

LGBTIQA+ Action Plan Consultation

Phase one

Introduction

At the December 2020 Council meeting, Council endorsed the establishment of an LGBTIQA+ Advisory Committee and the development of a LGBTIQA+ Action Plan to better understand and respond to the experiences and priorities of the LGBTIQA+ community in Monash. The Advisory Committee was recruited in May 2021. The Action Plan will focus on increasing the visibility, social inclusion and health and wellbeing of the LGBTIQA+ community and ensure that our LGBTIQA+ community are fully connected, supported and feel safe in the community.

In developing this draft plan, council utilised a number of consultation methods to better understand and respond to the experiences and needs of the LGBTIQA+ community in Monash.

January 2022	February	March	April
Project planning		Public Community engagement	
May	June	July	August
Collating consultation findings, mapping priority areas/goals with support of advisory committee	Internal engagement	Internal approvals	Councillor presentation of draft plan (strategy)

The purpose of the engagements was to gather quantitative and qualitative data about:

1. Perceptions of the LGBTIQA+ experience in the City of Monash
2. The City of Monash's role in improving the health and wellbeing of the LGBTIQA+ community
3. The key priority areas for LGBTIQA+ inclusion.

This community consultation report is intended to be a summary of the findings from the consultation, which has informed the development of the draft LGBTIQA+ action plan, and will be used as a benchmark to help evaluate the plan.

Summary of Engagement

The following table outlines the stakeholder engagement activities that were completed.

Engagements Undertaken			
3	LGBTIQA+ advisory committee meetings	1	Community survey
2	Internal LGBTIQA+ working group meetings	3	Community focus groups
1	Employee knowledge and competency survey	1	Feedback Wall

15	Employee/organisation workshops to formulate actions	1	Shape Monash site
4	Expert Service provider interviews	1	Joint advisory committee focus group/workshop
Who was Engaged			
15	LGBTIQA+ advisory committee members	83	Community survey respondents
16	LGBTIQA+ working group members	11	Community focus groups participants
101	Staff survey respondents	20	Feedback Wall respondents
23	Teams across council provided input for actions	487	Visits to the Shape Monash page
4	External staff involved in service provider interviews	15	Advisory committee attendees to joint advisory committee

Engagement Results

Approach

In developing the draft LGBTIQA+ Action Plan, Council utilised a number of consultation methods to better understand and respond to the experiences and needs of the LGBTIQA+ community in Monash.

A survey was available on Shape Monash from 14 February to 1 May 2022. Participants were recruited via Shape subscribers, social media and email lists. A total of 487 visits to the page resulted in 83 responses for analysis.

The community was invited via key communication channels to attend targeted and open community focus groups. A total of three focus groups were held (online, in-person, youth-specific) with 11 attendees in total.

Officers provided the opportunity for Advisory Committees (Disability, Gender Equity, LGBTIQA+, Multicultural, Positive Ageing, Sustainability and Youth) to have their say through a joint consultation. A total of 15 advisory committee members attended the joint consultation, and all advisory committees had a minimum of one representative.

During the Pride Swim Night on 30 April 2022, an interactive feedback wall was made available for event attendees to provide informal feedback and contribute to the plan. A total of 20 people responded.

Officers met with LGBTIQA+ experts to have informal discussions and interviews around the additional needs of LGBTIQA+ people from different backgrounds, including Vincent Care (Homelessness), Switchboard QTPOC program (CALD), Deakin University (Disability) and Victorian Pride Lobby.

The LGBTIQA+ working group (internal) met in June to provide an opportunity for input from LGBTIQA+ employees, allies and business unit representatives in the development of the plan.

Further internal consultations across relevant teams also occurred to ensure the actions were aligned with current policies, frameworks and planning requirements.

In addition to the above, our LGBTIQA+ Advisory Committee has met three times and engaged via email between meetings to ensure a co-design approach at every stage of the action plan. Engagement with

the LGBTIQ+ Advisory Committee informed the basis for community consultation, and it will continue to advise in the development and implementation of the Action Plan following this report.

Survey Participants

Details describe demographics of the 83 survey respondents.

Respondents represented a diverse spectrum of ages, cultural backgrounds, abilities, sexual orientations and gender identities.

Connection with the LGBTIQ+ Community

Respondents mostly identified as LGBTIQ+ (72%) with the remainder being allies, friends or family, or service providers.

Connection with LGBTIQ+ community	Number	Percent
LGBTIQ+	60	72%
Allies	8	10%
Friends or family	11	13%
Service providers	4	5%

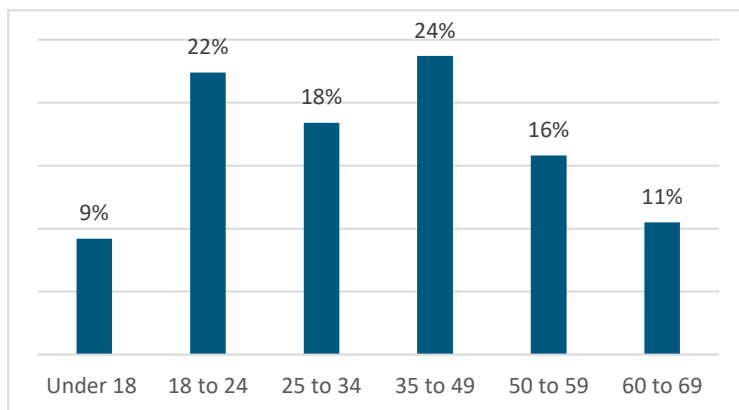
Connection to the City of Monash

The majority of respondents are residents of Monash, with a good representation from workers and students.

Connection to Monash	Number	Percent
Resident	53	64%
Worker	10	12%
Student	11	13%
Visitor	3	4%
Not stated	6	7%

Age of Respondents

Among the respondents who gave their age group, the spread was quite even among cohorts.



Gender Identity, Sexual Orientation, and Intersex Status

Gender Identity

Although participants were offered and selected a wide range of gender identities, for the purpose of analysis respondents were categorised into three broad gender categories. 10 respondents did not provide their gender. Results are shown in the table below.

	Number	Percent
Women	35	47%
Men	26	35%
Gender Diverse and Non-Binary	13	18%
Total	73	

Sexual Orientation

Participants were offered and selected a wide range of sexual orientations, with some respondents describing more than one sexual orientation – People can have multiple, intersecting identities, ie. Identities can be fluid and the ways in which they intersect varies depending upon the social and political context. Results are shown in the table below.

Lesbian	17	Asexual	4
Gay	16	Self-describe	8
Bisexual	20	Not stated	12
Heterosexual	17	Total	94

Born with a Variation of Sex Characteristics (also known as intersex)

	Number	Percent
Yes	3	4%
No	70	84%
Not stated	10	12%

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Descent

2% of respondents identified as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander. This is higher than the estimated population of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander people in Victoria (1%)

	Number	Percent
Yes	2	2%
No	72	88%
Not stated	9	10%

Country of Birth

The majority of participants were born in Australia or other English-speaking countries (78%) while 10% were born overseas in a non-English speaking country. A small proportion of residents (11%) speak a language other than English at home, with ten different languages represented in those results.

	Number	Percent
Australia and other English-speaking countries (Canada, New Zealand, UK, Ireland)	65	78%

Born overseas in a non-English speaking country (Germany, India, Indonesia, Kuwait, Malaysia, Vietnam)	8	10%
Not stated	10	12%

Disability or Long-Term Health Condition

Almost one in three (30%) participants reported living with a disability or long-term health condition.

	Number	Percent
Yes	25	30%
No	47	57%
Not stated	11	13%

Survey Results

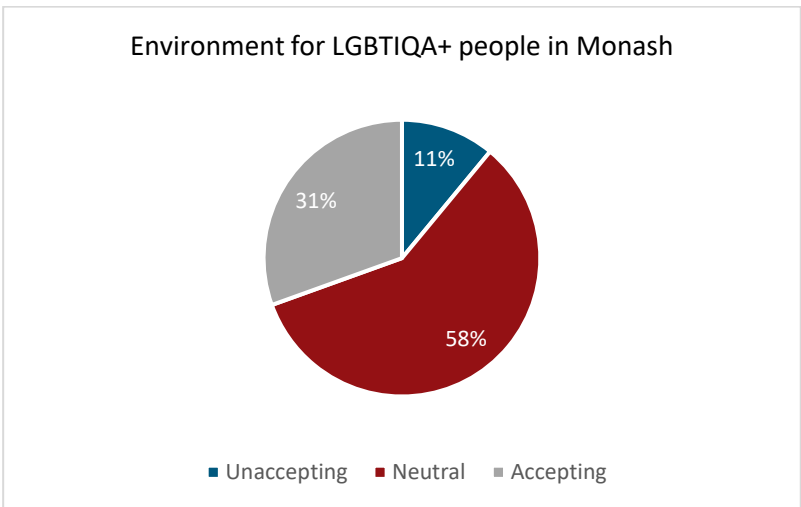
The purpose of the community questionnaire was to capture quantitative data about views and experiences regarding the LGBTIQ+ experience in Monash, as well as qualitative data on the community’s expectations around the Council role in improving the experience for the LGBTIQ+ community. This data will be used as benchmark for future evaluation.

The following is a summary of the quantitative community survey data. data collected from other consultation methods is shown below in the report.

Perceptions In Monash

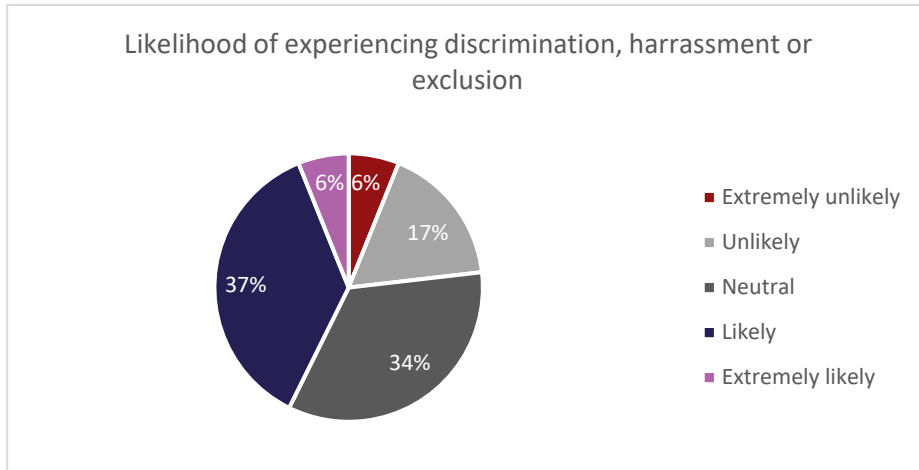
Environment for LGBTIQ+ People in Monash

The majority of respondents described the overall environment as neutral (58%) or accepting (31%). Results were similar for respondents who identify as LGBTIQ+ and those who don’t. (Accepting= 31% vs 30%, respectively).



Experiences of Discrimination, Harassment or Exclusion Based on LGBTIQ+ Identity

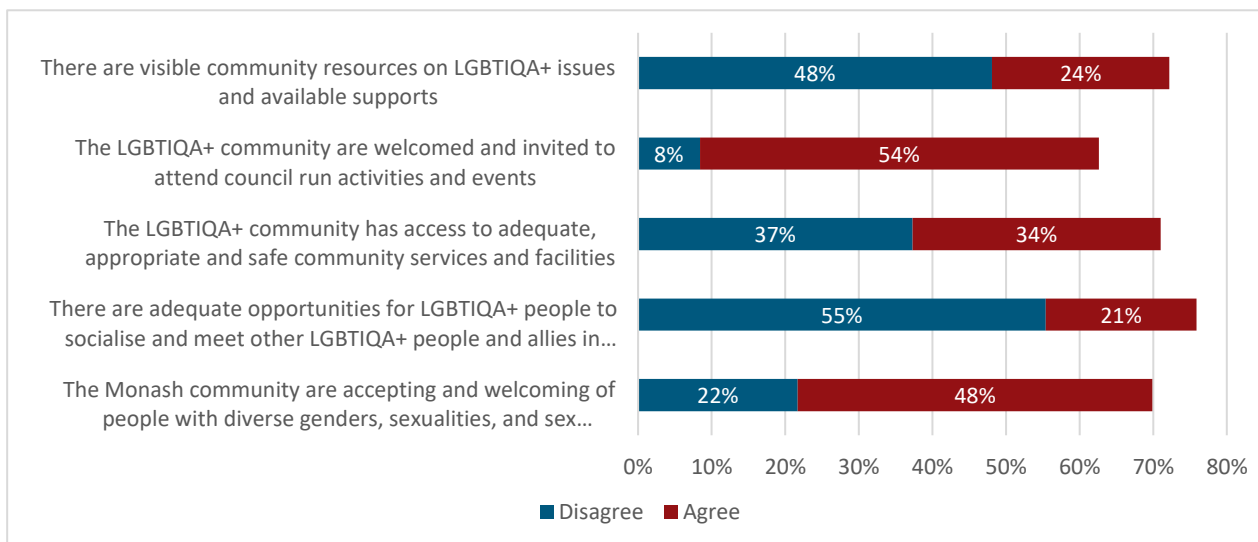
Almost half of respondents (43%) said that LGBTIQ+ people were likely (37%) or extremely likely (6%) to experience discrimination, harassment or exclusion in Monash, while 34% were neutral, and 23% said it was unlikely.



Experiences and Perceptions of the Local Community

Respondents were asked a series of statements about the local community. Over half of respondents (55%) disagreed that there were adequate opportunities for LGBTIQ+ people to socialise and meet others in the community and over 1 in 3 disagreed that the LGBTIQ+ community has access to adequate, appropriate and safe community services and facilities.

Total agreement (strongly agree and agree) compared to total disagreement (strongly disagree and disagree) are shown on the graph below:



Priority Areas

Respondents were asked to select their top priority initiatives under five themes to indicate which areas they think Monash Council should focus on to respond to the needs of the LGBTIQ+ community.

Top three priorities under each theme are shown below in order of priority as selected by respondents

<u>Welcoming and Accessible Services</u>	<i>Number</i>
Opportunities for LGBTIQ+ people to connect with each other	51
Updating amenities to be inclusive of all genders	51
Support opportunities to improve the physical and mental health of LGBTIQ+ people	42

<u>Visibility</u>	<i>Number</i>
Promote, support and host LGBTIQ+ activities, events and festivals	54
Raise the Pride flag outside the Monash Civic Centre permanently	47
Celebrate LGBTIQ+ days of significance	44

<u>Organisational Capacity</u>	<i>Number</i>
Regular consultation and engagement with LGBTIQ+ people	51
Permanent LGBTIQ+ Officer at City of Monash	46
Take a public stance on key issues for the LGBTIQ+ community	41

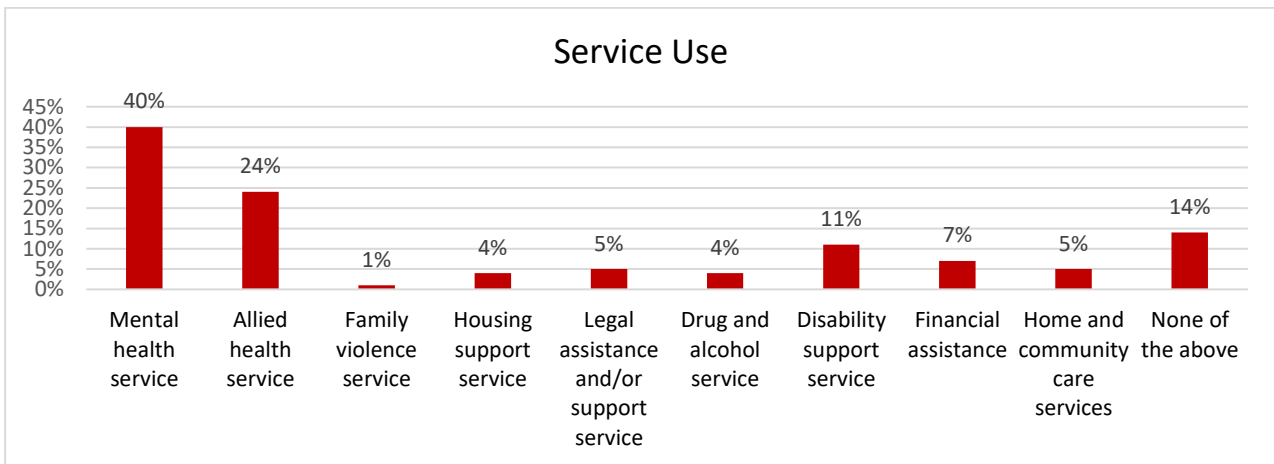
<u>Education and Training</u>	<i>Number</i>
Multilingual resources for the LGBTIQ+ community	53
Provide LGBTIQ+ awareness and inclusion training and workshops for businesses, services and community organisations in Monash	52
Publicly available educational resources to learn more about diverse sexuality, sex and gender	49

<u>Safety</u>	<i>Number</i>
Public all gender bathrooms	53
Partner with agencies to prevent and respond to family violence in LGBTIQ+ communities	47
Partner with agencies to provide accommodation options and housing support services for LGBTIQ+ people experiencing homelessness	43

Service Use

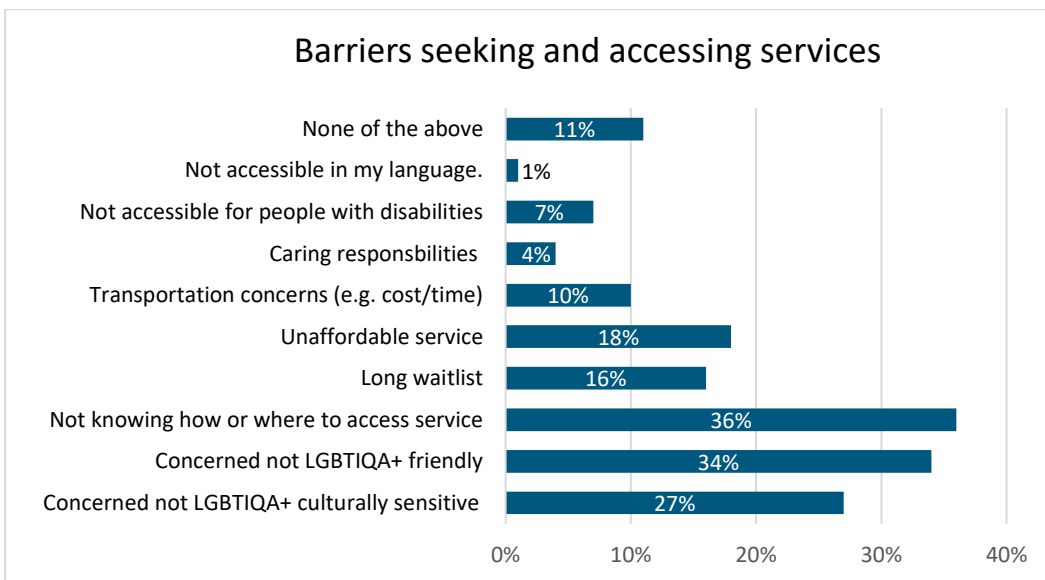
Types of Services Used

Majority of respondents had accessed or used a support service within the last 3 years, with mental health services ranking considerably higher than other support services.



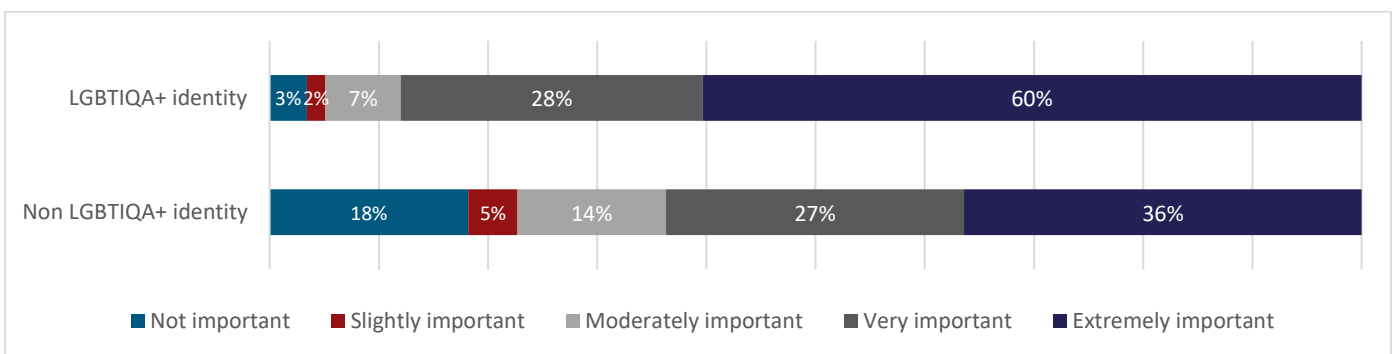
Barriers to Accessing Services

Cultural safety, not being LGBTIQ+ friendly, and a lack of awareness of where or how to access services, were seen as the highest barriers to accessing services.



LGBTIQ+ Inclusive Services

The importance of inclusivity was rated considerably higher by respondents who identify as LGBTIQ+ than those who do not.



Qualitative Feedback

The following qualitative feedback is informed by the discussions in the focus groups, the joint Advisory Committee workshop, at the LGBTIQ+ Advisory Group meetings and in the comments provided by the community online questionnaire and service provider interviews. The sentiment of the community is varied with many highlighting this consultation process as a good first step and have now expressed a desire for action from the City of Monash addressing LGBTIQ+ specific diversity and inclusion concerns.

When it comes to action, the respondents acknowledged that recognition, celebration and visibility are important; however, the community have also indicated that there are other areas of importance (e.g. knowledge and education, organisational capability) that they would like to see actioned to make Monash a safer place for LGBTIQ+ people.

A clear message from the feedback is that the community feel the City of Monash can demonstrate strong leadership to encourage the broader community to support their LGBTIQ+ peers.

Community Strengths and Assets

Survey and focus group participants were invited to identify current community strengths and assets that contribute to a supportive environment for LGBTIQ+ communities in Monash. The most commonly identified community strengths included:

- **Council Support:** council work and support and acknowledgement of the LGBTIQ+ community is recognised including our development of the LGBTIQ+ Action Plan, flying the rainbow flag, community awards and recruitment of a dedicated LGBTIQ+ worker.
- **Sport and Recreation:** accessible and inclusive sport and recreation activities including Active Pride Night, Proud 2 Play are considered a strength.
- **Inclusive Services:** providing services that are welcoming and inclusive of the LGBTIQ+ people (particularly libraries and Monash Youth Services) and our journey towards Rainbow Tick is seen as a strength.
- **Local Arts and Events:** the community feels our event programming is welcoming and inclusive of the LGBTIQ+ community, with projects done by Monash Gallery of Art was raised several times.

Respondent comments included:

"I'm starting to feel more valued as a queer resident of Monash after many years of feeling less visible"

"The recruitment of a LGBTIQ Officer was a move in the right direction"

"The City of Monash have been supportive of the LGBTIQ+ community through youth services.....and by considering in what ways this community needs better support and services"

"At last the council is talking about LGBTIQ+ and slowly is raising the level of awareness and acceptance across the board"

"I think this event (pride swim night) is a great way to start. Maybe more of these parties"

update all policies and procedures with inclusive and up to date language.... Utilise pronouns and names in email signatures...Consult with LGBTIQ+....Develop a separate policy to manage concerns and or complaints that regard gender and sexuality.

-Vision For the Future

Focus group participants were encouraged to explore the ideal Monash community for LGBTIQ+ people through the question "Imagine the ideal Monash community in 10 years' time, think about LGBTIQ+ people and their families who live, work, study and recreate here."

Participants identified key aspects of LGBTIQ+ experience as well as of the community in which LGBTIQ+ people and families live, work and study such as:

- LGBTIQ+ people have access to resources to be healthy and happy
- LGBTIQ+ people are safe, visible and celebrated
- Diverse and intersectional LGBTIQ+ identities are celebrated and supported
- LGBTIQ+ people are embedded, connected and included in activities and events
- Accessible, safe and inclusive services and facilities exist for all

Respondent comments included:

"Gender, ethnicity, disability etc no longer matter and everyone provided with tools they need to be healthy and thriving"

"Opportunities for people who identify as LGBTIQ+ and another identity to celebrate and be celebrated"

"LGBTIQ+ specific events that are inclusive of all intersections"

"Having a Physical space that LGBTIQ+ people can go to where they feel safe i.e. library"

"Having LGBTIQ+ specific and/or friendly services that are available and promoted to the community"

Current Gaps, Barriers and Limitations

Survey, focus group, and joint advisory committee participants were asked what they felt were the current gaps, barriers and limitations faced by the LGBTIQ+ community in Monash.

Commonly identified issues were grouped under the following themes:

- **Cultural Safety:** Discrimination and violence against LGBTIQ+ people persists and physical spaces and infrastructure often feel unsafe and/or unwelcoming.
- **Visibility, Recognition and Representation:** There is a lack of community and council-led visibility, recognition and representation. As well as a lack of opportunities for LGBTIQ+ people to celebrate, meet and connect.
- **Accessible and Inclusive Services:** respondents felt that information, networks, groups, services etc. are either hard to find or don't exist locally. They also felt there was a lack of LGBTIQ+ friendly support services in the municipality (e.g. Mental health, Family violence, Housing and Homeless support services).
- **Education and Awareness:** Respondents felt there was a lack of awareness and understanding of the LGBTIQ+ community and a need for education and awareness-raising activities.
- **Intersectionality:** Many participants recognised that the issues identified above are not experienced by LGBTIQ+ people equally, and that an intersectional lens is important for understanding the diversity of LGBTIQ+ experience.

Respondent comments included:

"I still don't feel as comfortable holding my partner's hand in public vs in some other inner city areas of Melbourne"

"We are just not very visible and I feel the majority of people are not aware of, or indeed think about LGBTIQ+ people as part of the community.....I feel there is a general lack of understanding about the LGBTIQ+ community"

"I'm in my late 30s and only just came out and it has been super hard trying to find support systems and community groups (in Monash) for people my age"

"You have to know who to talk to and already be connected to find anything".

"There is a lack of representation, often people do not outwardly show or talk about Queer identities....it feels so good to see yourself"

"LGBTIQ+ from different intersections have to choose which part of their identity to show/hide to access spaces and events"

"In all my time at Monash, I've not seen any LGBTIQ+ orientated support systems, family violence projects, elderly/aged care information specifically looking at LGBTIQ+ community"

Council Role and Opportunities for Action

Community engagement participants were asked to consider the range of local government roles and functions, and to highlight specific areas in which the Monash City Council might take future action through our LGBTIQ+ action plan.

Council's role and future opportunities for action identified by participants were grouped into the following themes:

- **Visibility and Recognition:** respondents suggested increased visibility and representation through signs, symbols and celebrations and events (e.g. posters, banners, Pride swim night). Also highlighted the opportunity to increase visibility via inclusive communication, advertising and promotion.
- **Accessible and Inclusive Community:** respondents felt council could form partnerships with local business, services and organisations to better support the LGBTIQ+ community. Provide accessible and inclusive council facilities, spaces infrastructure and services and events (e.g. achieving Rainbow Tick, having LGBTIQ+ specific events). Also felt there were opportunities to increase social cohesion through supporting, hosting or establishing community events, programs and groups
- **Organisational Capability:** respondents suggested Council ensure our commitment to LGBTIQ+ community is public and that we are resourced to lead by example including have policies and processes in place and safeguards for our LGBTIQ+ staff. Respondents also identified increasing community voice, recognition and representation as an action area.
- **Intersectionality and Social Cohesion:** many respondents recognised that the experiences of LGBTIQ+ people were varied and that an Intersectional and cross-cultural lens should be used when developing actions. It was also highlighted that where possible we should integrate and not segregate.
- **Knowledge and Awareness:** It was identified that there is a need for education, resources, training and support for services, allies and the broader community.

Respondents' comments included:

"Don't just show support during pride month or IDAHOBIT, also during the everyday"

"Spell it out, really clearly if a place is welcoming and safe- eg signs and posters on doors, pins and lanyards etc for individuals- banners and flags flown etc"

"Please raise the level of awareness and initiate regular social events for LGBTIQ+ people from all backgrounds (youth, seniors and of non-English speaking background)"

"It all comes down to greater community awareness..... Demystifying LGBTIQ relationships is the key to understanding"

"If not already updating all policies and procedures with inclusive and up to date inclusive language... don't say other as a gender option"

"Regular community events that will raise the level of awareness of LGBTQIA+ and also reduce the level of depression and discrimination experienced amongst the gay people of Monash"

"Help uplift LGBTQIA+ community.... LGBTQIA+ people will feel supported and able to reclaim their power"

"Identify gaps in who's voice is not being heard and take additional steps to ensure greater input from minority groups within the LGBTQIA+ community"

Intersectionality

We recognise that people's lives are multi-dimensional and complex and many people within LGBTQIA+ communities live with other forms of inequality or discrimination. Survey and joint advisory committee workshop participants were invited to identify the experiences of LGBTQIA+ people with overlapping and interconnecting identities.

While other community engagement activities did not specifically ask about intersectionality, it remained a clear and important theme across all engagements. Opportunities and suggestions for council to ensure intersectionality are grouped under the following themes:

- **Collaboration and Partnerships:** work collaboratively and form partnerships with services and groups supporting different intersections (i.e. CALD, Disability, Aboriginal etc.). As well as form partnerships with community leaders and build pathways between intersections especially LGBTQIA+ and CALD.
- **Fostering Inclusion and Respect:** foster culturally appropriate LGBTQIA+ inclusion strategies and initiatives across all intersections, i.e. accessible events for LGBTQIA+ people living with a disability to safely participate. Embed LGBTQIA+ into existing programs, activities and events for other intersections (e.g. Harmony Day, NAIDOC week). And facilitate and encourage opportunities to connect *with people from across intersections i.e. knitting group for all.*
- **Maintain Intersectional Lens:** provide tailored support services, training and educational resources, ensure services and facilities are welcoming and accessible for all intersections (i.e. building accessibility, language). Ensure an Intersectional approach to all communication materials e.g. images of a diverse range of people.

Respondents' comments included :

"Ensure that people of diverse backgrounds and circumstances are included in public-facing roles or on promotional materials....not every Queer person looks queer"

"Understanding that lesbian and bisexual women and women of colour face specific challenges when homophobia and misogyny (and racism) intersect"

“While things have improved for white, cis, not-disabled gay people, it's still pretty terrible all round for Black and brown, disabled gender diverse folks”

“I just feel that I am invisible in my community. Both as a women in her 50's as a lesbian...as a contributor to our diverse community”

“Lack of youth friendly LGBTIQ+ spaces in Monash, difficult to meet other LGBTIQ+ young peoplemost opportunities to meet other LGBTIQ+ people involve drinking and bars”

“Good idea to have reps from Monash community who can go out and talk to/ reach out to the multicultural community and build rapport about LGBTIQ+ identities”

Next Steps:

The findings of this report have been added into the draft LGBTIQ+ Action Plan. The next steps are to get endorsement from Council of the draft to send out for final consultation from our LGBTIQ+ Advisory Committee, feedback from Monash's other Advisory Committees, and with the community. Final feedback will be collated and incorporated and drafted for final endorsement in November 2022.