

## 6.2 LGBTIQ COMMUNITY NEEDS ASSESSMENT

Submitting Councillor: Cr Fergeus

### **MOTION**

*That Council consults with the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex and Queer/Questioning (LGBTIQ) community to determine the priorities, programs and/or activities that Council could progress, with findings to be presented in a report of the consultation for consideration at the June 2018 Council meeting.*

### **INTRODUCTION**

Council will consult with the Monash LGBTIQ community to inform the priorities, programs and/or activities that Council which could progress. The findings of the consultation will be presented to the June 2018 Council meeting.

### **BACKGROUND**

*A Healthy and Resilient Monash: Integrated Plan 2017-2021* outlines that Council celebrates its rich cultural, linguistic, religious, age, gender and sexual diversity and works to support lifetime wellbeing, community harmony and opportunities for everyone to be able to participate fully in community life. The specific inclusion and recognition of our LGBTIQ community is vital for their improved resilience, increased sense of security, better mental health outcomes, greater social cohesion and more accessible health care.

There is currently no data on the number of residents who identify as LGBTIQ in the Monash community. The latest Census data does not represent the total LGBTIQ community due to the Census data not identifying LGBTIQ persons who are not in a relationship or the whole spectrum of LGBTIQ. In addition, single parent families, lone person households and group households are not considered.

Council has limited knowledge and evidence on the current needs and priorities for our broader Monash LGBTIQ community. It is important to undertake a needs assessment to determine what response Council can implement to promote LGBTI recognition and inclusion including (but not limited to) internal and external policies, services and other initiatives.

Whilst Council currently provides a range of programs and activities to ensure we meet the needs of our LGBTIQ community, through Monash Youth Services (MYS), Monash Home and Community Services (HACC) and Children and Family services, whole-of-Council initiatives have not been implemented due to the limited engagement and understanding the needs of the community.

## **DISCUSSION**

The Local Government Act identifies that councils play a critical role in encouraging and supporting active participation in civic life and ensuring that their delivery of services is both accessible and equitable. Councils are also required to act consistently within the framework of the Victorian Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities and are bound by statutes relating to equal opportunity. Local governments are required to demonstrate diversity and inclusiveness across their culture and practice, both internally with staff and externally with community members who identify as LGBTIQ.

The aim of the needs assessment is to provide Council with the evidence and information on inclusion, access and equity issues facing the LGBTIQ communities to determine Council's role in supporting our LGBTIQ community. Consultation will also include contacting other Councils to gather information regarding their internal and external policies, services and other initiatives which promote LGBTIQ recognition and inclusion.

The report of consultation findings will consist of evidence to address the barriers faced by Monash's LGBTIQ community and seek to create more opportunities for participation and involvement. Council will use this information to identify options for improving the recognition, inclusion and community understanding of the Monash LGBTIQ community, as well as provide how Council may become a more inclusive working environment for our LGBTIQ staff members. The report will benefit the whole community and therefore requires the participation of everyone in the community if it is to be successful.

## **SOCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

Approximately 10% of the population identify as LGBTIQ<sup>1</sup>. In Monash this could equate to over 19,000 of our residents. Diversity in sexuality, gender identity and sex identity is something that should be acknowledged and embraced, but unfortunately those identifying as LGBTIQ too often experience discrimination and exclusion, whether or not they choose to disclose their sexuality/identity.

Research shows that homophobic discrimination and heterosexism (the favouring of opposite-sex sexuality and relationships) has resulted in:

- A large number of LGBTI people hiding their sexuality or gender identity when accessing services, at social and community events and at work, due to frequently experiencing discrimination<sup>2</sup>;
- LGBTIQ people experiencing higher rates of alcohol, tobacco and other drug use, homelessness, experience of violence, disengagement from schooling and poor physical health outcomes<sup>3</sup>;

---

<sup>1</sup> Australian Human Rights Commission (2014), Face the Facts: Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex People 2014, Australian Human Rights Commission, Sydney, retrieved 17 January 2018, <https://www.humanrights.gov.au/face-facts-lesbian-gay-bisexual-trans-andintersex-people>

<sup>2</sup> Australian Research Centre in Sex, Health & Society, La Trobe University (2012), Private Lives 2: The second national survey of the health and wellbeing of GLBT Australians, La Trobe University, Melbourne, retrieved 17 January 2018, <http://www.glhv.org.au/files/PrivateLives2Report.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> National LGBTI Health Alliance (2016), The Statistics at a Glance: The Mental Health of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Intersex People in Australia, National LGBTI Health Alliance, Sydney, retrieved 17 January 2018, <http://www.lgbtihealth.org.au/statistics>

- Over 60 per cent of LGBTIQ young people experience verbal homophobic abuse and 18 per cent experience physical homophobic abuse<sup>4</sup>;
- The mental health of LGBTIQ people is among the poorest in Australia<sup>5</sup>; and
- LGBTIQ people having the highest rates of suicidality of any population in Australia. Same-sex attracted Australians have up to 14x higher rates of suicide attempts than their heterosexual peers and suicide rates are 6 times higher for same-sex attracted young people<sup>6</sup>.

The specific inclusion and recognition of our LGBTIQ community is vital for their improved resilience, increased sense of security, better mental health outcomes, greater social cohesion and more accessible health care.

### **CONSULTATION**

I propose that Council undertake a number of consultation methods to inform priorities and direction. These consist of:

- **Development of a Project Reference Group:** An internal Project Reference Group will be established for the duration of the project comprising of community members, Council officers and relevant stakeholders;
- **Information exchange with other Councils:** Monash Council will liaise with other Councils and map the current work they are undertaking for the LGBTIQ community;
- **Literature Review:** A literature review will be undertaken to identify the most-up-to date statistical information on the demographic profile of the Monash LGBTIQ population and identify the best-practice models to addressing key priorities;
- **Media and Communications:** Council will widely promote the community consultation opportunities through the Monash Bulletin, Leader Newspaper, Monash Council 'Have Your Say' webpage, Council facilities and correspondence to all Council-funded community groups;
- **Community Consultation:** Council will invite all members of the Monash community to participate in the community consultation process which will comprise of an Online Survey and three community consultations;
- **Staff Consultation:** In response to the community consultation findings, meetings will be held with Council staff directorates to provide information about service-specific and program needs identified by the Monash LGBTIQ community in order to tailor and strengthen Council's established engagement with the Monash LGBTIQ community; and
- **Report with recommendations:** The report will provide the consultation findings and key recommendations for Council to prioritise and implement.

---

<sup>4</sup> Australian Research Centre in Sex, Health and Society, La Trobe University (2010), Writing Themselves in 3: The third national study on the sexual health and wellbeing of same sex attracted and gender questioning young people, La Trobe University, Melbourne, retrieved 17 January 2018, <http://www.latrobe.edu.au/arcshs/downloads/arcshs-research-publications/WTi3.pdf>

<sup>5</sup> National LGBTI Health Alliance (2014), Going upstream A framework for promoting the mental health of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) people, National LGBTI Health Alliance, Sydney, <https://www.beyondblue.org.au/docs/defaultsource/default-document-library/bw0257-going-upstream-online-o-lgbti-mental-health-promotion-framework.pdf?sfvrsn=2>

<sup>6</sup> Australian Research Centre in Sex, Health and Society, La Trobe University (2010), Writing Themselves in 3: The third national study on the sexual health and wellbeing of same sex attracted and gender questioning young people, La Trobe University, Melbourne, retrieved 13 January 2017, <http://www.latrobe.edu.au/arcshs/downloads/arcshs-research-publications/WTi3.pdf>

***FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS***

Any costs associated through undertaking consultation with the LGBTIQ community will be funded through the existing operational budget. It is not intended that any additional Council funding will be directed towards these activities as a result of this motion.

***CONCLUSION***

Monash is a diverse community, consisting of people from many different cultures, beliefs, abilities and identities. This diversity enriches and improves the Monash community. Monash Council has a commitment to its diverse communities to improve wellbeing and participation for all members of our community. It is important for Council to undertake consultation with the LGBTIQ to continue to strengthen Monash as a healthy, respectful and resilient community.