Rainbow Yarra Policy



Photo by Matto Lucas

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Rainbow Yarra

CITY OF YARRA

Yarra City Council acknowledges the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung people as the Traditional Owners and true sovereigns of the land now known as Yarra. We also acknowledge the significant contributions made by other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to life in Yarra. We pay our respects to Elders from all nations and to their Elders past, present and future.

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Alignment with Council Policy

The Rainbow Yarra Policy aligns with Yarra City Council's current strategic frameworks, including the Council Plan 2025–2029 and the Draft Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan 2025–2029, both of which outline Council's commitment to equity, inclusion, and community wellbeing. This Policy supports the realisation of those objectives by promoting safety, participation, and health for LGBTIQA+ communities across Yarra. It is also guided by relevant state and federal strategies and legislation that advance inclusion, equity, and public health for LGBTIQA+ communities

While grounded in the current context, the Rainbow Yarra Policy has been designed as a long-term framework. It will remain adaptable over time and may be updated to reflect changes in Council direction, relevant state and federal public policy, or shifts in the broader social, economic, and cultural landscape.

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A note on language

The terms Rainbow, LGBTIQA+ and Queer community are used interchangeably throughout this policy to reflect inclusivity and the diverse ways people identify. Each term is embraced by different individuals and carries cultural, political, or symbolic meaning, ensuring the policy remains accessible, respectful, and community-aligned.

The policy uses 'rainbow' as an inclusive and accessible term that encompasses diverse sexual orientations, gender identities, First Peoples, people of colour, and individuals with disabilities within the LGBTIQA+ community. Linked to the rainbow flag – a symbol of pride – it feels more unifying and positive than formal acronyms, promoting a sense of inclusivity.

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Introduction

Overview

Everyone has the right to express themselves freely and safely. Yarra City Council is committed to uniting in diversity and supporting LGBTIQA+ members of our community. With up to 24%[1] of Yarra's population identifying as LGBTIQA+, the Council is dedicated to fostering a thriving, inclusive environment where diversity, uniqueness, and belonging are celebrated.

The LGBTIQA+ community is a vital part of the cultural and social fabric of Yarra, which has long been a vibrant hub for queer life and expression. Council has a proud history of promoting equal rights and inclusion for this community.

In line with Victoria's ongoing efforts, and in consultation with the community, the Council has developed a policy focused on four key priority areas, tailored to the needs of the Yarra community. These priorities are Heritage and Celebration, Inclusion and Participation, Safer Spaces, and Health and Wellbeing. The new Rainbow Yarra policy succeeds the former four-year strategy, continuing our commitment to human rights, empowerment, and equitable access to services and programs.

An intersectional lens

The policy takes a strengths-based approach, celebrating the Rainbow community's self-determination and contributions to Yarra. It also acknowledges the complex challenges from intersecting identities like sexual orientation, gender, First Peoples communities, ethnicity, faith, language, age, ability, and socio-economic status. Council recognises that these factors can compound marginalisation, often making those facing intersectional discrimination less visible.

Promotion of other minority groups

Understanding the diverse needs of minority groups is key to driving meaningful change. While the Rainbow Yarra policy centres on Yarra's LGBTIQA+ community, it also acknowledges broader systemic inequities. True equality in Yarra requires addressing these challenges. The LGBTIQA+ community continues to face significant barriers, and this policy offers Council the opportunity to respond with inclusive, affirming, and culturally appropriate actions. By prioritising those most affected, we can build a stronger, fairer community for everyone.

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[1] The Victorian Population Health Survey (VAHI, 2023) found that 24% of Yara's population identifies as LGBTQIA+ and the Social Indicators Survey (Yarra City Council, 2024) found that 15% of Yara's population identifies as LGBTQIA+.

Our Community

This section shares what we know about the lives and experiences of LGBTIQA+ people in Yarra. While local data helps tell part of the story, Victorian data has also been included to help build a broader understanding of the community's needs and challenges.

Local Data

Council conducted its first-ever Social Indicators Survey in 2024. The representative survey has provided Council with its most granular data to date on the LGBTIQA+ community. It is noted that only data points with a sufficient sample size have been used in this policy to ensure accurate reporting.

↑ and ↓ = significant difference between the Rainbow community when compared to the total population of Yarra

Unless stated otherwise, the following data is from the Social Indicators Survey (Yarra City Council, 2024).

Up to 24%*

of Yarra's community **identify as LGBTIQA+**

*VAHI (2023) reports 24% and Yarra City Council (2024) reports 15%



80% of the community were born in Australia



30%↑ had a **disability,** which is *significantly higher* than Yarra's total population (21%)



48% of the Rainbow community **rented privately**, which is *higher* than Yarra's total population (43%*)

43% of the Rainbow community **owned their own home outright or with a mortgage,** which is similar to Yarra's total population (42%*)

*ABS (2021)



Of the **couples living together** (3,543 or 3% of Yarra's total population), **90% lived without children** and **10% with children**

ABS (2021)



47%↑ had **safety concerns doing exercise or physical activity outdoors at night**, which is *significantly higher* than Yarra's total population (36%)



37%↑ had **safety concerns using public outdoor parks, trails or reserves** which is *significantly higher* than Yarra's total population (24%)



40% had **safety concerns catching public transport**

Regarding safety concerns about people under the influence of drugs and alcohol:



80%↑ had witnessed/experienced **people being disruptive / generally annoying to people around them**, which is *significantly higher* than Yarra's total population (72%)



60% had experienced **feeling unsafe**

42% had witnessed **violence**







84%↑ participated in a sporting activity, which is *significantly higher* than Yarra's total population (77%)

80%↑ participated in activities like going to the gym, running, swimming etc., which is *significantly higher* than Yarra's total population (72%)





The Rainbow community in Yarra is more likely to use public squares, outdoor parks, trails, or reserves for **socialising** than the general population, **33%↑** versus 17%



31%↑ did unpaid volunteering, which is *significantly higher* than Yarra's total population (23%)



71%↑ participated in or attended an arts or cultural event, which is *significantly higher* than Yarra's total population (57%)

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98%↑ agree that it is a good thing for a society to be made up of people from different cultures, which is *significantly higher* than Yarra's total population (91%)

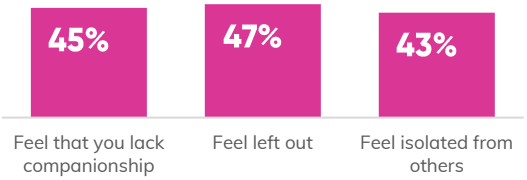
93%↑ agree that the relationship between First People's and other Australian's is important or very important for Australia as a nation, which is *significantly higher* than Yarra's total population (87%)

82% are satisfied with **life overall**

81% are satisfied with the **area they live in**

51%↓ are satisfied **with feeling a sense of belonging and inclusion in their community**, which is *significantly lower* than Yarra's total population (61%)

Loneliness



Often/Some of the time

Companionship/connectedness



Often/Some of the time

30%↑ frequently partake in binge drinking, which is *significantly higher* than Yarra's total population (22%)

Victorian Data

To address gaps in locally available data on Yarra residents, insights from the Victoria-wide *Private Lives Survey 3* (Hill et al., 2021). has been included to provide a broader understanding of the experiences and needs of the LGBTIQA+ community.

47% of participants reported having experienced homelessness at some point in their lives.	**18%** experienced difficulty managing alcohol use or noted that alcohol had negatively impacted their daily life within the past 12 months.
58% experienced unfair treatment due to sexual orientation, and **78%** of trans and gender diverse participants reported this based on gender identity in the past year.	**46%** reported using one or more drugs for non-medical reasons in the past six months.
72% reported having been diagnosed with a mental health condition at some stage in their lives.	**43%** had experienced abuse in an intimate relationship
Among various health service providers, mainstream medical clinics were least likely to be seen as respectful of sexual orientation (**57.5%)** and gender identity	**38%** had experienced abuse from a family member

Policy Context

Commitments to inclusion across all levels of government shape this Policy. Federal and state policies provide the framework that guides Council's role in supporting the rights, safety, and wellbeing of LGBTIQA+ communities locally.

Federal

The Federal policy landscape relevant to the LGBTIQA+ community includes the National LGBTIQA+ Action Plan, the Australian Human Rights Commission, the Marriage Amendment (Definition and Religious Freedoms) Act 2017, the National Sex Discrimination Act 1984, the LGBTIQ+ Health and Wellbeing Strategy, the National Strategy to Prevent LGBTIQ+ Domestic Violence, and the Gender Identity and Intersex Rights Legislation. These national frameworks guide local governments in aligning policies, promoting inclusion, and ensuring compliance with anti-discrimination standards in community services and programs.

State

The Victorian Government's policies and laws that are relevant for the LGBTQIA+ community include Victorian Pride in our Futures LGBTIQ+ Strategy 2022-32, Anti-Vilification Laws (civil protections 2026), Equal Opportunity Act 2010, and Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act (2006). These state laws and strategies inform how local councils develop inclusive initiatives, uphold human rights, and foster safe, equitable environments for LGBTQIA+ residents.

What Yarra does

Yarra City Council partners with local groups and organisations to support the health, rights, and visibility of the Rainbow community. These connections help us stay informed, share vital information, and collaborate on meaningful projects. We advocate for inclusion, challenge discrimination, and ensure our work reflects the diverse experiences within the LGBTIQA+ community.

We work closely with our partners to support our Rainbow community. Our partners include local LGBTIQA+ allied health services, community groups, lobbyists, sports clubs, schools, venues, businesses, community organisations and festivals.

Council, either independently or in partnership with others, supports events and celebrations, community initiatives, advocacy, visibility and awareness campaigns, as well as youth engagement and training. Recent examples include:

Events and Celebrations

Queerways walking tours	Midsumma Festival	Victoria's Pride	Peel St Park Projection exhibition
IDAHOBIT	Transgender Day of Remembrance vigil	Wear It Purple Day	Iftar dinner during Ramadan
Pride Pool Party	Elders Dance Club	Seniors Festival Lunch	Author Talks
Thread Together Queer Styling Day			

Community Support

Naarm Rainbow Dads Playgroup	Rainbow Families Playgroup	Richmond High School Pride Group
Bent Twig Alliance community group	Community Grants-funded programs or events specifically for queer communities	Rainbow Advisory Committee

Advocacy, Visibility and Awareness Campaigns

Rainbow Yarra Visibility campaign	AIDS Awareness Week	Rainbow Advisory Committee
Advocacy against religious discrimination	Advocacy for anti-vilification	Respectful relationships
LGBTIQA+ Heritage study of culturally and historically significant sites	Scoping for an LGBTIQA+ memorial for lives lost to suicide	Addressing family and intimate partner violence in the community

Youth Engagement and Training

Safer Futures Training & Workshops	DJ & Production Skills for youth	Redevelopment of the code of conduct/rights and responsibilities for young people

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Our Commitments

Our commitments are themed into four priority areas that have been formed through community engagement with a range of stakeholders, community data and subject matter expertise. Through this policy, Yarra City Council will foster a city that honours heritage, promotes inclusion, ensures safety, and supports wellbeing.

Priority areas



Priority area 1	Priority area 2	Priority area 3	Priority area 4
Heritage and Celebration	**Inclusion and Participation**	**Safer Spaces**	**Health and Wellbeing**

Priority 1: Heritage and Celebration

We acknowledge and celebrate our history and proudly support Yarra's LGBTIQA+ precinct and businesses.

1.1 Celebrate days of significance and pride events	
What will we do?	• Acknowledge and celebrate relevant days of significance in the Rainbow calendar
	• Partner with State Government for Victoria's Pride festival and Midsumma festival, exploring ways to expand accessibility and intersectionality
	• Provide opportunities for the community to participate in Pride events, facilitating learning and collaboration
1.2 Recognise queer people, spaces, landmarks and history	
What will we do?	• Collaborate with community to determine how to best acknowledge current and emerging places of cultural significance for the queer community, and protect significant places of historical significance.
	• Increase LGBTIQA+ visibility in social, cultural and economic life through public art, storytelling, representation, and community recognition.
	• Partner with First Peoples connected to Yarra who are LGBTIQA+ to centre voices, create culturally safe spaces, and advance community and economic development.
1.3 Support Rainbow businesses and cultural precincts	
What will we do?	• Explore ways to support rainbow businesses in Yarra through potential incentives and initiatives.
	• Preserve and enhance existing cultural precincts while exploring opportunities for expansion

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Priority 2: Inclusion and Participation

We advocate for LGBTIQA+ people in Yarra, foster community connection, a sense of belonging and work towards reducing social isolation.

2.1 Provide opportunities for community participation	
What will we do?	• Investigate ways to connect and gather in different environments, including natural and urban settings
	• Create spaces for Rainbow youth and young adults to explore their identities, build connections, and access mentorship
	• Support senior Rainbow individuals by creating social programs, wellness activities and support groups tailored to their specific needs
	• Facilitate capacity building and mentorship opportunities to enable access to education and employment
	• Build intersectional connections between diverse groups
2.2 Uphold visible representation and inclusion in Council spaces and services	
What will we do?	• Ensure that community resources in Council facilities, reflect the diversity of the community, including LGBTIQA+ individuals and families
	• Promote the visibility of LGBTIQA+ families and individuals within public spaces and services
	• Foster an intersectional approach to integrating diverse identities in Council Advisory Groups and Committees. (First Peoples, business, multicultural, ageing, disability) to ensure representation from all sectors of the community
2.3 Foster an inclusive city	
What will we do?	• Demonstrate and promote inclusive employment and leadership practices across Yarra by modelling best practice and in dialogue with local organisations, businesses and community groups.
	• Promote awareness of Council's Procurement Policy which upholds fairness, inclusion and ethical conduct in achieving best value for the Yarra community.
	• Provide staff with the tools to reflect and represent our diverse community in visual communications
	• Raise awareness and provide information to staff on inclusive language practices
	• Promote inclusive workplace policies and supports for trans and gender diverse people across Yarra, drawing on practices that ensure respect, safety and access to appropriate wellbeing supports as people live and present in ways that differ from the sex assigned at birth.
2.4 Support housing security	
What will we do?	• Through ongoing initiatives (such as Yarra Zero), explore and identify innovative social and affordable housing opportunities for groups at risk of homelessness or housing insecurity, including the LGBTIQA+ community

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Priority 3: Safer Spaces

We promote visibility and maintain accessible LGBTIQA+ spaces.

3.1 Make events, activities and sports welcoming and accessible	
What will we do?	• Support inclusive access to sporting facilities and promote the growth of diverse sports that celebrate community participation and representation
	• Prioritise accessibility and inclusion at events to support the participation of LGBTIQA+ people with disabilities and older community members
3.2 Raise awareness and promote relevant services	
What will we do?	• Advocate to service providers and other relevant stakeholders to improve access to safe, inclusive and affirming health care. Particularly for trans and gender diverse communities
3.3 Adopt a zero-tolerance approach to discrimination, harassment and violence	
What will we do?	• Collaborate with local organisations to prevent discrimination and violence, ensuring safety and support for the Rainbow community
	• Investigate gaps and opportunities in intimate partner and family violence support services for LGBTIQA+ communities
	• Address anti-LGBTIQA+ discrimination with tailored campaigns aimed at education and shifting attitudes across the wider community
	• Acknowledge and address the rising prevalence of lateral violence within LGBTIQA+ communities, focusing on prevention and support
	• Help foster a community culture that rejects discrimination and promotes respect in the spaces, places and programs we share across the community.

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Priority 4: Health and Wellbeing

We focus on improving the health and wellbeing of LGBTIQA+ individuals by supporting all intersections within the community.

4.1 Encourage healthy and active lifestyles	
What will we do?	• Create more opportunities for community to connect in alcohol-free spaces
	• Promote current LGBTIQA+ Alcohol and Other Drugs (AOD) services and therapeutic groups
	• Investigate creative ways to increase opportunities and engagement in physical activities
4.2 Promote mental health and wellbeing	
What will we do?	• Investigate gaps and opportunities in the mental health sector for the queer community
	• Collaborate with queer, First Peoples, multicultural, and refugee groups to provide meaningful support on sexuality and gender issues
	• Support initiatives that encourage connections between different generations within the Rainbow community
	• Promote the wellbeing benefits of community participation, such as celebrating volunteerism in the queer community

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Glossary of Terms

LGBTIQA+
An umbrella acronym that stands for:

- **L**esbian – A woman who is emotionally, romantically or sexually attracted to other women.
- **G**ay – Often refers to a man who is emotionally, romantically or sexually attracted to other men, but can also refer to anyone attracted to the same gender.
- **B**isexual – A person attracted to more than one gender. Other terms used can be Pansexual or Multi Gender Attracted.
- **T**ransgender – Someone whose gender identity differs from the sex they were assigned at birth.
- **I**ntersex – A person born with physical sex characteristics that don't fit typical definitions of male or female.
- **Q**ueer – A reclaimed word used by many in the community to describe identities beyond heterosexual and cisgender. It's broad, fluid, and intentionally inclusive.
- **A**sexual (or Aromantic or Agender) – Often included to represent people who don't experience sexual attraction or have non-normative romantic/relationship identities or gender identities.
- **+** – A symbol to include all other diverse sexual orientations, gender identities, and intersex variations not specifically covered by the preceding letters.

Other Key Terms in Context

Rainbow Advisory Committee
The Council's Rainbow Advisory Committee advocates for making the City of Yarra a better place to live and work for people who identify as LGBTIQA+. The committee advises Council on how to communicate and engage with LGBTIQA+ people on issues that affect them.

Rainbow
Is an umbrella term used to represent the LGBTIQA+ community, also considering multicultural intersections and First Nations people. Rainbow Yarra's logo has many colours in its rainbow to reflect this.

QTIPOC
Queer, Trans, and/or Intersex People of Colour. It's a term used to describe individuals who identify as queer, trans, intersex, or are questioning their gender or sexuality, and identify as people of colour.

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QTBIPOC
Queer, Trans, Black, Indigenous People of Colour.

IDAHOBIT
International Day Against Homophobia, Biphobia, Intersex Discrimination and Transphobia – Celebrated on May 17 each year to raise awareness of the discrimination faced by LGBTIQA+ communities worldwide.

Trans Day of Remembrance (TDOR)
Observed annually on November 20 to honour the memory of transgender people whose lives were lost in acts of anti-transgender violence.

Midsumma Festival
Melbourne's premier queer arts and cultural festival, running each summer and showcasing diverse LGBTIQA+ communities through events, performances, exhibitions and Pride March.

Victoria's Pride
A Victorian Government-funded street festival celebration held in Yarra for LGBTIQA+ communities and allies 2022-2026

Rainbow families
Families where one or more caregivers identify as part of the LGBTIQA+ community. This term embraces diverse family structures, including same-gender parents, trans parents, and chosen family networks.

Rainbow youth
Young people who identify as LGBTIQA+ and may be navigating identity, community, connection, and support.

Rainbow Yarra visibility campaign
Refers to a Yarra initiative created to increase the presence and representation of LGBTIQA+ communities in public life, which includes a campaign featuring posters, social media content, videos, public art, and storytelling.

Lateral violence
A form of harm that can occur within marginalised communities – including LGBTIQA+ spaces — where internalised oppression, competition, or trauma is expressed as conflict, exclusion, or criticism directed at peers.

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