

# EMBRACING EQUALITY PLEDGE

*Diversity is a fact. Equity is a choice. Inclusion is an action. Belonging is an outcome. - Arthur Chan*

## VISION

We, the undersigned service provider, pledge to embrace equality and work to end the discrimination experienced by lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans and gender diverse, intersex and queer (LGBTIQ+) people in Victoria.

Our vision is for safe, strong and sustainable LGBTIQ+ communities. This can only be realised through sustainably funded LGBTIQ+ community-controlled services, a service and education system that is safe, inclusive and affirming of LGBTIQ+ people, and a society in which LGBTIQ+ Victorians and their families are safe, equal, and enjoy the benefits of full economic, educational and community participation.

LGBTIQ+ people represent diverse, distinct and at times intersecting communities. For example, Aboriginal LGBTIQ+ people can experience prejudice based on their race and LGBTIQ+ status. This diversity must be understood and embraced. This can only be achieved through full participation and shared decision making of LGBTIQ+ people and their representative bodies in all matters that impact LGBTIQ+ people. We acknowledge the need to create space for a variety of LGBTIQ+ voices – young people, older people, Aboriginal people, disabled people, and people from diverse cultural backgrounds.

We have come far and we are heading in the right direction, but we still have a long way to go. Marriage equality and the ban on conversion practices in Victoria are welcome reforms, but historical oppression, persecution and continuing disadvantage and discrimination are holding LGBTIQ+ communities back. Together, we can change this.

While LGBTIQ+ communities are resilient, across almost every measure of health and wellbeing LGBTIQ+ people fare significantly worse than non-LGBTIQ+ people. LGBTIQ+ people experience disproportionately higher rates of substance misuse and homelessness, and the mental health of LGBTIQ+ people has been at crisis levels for decades with no signs of improvement.

The current service system is not working for LGBTIQ+ people. Many LGBTIQ+ people delay seeking the treatment and support they need due to the fear of stigma and discrimination. Services must be LGBTIQ+ inclusive and affirming to allay these fears and improve service uptake. The education system needs to embed support for LGBTIQ+ young people and give them the best start in life.

LGBTIQ+ community-controlled services are initiated and operated by and for LGBTIQ+ communities to provide safe, trusted and culturally appropriate services. Ensuring consumer choice and access to culturally safe, sustainably funded LGBTIQ+ community-controlled services is essential to improving health and wellbeing outcomes for LGBTIQ+ people in Victoria.

## AS A SERVICE PROVIDER, WE ENDORSE THE EMBRACING EQUALITY CHARTER AND PLEDGE TO:

- Establish and maintain relationships with LGBTIQ+ communities and services.
- Ensure all staff receive LGBTIQ+ inclusive practice training.
- Protect LGBTIQ+ staff and service users from discrimination, including by promoting a culture of respect and inclusion, and embedding formal structures that promote the reporting of instances of discrimination.
- Ensure systems of care are safe and culturally appropriate for LGBTIQ+ people, including by establishing and maintaining referral arrangements with LGBTIQ+ services, and evaluation processes that ensure the cultural needs of LGBTIQ+ people are addressed when referrals and service needs are being considered.
- Improve organisational understanding of intersectionality to address different modes of discrimination and privilege, including but not limited to the intersections of people who are both LGBTIQ+ and Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander.

This is only possible if LGBTIQ+ community-controlled organisations, mainstream organisations, Aboriginal Community-Controlled Organisations and the Victorian Government work in close partnership. We must ensure that LGBTIQ+ community-controlled services are sustainable, the service system is inclusive, and that the necessary funding and resources are made available to achieve this.



Acknowledgement: The Embracing Equality Charter and Pledge draw on the wisdom, experience and leadership of Aboriginal community-controlled organisations in championing the community-controlled service model and the Closing the Gap campaign. We recognise the intersectional lives of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander LGBTIQ+ people and the devastating role colonisation has played in their Communities. We acknowledge the marginalisation and social isolation that comes from being in this intersection.