

Rainbow Action Plan



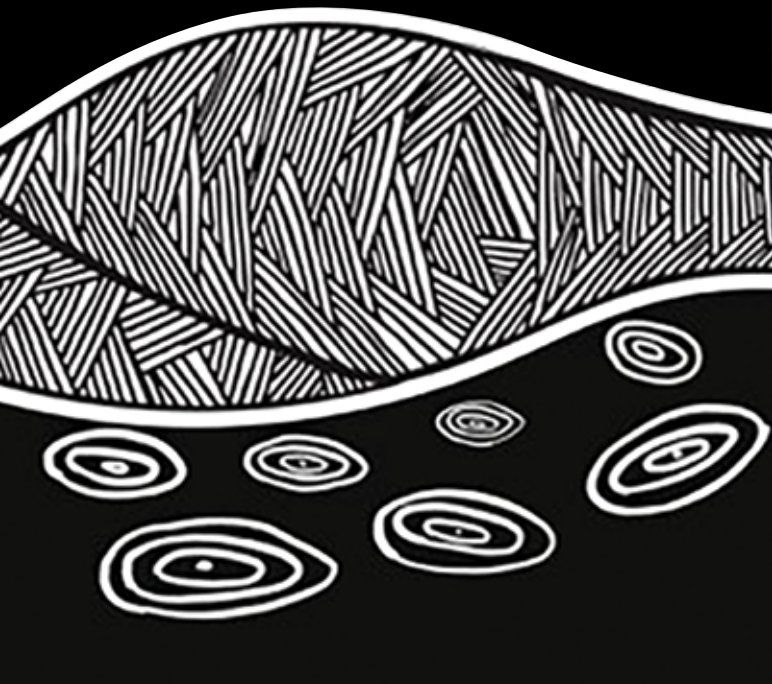
DRAFT

2024 - 2026

Acknowledgement of Country

Hepburn Shire Council acknowledges the Dja Dja Wurrung as the Traditional Owners of the lands and waters on which we live and work. On these lands, Djaara have performed age-old ceremonies of celebration, initiation and renewal. We recognise their resilience through dispossession and it is a testament to their continuing culture and tradition, which is strong and thriving.

We also acknowledge the neighbouring Traditional Owners, the Wurundjeri to our south east and the Wadawurrung to our south west and pay our respect to all Aboriginal peoples, their culture and lore. We acknowledge their living culture and the unique role they play in the life of this region.



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Mayor's message

Hepburn Shire Council is proud to present its first Rainbow Action Plan. It commits to a clear and achievable set of actions to guide our work to create a safe and welcoming community for our LGBTIQ+ people.

It builds on Council's initiative in 2021 to create an LGBTIQ+ Advisory Committee.

The plan will help to ensure that all LGBTIQ+ people feel supported, connected, visible and safe in our community. We will treat all people fairly, equitably and with respect. We will not tolerate violence in any form, against any part of our community.

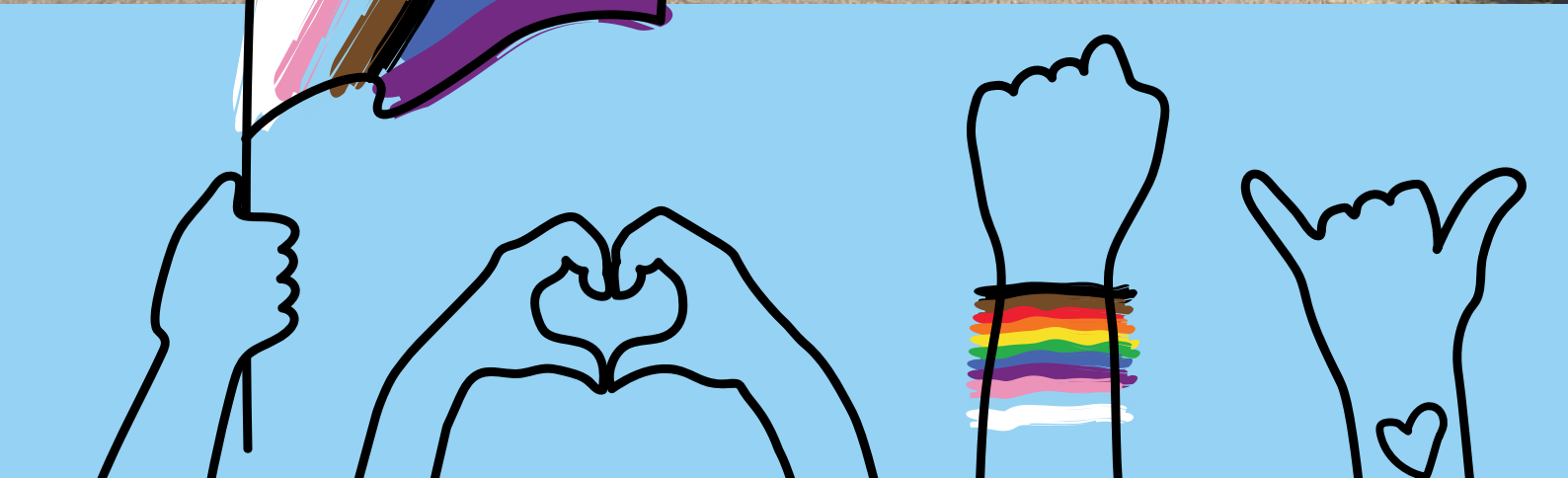
The Plan will also guide us in providing an inclusive workplace for LGBTIQ+ staff and volunteers.

Hepburn Shire recognises and celebrates the important contributions that our LGBTIQ+ people, businesses and visitors bring to the life of our Shire. Together we share an inclusive, resilient, vibrant, sustainable, innovative and diverse community. This plan will take us to the next level.



Cr Brian Hood
Mayor







A note on language

A variety of abbreviations are used to describe the LGBTIQ+ community and to celebrate people's different and diverse experiences. Each abbreviation has limitations.

Hepburn Shire Council has chosen the abbreviation 'LGBTIQ+' to describe people, families, communities and organisations that are Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and gender-diverse, Intersex, Queer and Asexual. The plus symbol (+) indicates that these initials cannot cover everyone's experiences of sexuality, gender identity and sex characteristics.

We acknowledge that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities use the terms 'sistergirls' and 'brotherboys' and their preferred abbreviation can be written as LGBTIQ+SB.

Council will sometimes choose to respectfully use 'Rainbow' as an inclusive umbrella term for all who are represented by the letters in LGBTIQ+. For example, this is the Rainbow Action Plan.

We recognise that each person reflected in these 'letters' has a different lived experience, and we do consider the impact of intersectionality.

Finally, we must contend with the history of these words which were (and are) used to abuse and denigrate people. Some words – like 'gay' – have been reclaimed and are now used with pride. The word 'queer' can be inclusive and uniting for some, yet older people may still find it offensive and disrespectful.





Community Vision

Hepburn Shire – An inclusive rural community in Dja Dja Wurrung Country, where all people are valued, partnerships are fostered, environments protected, diversity supported and innovation embraced.



Photo: Sandy Scheltema

Diversity Statement

We are proud of our Shire's diversity. We are enriched when all people, regardless of cultural background, gender, sexuality or identity, are embraced and supported to participate and contribute to the life of our community.

Commitment to LGBTIQ+ Inclusion

Rainbow Pledge by candidates, 2020.

Councillors commit to furthering equality for lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans and gender diverse, intersex, queer and asexual (LGBTIQ+) people.

We will work to end LGBTIQ+ discrimination, and stand up for the human rights of LGBTIQ+ people.



Photo: Michelle Donnelly Photography

LGBTIQA+ people in Hepburn Shire

The Victorian Population Health Survey shows that 7.5% of Hepburn Shire's population identify as LGBTIQA+, which is higher than the 5.7% average for rural and regional local government areas in Victoria. It is possible that surveys under-report our LGBTIQA+ population because – anecdotally – many 'local' LGBTIQA+ people have their primary residence in Melbourne.

Interpretation of household population data from the 2021 Census shows that localities within Hepburn Shire have some of the highest rates of same-sex-couple households (per 1000 people living as couples) in Victoria.

Four of the 'top 10' localities for Victorian same-sex households are in our Shire. They are Hepburn Springs (16.3%), Daylesford (13.2%), Hepburn (11.2%) and Glenlyon (8.5%). For comparison, the highest figure in metropolitan Melbourne was 11.2% in Collingwood.

The average same-sex-couple rate across the whole Hepburn Shire was 6.8%, just behind top-placed City of Yarra (6.9%). The average across all Victorian LGAs was 1.5% same-sex-couple households.

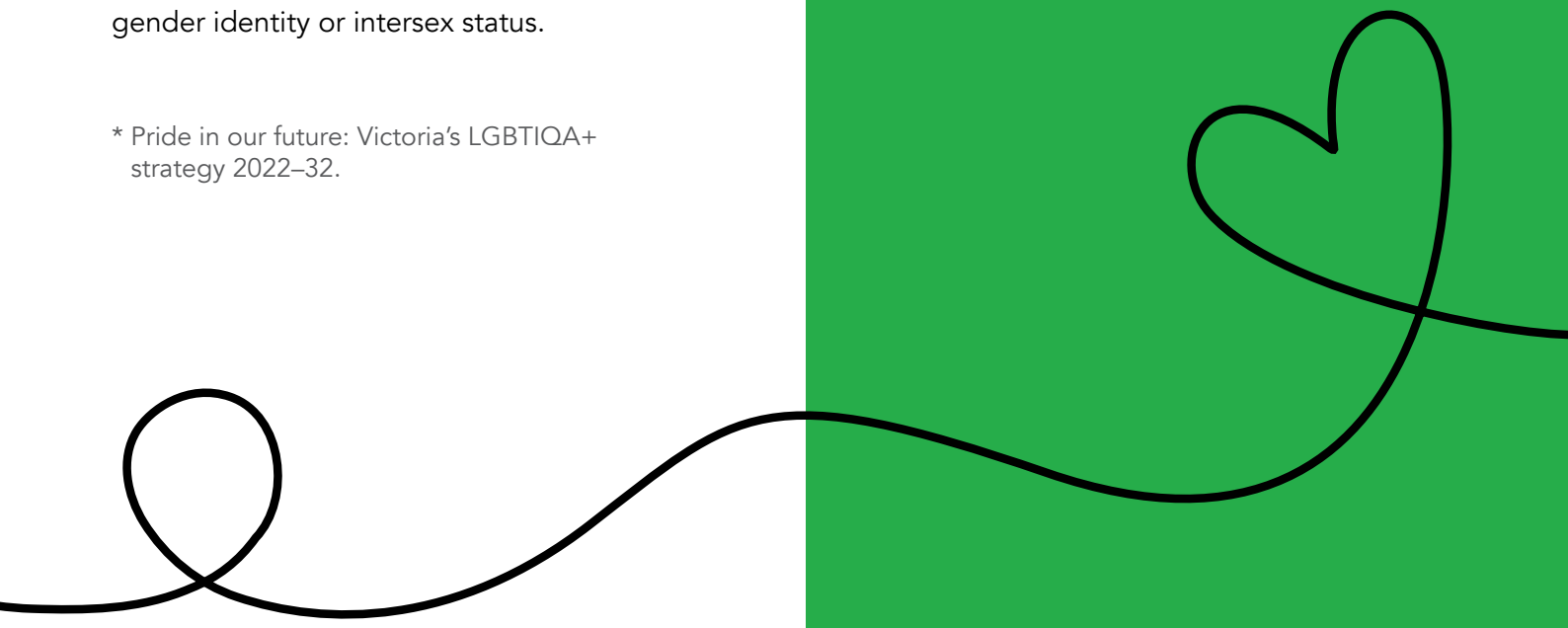
Why is this plan important?

Many LGBTIQ+ people live happy, connected, positive and healthy lives. Yet research shows that LGBTIQ+ Victorians face higher levels of unfair treatment, discrimination, social exclusion, abuse and harassment. The figures are higher in regional and rural areas, and for LGBTIQ+ people from multicultural backgrounds.*

It is said that the single strongest and most consistent predictor of poor mental health and wellbeing among LGBTIQ+ communities is experiences of abuse, harassment or assault.*

This Rainbow Action Plan will help to deliver safe and inclusive services, facilities, programs and events for our LGBTIQ+ communities. The Plan aims to reduce the likelihood of direct or indirect discrimination related to sexual orientation, gender identity or intersex status.

* Pride in our future: Victoria's LGBTIQ+ strategy 2022–32.





Our Goal

Hepburn Shire Council will be renowned as a leader in LGBTIQ+ inclusion, because of the way we understand and address the needs of our LGBTIQ+ constituents, and work with them to build a safe and welcoming culture of LGBTIQ+ inclusivity in the Shire.

For matters beyond Council's direct control, we will demonstrate leadership through effective advocacy, thereby helping to achieve change.

Principles of LGBTIQ+ Inclusion

This Action Plan was developed using the Victorian Government's Rainbow Ready Roadmap (RRR) methodology. The roadmap was developed by LGBTIQ+ communities, so that regional and rural communities can work together to address inequalities experienced by LGBTIQ+ people.

The four core principles of LGBTIQ+ inclusion are: Understanding, Inclusion, Visibility and Safety.



Indicators of LGBTIQ+ Inclusion

Indicators are measures used to understand the ways in which Hepburn Shire Council already practices LGBTIQ+ inclusion, and where there is room for improvement.

The Rainbow Ready Roadmap Setting Guide for Local Government has 15 'indicators' which align with the four core principles of LGBTIQ+ inclusion. Each Core Principle has one or more Indicators. Council has identified achievable actions that address these Indicators.

A: Understanding

- 1 Council educates its staff and volunteers on LGBTIQ+ inclusion.

B: Inclusion

- 2 LGBTIQ+ residents take part in Council committees and in Council planning.
- 3 Council grants are provided to support local LGBTIQ+ initiatives.
- 4 Council supports local LGBTIQ+ events.
- 5 Council provides an inclusive workplace for LGBTIQ+ employees and volunteers.

C: Visibility

- 6 Council has a strategy or plan for LGBTIQ+ inclusion.
- 7 Council has a statement of LGBTIQ+ inclusion that is publicly visible.
- 8 Council information incorporates LGBTIQ+ inclusive language and images.
- 9 Council takes opportunities to fly Pride flags and display other symbols of Pride.
- 10 Council's website and social media accounts profile LGBTIQ+ initiatives, events, people and resources.

D: Safety

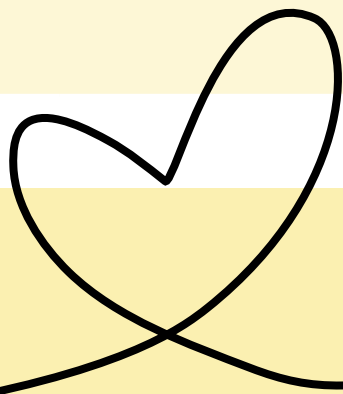
- 11 Bookings and assessment processes are LGBTIQ+ inclusive.
- 12 LGBTIQ+ groups and services are supported to access Council spaces.
- 13 Council provides all-gender bathroom and change room options.
- 14 Potential risks to the safety of LGBTIQ+ people are identified and minimised.
- 15 Council responds to LGBTIQ+-phobic incidents by advocating for the rights of LGBTIQ+ members and taking steps to prevent future incidents.

Indicators of LGBTIQ+ Inclusion (cont.)

Principles	Indicators of inclusion	Council's planned actions
Understanding		
1	Council educates its staff and volunteers on LGBTIQ+ inclusion.	<p>1.1 Continue to offer LGBTIQ+ Inclusion as part of mandatory induction training for new staff. Expand this induction training to include new volunteers and new Councillors.</p> <p>1.2 Develop/Deliver a more comprehensive inclusion training program for existing staff and volunteers.</p> <p>1.3 Continue awareness-raising activities for staff and volunteers in Council's celebration of LGBTIQ+ days of significance, eg, IDAHOBIT, Wear It Purple Day, Trans Awareness Week.</p>



Principles	Indicators of inclusion	Council's planned actions
Inclusion		
2	LGBTIQ+ residents take part in Council committees and in Council planning.	<p>2.1 Provide an annual report to the community about progress made against this plan and celebrate achievements.</p> <p>2.2 Continue to support and engage with our LGBTIQ+ community members, and consider their advice on Council's proposed policies, plans and strategies.</p>
3	Council grants are provided to support local LGBTIQ+ initiatives.	<p>3.1 Promote Council grants to local LGBTIQ+ groups and organisations, so that they can develop and deliver community-led programs and events.</p> <p>3.2 Strengthen grant-seeking capability within LGBTIQ+ community groups through mechanisms such as workshops.</p>
4	Council supports local LGBTIQ+ events.	<p>4.1 Continue to provide support for ChillOut Festival – regional Victoria's largest and longest running LGBTIQ+ cultural festival.</p> <p>4.2 Continue the tradition of Councillors and staff proudly marching in the annual ChillOut Parade.</p> <p>4.3 Encourage other local groups to offer programs and events for LGBTIQ+ people.</p>
5	Council provides an inclusive workplace for LGBTIQ+ employees and volunteers.	<p>5.1 Incorporate gender inclusive language into all standards and protocols, forms, surveys and induction processes. [Link to Gender Equity Action Plan 1.3]</p> <p>5.2 Examine our recruitment process with a gender and diversity lens (including targeted recruitment for binary dominated roles; improving diversity representation in advertising, imaging and wording; reviewing application requirements; and expanding our recruitment channels). [Link to Gender Equity Action Plan 2.1]</p> <p>5.3 Strengthen data collection systems and processes to fill data gaps (including establishing the system for employees to control their own data; space on forms for employees to identify themselves; and promoting feedback opportunities such as people matter and pulse surveys) [Link to Gender Equity Action Plan 3.1]</p> <p>5.4 Analyse staff surveys and feedback opportunities to better understand perceptions of safety in the workplace and how these may be different for LGBTIQ+ staff.</p>



Principles	Indicators of inclusion	Council's planned actions
Visibility		
6	Council has a strategy or plan for LGBTIQ+ inclusion.	6.1 Pursue the idea of incorporating "LGBTIQ+ inclusion" in the 2025-2028 Council Plan as part of a wholistic 'Inclusion' framework, rather than as a discrete Rainbow Action Plan.
7	Council has a statement of LGBTIQ+ inclusion that is publicly visible.	<p>7.1 The statement of commitment to LGBTIQ+ inclusion developed for this Plan will be featured on Council's website and in relevant publications, and promoted to Staff and Volunteers.</p> <p>7.2 Promote the statement of commitment to LGBTIQ+ inclusion at LGBTIQ+ events run by Council.</p>
8	Council information incorporates LGBTIQ+ inclusive language and images.	<p>8.1 Update and expand our current inclusive language guidelines (in Brand Guidelines) to reflect best practice.</p> <p>8.2 Develop an inclusive image bank and source images or conduct photoshoots to obtain images of Rainbow families, LGBTIQ+ elders, LGBTIQ+ young people and trans and gender diverse community members.</p> <p>8.3 Develop and expand capacity of staff to use LGBTIQ+ inclusive language and images.</p>
9	Council takes opportunities to fly Pride flags and display other symbols of Pride.	<p>9.1 Flags are flown on the Daylesford community flagpole on LGBTIQ+ days of significance, such as IDAHOBIT, Trans Awareness Week, World AIDS Day.</p> <p>9.2 Investigate a community flagpole be installed at a prominent location in each major town (Trentham, Creswick and Clunes) so that flags can be flown Shire-wide, at locations where people can gather.</p> <p>9.3 Investigate a new location for the Daylesford community flagpole so that larger groups can safely gather for flag-raising ceremonies.</p> <p>9.4 Maintain current and identify opportunities for new symbols of Pride throughout the Shire.</p>
10	Council's website and social media accounts profile LGBTIQ+ initiatives, events, people and resources.	<p>10.1 Continue to profile LGBTIQ+ content on social media. Eg, sharing content related to LGBTIQ+ days of significance, and community events.</p> <p>10.2 Review Council's website content so that content relevant to our LGBTIQ+ community is up-to-date, comprehensive and easy to find.</p> <p>10.3 Encourage local community support and services organisations to promote their LGBTIQ+ services and events on the 'Ask Izzy' platform, which is linked to Council's website.</p>

Principles	Indicators of inclusion	Council's planned actions
Safety		
11	Bookings and assessment processes are LGBTQIA+ inclusive.	11.1 Develop staff capacity to audit and improve booking, assessment and intake forms and correspondence to ensure they are LGBTQIA+ inclusive across all Council services.
12	LGBTQIA+ groups and services are supported to access Council spaces.	12.1 Invite LGBTQIA+ groups and services to consider using Council spaces. 12.2 Develop the capacity of LGBTQIA+ groups and services to access Council spaces by holding an information session covering bookings, permits, risk plans and public liability insurance. 12.3 Review current Council operational spaces to ensure they are welcoming and inclusive for all genders and intersectionalities. [Link to Gender Equity Action Plan 1.5]
13	Council provides all-gender bathroom and change room options.	13.1 Include all-gender toilet facilities and change room options in all new building and redevelopment projects. 13.2 Work with the owners/operators of non-Council public facilities in Hepburn Shire, encouraging them to provide all-gender bathroom and change room options.
14	Potential risks to the safety of LGBTQIA+ people are identified and minimised.	14.1 Consult LGBTQIA+ groups to understand current concerns about community safety. 14.2 Consider emerging risks to LGBTQIA+ people in the Shire, and work with Police and others to mitigate those risks. 14.3 Risk management plans for Council-run LGBTQIA+ events will address the safety of all participants, including staff and volunteers.
15	Council responds to LGBTQIA+-phobic incidents by advocating for the rights of LGBTQIA+ members and taking steps to prevent future incidents.	15.1 Reiterate Council's public statements of support for LGBTQIA+ people, and opposition to violence in all forms. 15.2 Work with local Police to create community guidelines for responding to any LGBTQIA+ phobic incidents, and share these with the community. 15.3 Continue to monitor Council's social media accounts to detect and (when appropriate) respond to LGBTQIA+ phobic social media postings. 15.4 Council will review LGBTQIA+ phobic incidents brought to our attention, noting immediate responses and follow-up actions, to improve our responses over time. 15.5 Promote the Community Reporting Tool (Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission) for discrimination and breaches of human rights, and make the link visible on Council's website. 15.6 Enforce the Local Laws to protect LGBTQIA+ community members in a public place from threatening, abusive or insulting words or behaviour which interferes with their use or enjoyment of that public place.





Acknowledgements

Hepburn Shire Council's LGBTIQ+ and
Gender Equity Advisory Committee members

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