

# OUT IS IN

## A report on the GLBTIQ\* 'Out Is In' Forum

\* Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex and Queer

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*There's no right way to approach GLBTIQ inclusion work whether you work in local government or not – it's about choosing something that works for you; there's no right order and in the case of all of the western region councils, each have been at different stages in their approach and continue to learn from, support and encourage each other.*



## **Acknowledgements**

This report was only made possible by the unprecedented collaboration between the council officers involved with the GLBTIQ Western Region Councils' Working Group (WRCWG), associated Council GLBTIQ Advisory Groups, partner organisations and community members who must be acknowledged for their individual and combined contributions.

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# Executive Summary

In February 2015, 120 people from across the West attended the 'Out Is In' Forum, a joint collaboration of the WRCWG. The 'Out Is In' forum was only possible because of the unprecedented collaboration between the western region councils coming together to support and celebrate GLBTIQ communities.

The forum provided a space to celebrate and reflect on GLBTIQ inclusion initiatives in Melbourne's West and identify a vision for the way forward for GLBTIQ communities in the West.

Basketball Victoria, CoHealth and the Australian Research Centre for Sex, Health and Society gave presentations on current GLBTIQ experience in the West. The WRCWG also presented on their achievements to date.

Forum attendees praised the progress that had been made in recent years, particularly praising the GOWEST initiative and local governments' greater willingness to support and engage GLBTIQ people. So too, attendees paid tribute to the West's unique approach in working together to undertake a range of GLBTIQ work.

The 'Out Is In' forum provided a rare opportunity to find out what local GLBTIQ people felt was missing in the West and what could be done better. Their answers provide a compelling vision for how best to support, include and celebrate GLBTIQ communities in the West.

The vision for a way forward articulated on the night can be divided into seven key themes:

- Recognising layers of GLBTIQ identity
- Promoting safe spaces
- Advocating for better access to health care
- Embedding what's been started
- Fostering GLBTIQ role models and visibility
- Supporting local Schools
- Encouraging GLBTIQ networking

This report provides an overview of the forum and its findings. It aims to provide direction for community, community organisations, service providers and western region councils to enable the establishment of stronger partnerships, policy development, action planning and implementation.

# Introduction

## Western Region Councils' Working Group

The Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex and Queer (GLBTIQ) Western Region Councils' Working Group (WRCWG) was formed in 2011, as a key action from the first GLBTIQ forum held in Hobsons Bay in 2010<sup>1</sup>. The WRCWG consists of six Councils: Brimbank, Maribyrnong, Melton, Moonee Valley, Wyndham and Hobsons Bay<sup>2</sup>, working together to promote GLBTIQ inclusion.

## The 'Out Is In' Forum

In February 2015, the WRCWG hosted the 'Out Is In' Forum. The forum reflected on GLBTIQ inclusion initiatives in Melbourne's West and invited attendees to identify a vision for the future.

This report captures the findings of the evening, articulating what has been achieved in this space so far and a vision for a way forward, as articulated by the community on the night.



<sup>1</sup> In 2010 Cr Tony Briffa (Hobsons Bay) instigated a GLBTIQ community forum during the Midsumma Festival; the first of its kind for Victorian local government. Over 90 attended.

<sup>2</sup> In 2012 the City of Melbourne also became a member. There are moves, at the time of writing, to include the City of Greater Geelong.

# Context

## GLBTIQ Communities

Currently there is a lack of data about the population of GLBTIQ people in the West.

So too, there isn't yet a specific snapshot of GLBTIQ demographics from the Australian Bureau of Statistics. However a growing body of evidence about the GLBTIQ communities<sup>3</sup> suggests that they make up a significant number of the adult population. The research evidence suggests that:

- Same-sex attracted women make up 15 per cent of the adult population; men nine per cent;
- Transgender people prevalence rates lie somewhere between 1:500 and 1:11,500; intersex people estimates suggest 1:200 to 1:2000; and,
- Same-sex attracted young people make up nine percent of young people between 14 and 21 years of age; gender diverse young people at least three per cent<sup>4</sup>.

## Forum attendance

In February 2015, 120 people attended the 'Out Is In' Forum, held at The Substation (Newport). Attendees included Councillors, Directors and council officers from each of the WCRWG; executives and other representatives from health care providers and sporting associations servicing the West; executives and other representatives from peak GLBTIQ organisations; and, GLBTIQ community members and their allies.



<sup>3</sup> Rosenstreich, G. (2013) LGBTI People Mental Health and Suicide. Revised 2nd Edition. National LGBTI Health Alliance. Sydney

<sup>4</sup> Hillier, L. et al. (2010) Writing Themselves In 3: The third national study on the sexual health and wellbeing of same sex attracted and gender questioning young people. Australian Research Centre in Sex, Health and Society, La Trobe University. Melbourne  
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Following the forum, 42 participants completed an online GLBTIQ Community Survey<sup>5</sup>. Postcode data identified that GLBTIQ community members attended from each of the six WCRWG. Additionally, attendees came from the City of Melbourne, Moreland City Council, Darebin City Council, Banyule City Council, City of Port Phillip, City of Greater Geelong, Macedon Ranges Shire and the City of Whitehorse. It also identified that 77.5 per cent of forum participants identified as GLBTIQ, and that participants ranged from 21 to 68 years of age, with an average of 44.8 years.

## Forum Overview: Where are we now?

### Guest Speakers

Following opening entertainment by drag performer, Kaye Sera, a panel of speakers from a range of organisations shared their own professional and personal experiences of GLBTIQ work happening in the West. The order, with their main presentation points, was as follows:

**Julie Anderson, CEO Basketball Victoria:**

- The GLBTIQ barriers tackled as a proud, gay, female leader;
- Homophobia in sport; and,
- Why Fair Go, Sport! is so close to her heart.

**Jason Rostant, Director Advocacy and Partnerships, CoHealth:**

- The GLBTIQ work undertaken at CoHealth; and,
- The priorities for GLBTIQ health in the west for the future.

**David Mejia-Canales, ARCSHS, Faculty of Health Sciences La Trobe University,**

- Key findings and next stages of the recent research report by ARCSHS: *'Understanding the support needs of LGBT young people from refugee and newly arrived backgrounds'*.

### Where We Are Now: Progress, Achievements and Room To Improve

Following the guest speakers, Joanna Nevill (Hobsons Bay) and Rebecca Gardner (Moonee Valley) presented the progress and achievements of the WRCWG, which can be summarised into four themes; GOWEST, Embedding and Celebrating Inclusion, Organisation and Cultural Change and Community Engagement and Partnerships<sup>6</sup>.

#### GOWEST

GOWEST is a mini-festival, as part of the broader Midsumma Festival<sup>7</sup> program. Initiated by Hobsons Bay in 2010, GOWEST is an unprecedented collaboration of western region councils coming together to support and celebrate GLBTIQ communities. It has been a major part of the work undertaken by western region councils.

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<sup>5</sup> Available from the Working Group as a separate document: GLBTIQ Community Survey 2015

<sup>6</sup> A comprehensive list of achievements can be found in Appendix 1: GLBTIQ Region Councils' Working Group Achievements.

<sup>7</sup> Midsumma is Melbourne's annual GLBTIQ Festival; a federation of arts and cultural events spread across Victoria. The festival has been presented annually, each January and February, since 1988. Out Is In: A report on the GLBTIQ 'Out Is In' forum

The 2015 GOWEST Program marked a milestone for the WCRWG: every Council has now hosted or been part of a GOWEST event for the first time. Importantly, the GOWEST program has grown from two events solely in Hobsons Bay to twenty-four events across all western region councils in 2015, encompassing fifteen partnerships.

### **Embedding and Celebrating Inclusion**

Each of the Councils of the WRCWG has worked to embed GLBTIQ inclusion within existing Council frameworks and services to ensure that GLBTIQ inclusion outlives any GLBTIQ-specific project, initiative or position.

For example, in March 2014 Moonee Valley City Council adopted the Diversity Access and Equity Policy and commenced the development of a Sexuality, Gender Identity and Intersex Action Plan<sup>8</sup>. Similarly, Wyndham City has embedded GLBTIQ inclusion into their City Plan and their Health, Safety & Wellbeing Plan 2013-2017, committing to increase social connectedness and tackle homo/bi/transphobia.

Each of the Councils of the WRCWG has also moved to celebrate their local GLBTIQ communities. For example, all member Councils have raised rainbow flags to mark IDAHO<sup>9</sup>, with some councils also flying the rainbow flag for the entirety of the Midsumma/GOWEST Festival.

### **Organisation and Cultural Change**

All of the western region councils are at different stages of their GLBTIQ journey. Together, their combined efforts provide an impressive roadmap for any local government area in Australia seeking to undertake substantive GLBTIQ work.

Examples of work in this area include a number of initiatives undertaken at Hobsons Bay City Council. These include a GLBTIQ component in their staff's compulsory staff Diversity induction training, the development of a GLBTIQ Writing Style Guide, along with a GLBTIQ page on their website and the GOWEST facebook page. Their Diversity Officer has updated the council website to avoid heteronormative language, targeted GLBTIQ communities through the council's community grants program, worked with libraries to ensure a range of queer press and literature is available and delivered Rainbow Families 'Who is in Your Family' resource kits to all kindergartens and childcare centres.

### **Community Engagement and Partnerships**

As with organisation and culture change, so too each member of the WRCWG is at different stages of engaging GLBTIQ communities and partnering to better support and celebrate them.

For example, Moonee Valley has facilitated regular GLBTIQ Community Forums, undertaken a Community Survey, established a GLBTIQ working group to guide the development of their Sexuality, Gender Identity and Intersex Action Plan and included local GLBTIQ people in a GLBTIQ Storytelling Project.

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<sup>8</sup> At the time of writing, this plan had been adopted by Council.

<sup>9</sup> The International Day Against Homophobia (IDAHO) is celebrated on May 17, and has recently included Transphobia (IDAHOT) & Biphobia, Intersexphobia and Transphobia (IDAHOBIT).  
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## Community Response

Following the presentations by the guest speakers and the WRCWG, 'Out Is In' forum participants were invited to reflect on their experiences in the West since the 2010 forum, as well as their current experiences as GLBTIQ people and allies in the West.

There was consensus that there had been progress.

Participants generally congratulated western region councils, observing that local government is more progressive on GLBTIQ issues than their state and federal counterparts, noting that there are different ways that each Council are trying to foster GLBTIQ inclusion. Particularly, there was praise for local governments' greater willingness to support and engage GLBTIQ people.

The continuous growth of the GOWEST festival program and the part that Councils play in this was cited. Many attending the forum attributed the recent GLBTIQ progress in the West to the efforts of the GOWEST festival. Many mentioned the importance of being able to gather, connect and share with other GLBTIQ people without having to go to more traditionally GLBTIQ pockets of Melbourne.

So too, participants paid tribute to the West's unique approach to this work, stating the benefit from combined and continued efforts. There were many comments about how there is a practical, 'can do' approach in the West and "our very unique way of working together". There was a healthy competitiveness and pride from locals who noted that this was not happening in other regions in Melbourne.

A common response was of genuine (and pleasant) surprise at the proactive GLBTIQ leadership in the West.

*"I assumed that other parts of Melbourne are leading, but it's the WEST! I'm a bit Surprised that 'the west' is providing proactive leadership, proactive..."*



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# Community Vision for the Way Forward

To end the 'Out Is In' forum, participants were asked what was still missing for them in the West, and what western region councils and organisations could do better to support and advocate for GLBTIQ communities. Their answers, focusing on seven themes, provide a compelling vision for how best to support, include and celebrate GLBTIQ communities in the West<sup>10</sup>.

The themes include:

- Recognising Layers of GLBTIQ Identity;
- Promoting Safe Spaces;
- Advocating for Better Access to Health Care;
- Embedding What's Been Started;
- Fostering GLBTIQ Role Models & Visibility;
- Supporting Local Schools; and,
- Encouraging GLBTIQ Networking.

They offer clear direction for community, community organisations, service providers and western region councils to enable the establishment of stronger partnerships, policy development, action planning and implementation<sup>11</sup>.

## RECOGNISING LAYERS OF GLBTIQ IDENTITY

**Now:** There is a limited, simplistic and, too often, stereotypical view of GLBTIQ people in the West.

**The Vision:** For decision makers, service providers and the broader community to see beyond the traditional view of GLBTIQ people in the West to acknowledge and work with their multiple identities: CALD communities, refugees, religious groups & leaders, disability and older GLBTIQ people.

## PROMOTING SAFE SPACES

**Now:** Local GLBTIQ people face homophobic and transphobic harassment and violence in their everyday lives.

**The Vision:** For western region councils and service providers to partner with GLBTIQ communities to address homophobic and transphobic harassment and violence, foster specific GLBTIQ safe spaces and community facilities and promote safety in public spaces.

<sup>10</sup> A full list of forum responses is available, through the Working Group, as a separate document titled, 'Out Is In GLBTIQ Collated Responses 2015'.

<sup>11</sup> In 2010, forum attendees identified issues of importance for GLBTIQ people as: Safety, Visibility, Council Leadership, Places & Spaces, Health Services, Advocacy, Media, Educating Everyone and the Education System.

**ADVOCATING FOR BETTER  
ACCESS TO HEALTH CARE**

**Now:** Local GLBTIQ don't feel safe, supported and able to access mainstream health care in the West, with some going "over the West Gate" to have their health needs met, particularly for sexual health reasons, HIV-related support and trans-specific support.

**The Vision:** For western region councils and service providers to work together to advocate for and provide inclusive, non-judgmental and responsive health care in the West that local GLBTIQ feel safe and able to access.

**EMBEDDING WHAT'S  
BEEN STARTED**

**Now:** A range of promising GLBTIQ work has been undertaken across the western region local government areas.

**The Vision:** For western region councils to ensure that GLBTIQ-inclusion is given further resources, embedded within Council's policy and practice. Further there is more inclusive practice, more consultation, training and GLBTIQ-inclusion at "other council events".

**FOSTERING GLBTIQ  
ROLE MODELS  
& VISIBILITY**

**Now:** There are very few local GLBTIQ role models in the West who are publicly out and visible.

**The Vision:** For western region councils, service providers and the broader community to foster and promote GLBTIQ community leadership, role models and their visibility. Further, for councils and service providers to work with local GLBTIQ people to foster a strong GLBTIQ identity in the West.

**SUPPORTING  
LOCAL SCHOOLS**

**Now:** Efforts in local schools to better support GLBTIQ students and challenge homophobia and transphobia is limited, and fails to adequately challenge and equip teachers.

**The Vision:** For western region councils and service providers to work together to expand on GLBTIQ work done in schools, going beyond just signing up to the Safe Schools Coalition and working with teachers in particular.

**ENCOURAGING  
GLBTIQ NETWORKING**

**Now:** There are few opportunities for GLBTIQ people in the West to gather, connect and share beyond GOWEST.

**The Vision:** To increase opportunities for local government, service providers, GLBTIQ community groups, GLBTIQ people and their allies to spend time with one another, share and learn.

## Where to from here?

This report provides direction for community, community organisations, service providers and western region councils to enable the establishment of stronger partnerships, policy development, action planning and implementation.

## Final Statements



It's perhaps appropriate that we leave the final word to local GLBTIQ people, who have contributed so much to public life in the West for – at least – the last four decades, and who look forward to contributing for many decades more into the future. The following three quotes summarise a great deal of the sentiment and hope for GLBTIQ life in the West.

*"My hope for the future is that in any municipality, any LGBTIQ person can walk into a mainstream service provider & get the service they need."*

*"I'd prefer not to always be going over the other side of the West Gate [for GLBTIQ-inclusive health care]."*

*"I hope to see [GLBTIQ] people with their partners, walking in street holding hands and for it be completely normal."*

## APPENDIX 1 - GLBTIQ WESTERN REGION COUNCILS' WORKING GROUP ACHIEVEMENTS

### GOWEST

Highlights of the GOWEST festival have been:

- The painting of a rainbow crossing in Altona;
- Werribee's first GLBTIQ picnic event which led to creation of a local group the Wyndham Rainbow Neighbours;
- sailing days; sporting days and partnering with other GLBTIQ organisations like Team Melbourne;
- Burlesque; the international NO H8 campaign which came to Australia for the first time (and the west);
- incredible art exhibitions which have an international focus which have been part of the GOWEST program this year and include Visual Activism (by Wyndham) and Walk with Pride (by Moonee Valley).

Further highlights of the program include:

- In 2012, the Hobsons Bay Mayor Cr Briffa marched in mayoral robes and the chain of office; and,
- In 2015 three Councillors from Hobsons Bay marched – including the Mayor Cr Gates, Deputy Mayor Cr Morgan and Cr Wilson. The Mayor of Moonee Valley Cr Narelle Sharpe also marched under the GOWEST banner.

	Numbers of events in total	Number of local partnerships	Number of other western region councils involved and events held
<b>Year 1:</b> 2010	2 (Exhibition and Forum)	1	<b>1 Councils</b> (all exclusively Hobsons Bay events)
<b>Year 2:</b> 2011	10	5	<b>1 Councils</b> (all exclusively Hobsons Bay events)
<b>Year 3:</b> 2012	12	8	<b>2 Councils</b> Hobsons Bay 11, Wyndham 1
<b>Year 4:</b> 2013	19	11	<b>4 Councils</b> Brimbank 1, Hobsons Bay 12, Maribyrnong 3, Wyndham 2
<b>Year 5:</b> 2014	21	11	<b>4 Councils</b> Brimbank 1, Hobsons Bay 10, Maribyrnong 2, Wyndham 3
<b>Year 6:</b> 2014	24	15	<b>ALL 6 Councils</b> Brimbank 2, Hobsons Bay 11, Maribyrnong 3, Melton 1, Moonee Valley 2, Wyndham 4



## Embedding and Celebrating Inclusion

Examples of embedding GLBTIQ Inclusion work and celebrating the GLBTIQ community in the west include:

- In 2011, Hobsons Bay resourced a new 'Diversity Officer' position supporting the resourcing of **the GLBTIQ portfolio** and to implement the recommendations from the 2010 forum;
- In March 2014 Moonee Valley City Council adopted the **Diversity Access and Equity Policy** – and commenced the development of a **Sexuality, Gender Identity and Intersex Action Plan**;
- Maribyrnong City Council **Human Rights & Social Justice Framework 2013-2016**;
- Rainbow flag raisings to mark **IDAHOBIT** and the **Midsumma Festival**;
- Brimbank and Hobsons Bay have developed a council **GLBTIQ Internal Reference Group** to advise on upcoming events and revise internal EO policy;
- Wyndham City Council has committed to increase social connectedness and tackle homo/bi/transphobia as outlined in their council's **City Plan and Health, Safety & Wellbeing Plan 2013-2017**; and,
- Hobsons Bay included **gender diverse people** as part of the council's **Gender Equity Policy Statement**.
- Almost all western region councils fly the rainbow flag to mark IDAHOBIT (Hobsons Bay, Maribyrnong, Brimbank, Wyndham, Melton)
- Hobsons Bay flies the rainbow flag for the entire duration of the Midsumma Festival.
- In 2015, Moonee Valley put up Rainbow flags at the Civic Centre, the Depot and key intersections across the municipality throughout Midsumma.

## Organisational Cultural Change

- Hobsons Bay and Brimbank have delivered packages of **GLBTIQ awareness training for staff**; Additionally, HBCC have delivered specific GLBTIQ awareness training to libraries, HR, aged care);
- Hobsons Bay also have: a GLBTIQ component in their staff's **compulsory staff Diversity induction training**; developed a **GLBTIQ Writing Style Guide** for staff; a GLBTIQ website and **GOWEST facebook page**; updated the council website to avoid heteronormative language; **targeted GLBTIQ communities** through the councils community grants program; worked with libraries to ensure a range of **queer press and literature** is available; and, delivered Rainbow Families 'Who is in Your Family' resource kits to all kindergartens and childcare centres.

## Community Engagement and Partnerships

- First GLBTIQ community forum in Hobsons Bay in 2010;
- Hobsons Bay developed Victoria's first GLBTIQ Advisory Committee in 2011;
- Moonee Valley in 2014 has:
  - Hosted two discussion evenings (held in May and October 2014);
  - A Community Survey (May and June 2014); and,
  - The establishment of LGBTIQ working group to guide the development of the plan and Councils activities for IDAHOBIT in 2015;
- Brimbank City Council coordinates and facilitates **Qwest - a municipal wide network of Youth Services**;
- Brimbank has supported and funded 3 **local school Gay Straight Alliances** and facilitated guest speakers;
- Wyndham Youth Services leads the **Q Program** (a social group for young people aged up to 25 who are GLBTIQ or questioning);
- Melton City Council's "The Space" Youth Program is a social support group for young people aged 12-25yrs who are questioning their sexuality and/or sexual identity. The program has



successfully been running for a few years with group numbers increasing as local youth feel safe with positive support from the Youth workers;

- Melton City Council has organized “Welcoming Diversity” Rainbow sticker to be sent to all Melton services and agencies. We have asked these services to display the sticker on their agency door to support the GLBTIQ community and to assist in creating a welcoming environment; and,
- Hobsons Bay initiated the **WESTANDPROUD film project** – a Hobsons Bay Libraries project in collaboration with RMIT University which documented the history and stories of GLBTIQ living in the west of Melbourne.

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