

Briefing paper

prepared for Knox City Council

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Summary of relevant material gathered through a brief desktop review for the Knox LGBTIQ+ Needs Analysis project.

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I acknowledge the traditional custodians of the land on which I work and live, and pay respect to Elders past and present. I acknowledge the sorrow of the Stolen Generations and the continuing resilience, pride and strength of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community.

1. Introduction

Knox City Council recognises it has an important role to play in supporting and addressing social equity issues affecting marginalised and/or at-risk communities.

The Knox LGBTIQ+ Needs Analysis project aims to better understand the lived experience of Knox's LGBTIQ+ community, and to explore opportunities for Council to positively influence health and wellbeing outcomes locally and regionally.

Through an analysis of data primarily gathered through consultation with key stakeholders, the project aims to gain a preliminary understanding of the health and wellbeing needs, as well as strengths, assets and resources of LGBTIQ+ people who live, work and recreate in Knox.

Findings and insights will be used to inform future engagement activities and work with the LGBTIQ+ community to influence Council policy, strategy and practice.

This paper provides a preliminary scan of available community data and the service landscape.

It provides a brief background to the project including:

- its purpose, objectives and links to relevant Knox policies and Victorian laws;
- a high-level overview of the health and wellbeing status of the Knox community and the LGBTIQ+ community residing and working within it (to the extent data allows); and
- an overview of available services targeting LGBTIQ+ communities in the municipality.

The scan been conducted through a rapid desktop review. It is not a comprehensive review of the LGBTIQ+ community in Knox and its needs and aspirations, or of the entire service landscape available to support the community.

The paper is intended to support consultations planned for the Knox LGBTIQ+ Needs Analysis project.

Further comment about key missing information is welcome through the consultation process.

2. Project background and objectives¹

Over the past three years, Knox City Council has sought to gain insight into the social issues impacting local LGBTIQ+ communities. A range of activities including desktop research, sector networking and social support programs to the community have revealed:

- A lack of LGBTIQ+ specific services in the Eastern Metropolitan Region (EMR);
- Community resistance to Council's role in LGBTIQ+ advocacy and support; and
- Lack of knowledge and contact with LGBTIQ+ people 25 years and older.

Through desktop research, community consultations, focus groups and a survey with community members and local service providers, the Knox LGBTIQ+ Needs Analysis project aims to better understand the lived experience of LGBTIQ+ people who live, work and recreate in Knox including their health and wellbeing needs, strengths and assets.

Project objectives include to:

- Better understand the needs, strengths and assets of the LGBTIQ+ community in Knox;
- Identify opportunities for interventions (e.g. social support groups, community engagement, advocacy initiatives) that address health and wellbeing inequalities specific to the local LGBTIQ+ community; and
- Share learnings and insights across the organisation and with other Councils in the EMR.

It is expected that short-term outcomes from the project will include:

- Access to LGBTIQ+ demographic data in Knox and/or the EMR;
- Better understanding of the health and wellbeing needs of Knox's LGBTIQ+ community;
- Awareness of issues impacting social cohesion and health equality for Knox's LGBTIQ+ community;
- Improved understanding of vulnerable groups within the local LGBTIQ+ community; and
- Awareness of LGBTIQ+ specific and/or affirmative services in Knox.

¹ Knox City Council (2020). *LGBTIQ+ needs analysis project: Consultant project brief*.

A range of medium and longer-term outcomes are also supported by the project, including

- Improved access to services for Knox's LGBTIQ+ community;
- Strengthened relationship between Knox Council and LGBTIQ+ people 25 years to 64 years and 65 years +;
- Community settings that are LGBTIQ+ inclusive and affirmative;
- Municipal strategy and policy better informed by local data;
- Reduction in gender and sexuality-based discrimination in Knox; and
- Improvement in health and wellbeing outcomes for the local LGBTIQ+ communities.

The project will deliver a needs analysis report detailing findings from the community consultations and desktop research and provide recommendations for future action.

3. Links to legal requirements and Council policy

The LGBTIQ+ Needs Analysis project is an important commitment by Knox Council that will help it meet its legal requirements as well as deliver on a number of its key strategies to promote community health, wellbeing and inclusion.

A number of Victorian and federal laws are relevant to local councils when thinking about the needs of their LGBTIQ+ communities. These are detailed in a [recent publication](#) by the Victorian Local Governance Association², but in summary they include:

- **Human rights laws:** According to the *Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006*, local councils must act compatibly with human rights including by considering human rights when making decisions, and making, interpreting and applying laws;
- **Equal opportunity laws:** Councils have a duty to prevent discrimination on the basis of sex, marital and relationship status, sexual orientation or preference, gender identity and intersex status within various laws including the *Victorian Equal Opportunity Act 2010*, the *Fair Work Act 2009* and the *Sex Discrimination Act 1984*;
- **Local government laws:** The *Local Government Act 1989* is the main law outlining the role and function of local councils in Victoria. The Act currently being reviewed to strengthen community voice in local planning processes, and to strengthen councils' requirements to consider the diverse needs of all parts of their communities;
- **Public health laws:** The *Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008* aims to deliver high standards of public health and wellbeing by preventing disease, promoting healthy conditions and addressing health inequalities by targeting efforts according to need; and
- **Gender equality laws:** The *Gender Equality Act 2020* is a new law that will require local councils to develop and report on gender equality plans that promote gender equality for people of all genders in the community.

As well as supporting Council to meet its legal obligations to LGBTIQ+ communities, the project supports the delivery of key Knox Council plans and strategies. These include for example:

<p><u>Community and Council Plan 2017-2021</u></p>	<p>Goal 6. We are healthy, happy and well: Strategy 6.2 Support the community to enable positive physical and mental health</p> <p>Goal 7. We are inclusive, feel a sense of belonging and value our identity: Strategy 7.3 Strengthen community connections</p> <p>Goal 8. We have confidence in decision making: Strategy 8.2 Enable the community to participate in a wide range of engagement activities</p>
<p><u>Community Access and Equity Implementation Plan 2017 – 2022</u></p>	<p>Key issue: Lack of culturally appropriate services and limited knowledge and understanding of cultural expectations (including for LGBTIQ communities)</p>

² VLGA (2020). *Rainbow resource for Victorian councils: Supporting lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex and queer diversity and inclusion in local government* (Accessed 12/8/20)

	<p><i>Commitment:</i> Making Knox a safe and welcoming place to the LGBTIQ community and that services are accessible and appropriate to the needs of our LGBTIQ community.</p> <p><i>Focus Area 2. Leadership and advocacy:</i> Action 2.12 Conduct further research to identify activities of Council's role in supporting and advocating for Knox's LGBTIQ communities and families throughout the life stages and inform the ongoing Community Access and Equity Implementation Plan.</p>
<p><u>Knox Key Life Stages Plan 2017-2021 and Key Life Stages Plan Action Table</u></p>	<p><i>Focus areas:</i> LGBTIQ+ a key life stage influencing factor across all life stages – childhood/early years, youth, older people</p> <p><i>Goal 6. We are healthy, happy and well:</i> Continue to educate and advocate on gender and sexuality issues in Knox through proactive initiatives.</p>

4. About the Knox community^{3 4}

Information in this section is intended to provide a very high-level overview of key characteristics of the Knox community. It draws from two primary sources – online id.community data profiles and the [State of Knox report](#).

The State of Knox report is developed by Council every few years through extensive analysis of data drawn from a broad range of sources. The last report (2nd ed.) was produced in 2016 and a third edition is currently in production.

The 2016 report provides a detailed demographic overview of the Knox community and includes further data across a range of health and wellbeing, safety, education and employment, and social inclusion and participation measures.

In 2019, the estimated resident population of Knox was 164,538 people.

Overall the population is slightly older than for Greater Melbourne (39 years of age cf. 36). It is comprised of higher rates of couples with children (39% cf. 33%), older couples without children (10% cf. 8%) and a slightly lower rate of lone person households (20% cf. 22%). The Knox community is ageing and the proportion of households comprised of couples with children is decreasing. This means there are more single person households and couple households without children.

Knox households are less likely to be renting and more likely to own their own homes. Rent prices are about the same as for Melbourne, and mortgages are slightly lower. Affordability is still an issue for many people in Knox.

Residents are slightly less likely to have been born overseas than other Melbournians (30% cf. 34%) or to speak a language other than English at home (25% cf. 32%), but these numbers are growing as a proportion of the overall population.

The top five most commonly spoken languages other than English (LOTE) in 2016 were Mandarin, Cantonese, Sinhalese, and Italian / Greek in roughly equal numbers. The top three LOTEs comprise a higher proportion of the Knox community than in Melbourne more broadly, and the number of Cantonese speaking residents in particular grew very strongly between 2011 and 2016.

Median weekly incomes are slightly higher for Knox residents than for those of Greater Melbourne (\$1558 cf. \$1539). Knox residents were about as likely to currently attend university as others in Melbourne, though slightly less likely to hold a university qualification overall, and more likely to hold a trade qualification.

Unemployment rates in 2016 were more than a percentage point lower than for other Melbournians (5.6%), with residents slightly more likely to be in the labour force (64% cf. 62%).

Knox was ranked 13th among Victorian local government areas on the SEIFA index of disadvantage which represents a lower level of disadvantage than for Great Melbourne overall, but there are pockets relatively less advantaged across the municipality. These include the suburbs of Bayswater and Boronia, and the wards of Baird, Dinsdale and Chandler.

³ idcommunity (2020). [City of Knox community profiles](#). (Accessed 12/8/20)

⁴ Knox City Council (2016). [State of Knox report](#). Second edition

Residents of Bayswater and Boronia were also most likely of all Knox residents to be receiving the JobKeeper subsidy in June 2020 (almost 10% each compared with 7.5% for Knox overall). JobKeeper rates may be a proxy for COVID-related financial and mental health stressors.

There are more Knox residents with a major disability than in other parts of Melbourne, and along with declining literacy and education levels, there is increasing demand for services and infrastructure.

The State of Knox report also documented Knox community aspirations, strengths, and current and emerging challenges.

Key aspirations in the 2016 report included healthy, connected communities; a prosperous, advancing economy; a vibrant and sustainable built and natural environment; culturally rich and active communities; and democratic and engaged communities.

Some of Knox's key community strengths included:

- Adults, children, and young people in Knox generally experience positive health and wellbeing;
- Residents have positive perceptions of access to facilities and services in Knox;
- Perceptions of safety on the streets during the day and at home in Knox are higher than the metropolitan average;
- Community connectedness remains an ongoing strength;
- Volunteering has been strong in Knox for many years and the data shows that it is still well above the metropolitan average; and
- Knox residents are generally satisfied with consultation and engagement processes.

Among its current and emerging challenges were:

- Health and wellbeing challenges related to type 2 diabetes, increasing registered mental health clients, use of mental health services and alcohol and drug-related hospital admissions for young people; high rates of mental-health related hospital admissions, eating disorders and reported bullying among young people compared to other parts of Melbourne
- High rates of older residents living on 'low' or 'very low' incomes;
- Low perceptions of safety on the streets at night compared to the Melbourne average;
- Crime rates growing faster than the Melbourne average (though still low overall);
- The highest rates of family violence in the outer east for over 20 years;
- Housing availability matched to need, rental affordability and access to social housing are all challenges;
- Opportunities to improve attitudes to diversity with Knox residents appearing less accepting of cultural diversity and multiculturalism than the Melbourne average; and
- An erosion over several years of participation in community events from above to below the metropolitan average.

A number of these strengths and challenges are likely to have specific impacts for LGBTIQ+ people in Knox.

5. About the Knox LGBTIQ community

Very little is known about the demographic makeup of LGBTIQ+ people, families and communities in Knox.

LGBTIQ+ people, families and communities living in Knox remain relatively hidden within mainstream community settings. This is common in outer metropolitan, rural and regional areas where research has shown that LGBTIQ+ people living more than 10km from the city experience higher levels of discrimination, social isolation and street-based harassment.⁵

This lack of visibility may also be exacerbated by the perceptions of the Knox community as being less accepting of difference than other areas of Melbourne.

⁵ James Morandini (et al), 'Minority Stress and Community Connectedness among Gay, Lesbian and Bisexual Australians: A Comparison of Rural and Metropolitan Localities' (2015) 39(3) Australian and New Zealand Journal of Public Health 260.

As outlined in the previous section, there are opportunities to strengthen attitudes to cultural diversity and multiculturalism, and community resistance to Council's role in LGBTIQ+ advocacy and support has also been highlighted as one of the key drivers for the current project.

As evidence through the marriage equality, safe schools and religious freedoms debates of recent times, vocal community resistance of this kind has often come from small subsections of the community with deeply-held and conservative religious beliefs. It is notable that while still very small in number, Knox residents practice more conservative Christian traditions at up to twice the rate as in Greater Melbourne.⁶

Notwithstanding, Knox residents participated in the 2017 Australian marriage law postal survey at much the same rate as other Victorians and only showed slightly less support for the change (62% cf. 64.9%). Knox residents participated and voted for change at higher rates than Australians overall.⁷

The greatest single challenge for understanding the makeup and experience of LGBTIQ+ communities in Knox is the lack of available and reliable population data for Victoria or nationally.

Only very limited data is captured in the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) national census, and until recently, disaggregated data was also not available through other key datasets such as the Victorian Population Health Survey. At an organisational level, funded programs are also not required (and do not) collect service utilization and outcome data inclusive of LGBTIQ+ identities.

Even the very detailed State of Knox report outlined above does not contain a single reference in either the 2016 edition or preliminary 2020 data related to LGBTIQ+ people and families.

This global lack of data means it is very difficult to determine a breakdown with any accuracy, of the demographic features of LGBTIQ+ communities in Knox related to age, ethnicity, family structure, socioeconomic status and health and wellbeing.

Generally, it is accepted that people of diverse sexual orientations, sex and gender identity account for around 11% of the population.⁸ This means that up to 18,000 or more LGBTIQ+ people may be residing in Knox.

The ABS census has collected data about same-sex couples since 1996. Numbers have more than quadrupled in the two decades since, with same-sex couples accounting for 1.0% of all Victorian couples in 2016. Fifteen percent of same-sex couples reported having children including one in four female couples.⁹

These numbers are conservative and highly inaccurate because they rely on self-reporting and only count couples that live together, and data broken down by local government area is not available.

Even so, this means that in 2016 it is likely there were *at least* 350 same-sex couples residing in Knox, including *at least* 50 same-sex parented families with children.

Other 2016 census data of interest but relatively little applicability to Knox included that partners in same-sex relationships were far more likely to have no religion, have a university degree, be employed, and have higher personal incomes compared to partners in opposite sex relationships.

These statistics are also problematic because they don't account for variations *within* LGBTIQ+ communities, and relying on self-reporting as they do, are likely to skew results towards those with greater access to personal resources and agency, and confidence to disclose their personal circumstances.

The 2016 census also attempted for the first time to gather data on sex and gender diversity. This was a pilot which relied on users knowing about, and engaging with, a separate mechanism to record their sex as anything other than 'male' or 'female'. The results reveal little about the number and demographic profile of sex and gender diverse people nationally, let alone at a local government level.¹⁰

The best available data is captured through the Victorian Population Health Survey, which in 2017 captured information about sexual orientation and gender identity for the first time. It found that Knox

⁶ idcommunity (2020). *City of Knox community profiles*. (Accessed 12/8/20)

⁷ ABS (2018). *Australian Marriage Law Postal Survey, 2017: Results for Victoria*. (Accessed 13/08/20)

⁸ Department of Health (2012). *National LGBTI Ageing and Aged Care Strategy*; State of Victoria (2019). *Royal Commission into Victoria's Mental Health System: Interim Report*. (Accessed 13/08/20)

⁹ ABS (2018). *Same sex couples in Australia, 2016*. (Accessed 13/08/20)

¹⁰ ABS (2018). *Sex and gender diversity in the 2016 census*. (Accessed 13/08/20)

has an estimated LGBTIQ+ population of 6.1%, with a further estimate range of between 3.7-9.8% of the population.¹¹ Other key findings with respect to health and wellbeing are included in the next section.

A desktop search for any existing needs analyses or data relating to Knox LGBTIQ+ people, families and communities elicited no results.

6. LGBTIQ community needs and expectations

The health and wellbeing experiences and needs of LGBTIQ+ people, families and communities have been well documented through many years of research.

Overall, LGBTIQ+ people have poorer health and wellbeing experiences and outcomes than others in the community. Disparities in health and wellbeing outcomes for LGBTIQ+ people compared to the broader community include, for example:

- higher than average rates of violence, harassment and discrimination;
- poorer mental health such as anxiety, depression, psychological distress, self-harm and risk of suicide;
- higher rates of isolation and rejection, reduced social participation and engagement;
- poorer life outcomes in terms of drug and alcohol use, homelessness, and early school leaving; and
- avoidance or delay in help seeking behaviours because of real or feared prejudice within service settings.¹²

The Victorian Population Health Survey referenced above found that self-identified LGBTIQ+ people were **more likely** to have been born in Australia or be Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, to have never married, to have a total annual household income lower than \$40,000, be unable to raise \$2,000 within two days in an emergency, and to have experience food insecurity in the previous year. The same cohort were **less likely** to have private health insurance or have a total annual household income over \$100,000.¹³

Across social capital measures, LGBTIQ+ adults were **more likely** to never or not often feel valued by society, but were also more likely to be members of community groups, feel multiculturalism made life in their area better, and be in contact with 1-4 people in the previous day.

They were **less likely** to get help from family or neighbours when needed, get a relative or friend to care for them or their children in an emergency, be members of a sports group, or to have lived for 10 years or more in their current neighbourhood.

Not all LGBTIQ people experience these issues equally, with some people being more vulnerable than others to poorer health and wellbeing experiences and outcomes.

Factors influencing LGBTIQ health and wellbeing may include age (younger and older people), gender, cultural and religious background, living circumstance (city/rural/ regional, homelessness), existence of a disability or coexisting mental health issue, and the presence or absence of supportive and accepting relationships.¹⁴

A detailed overview of the issues and experiences for diverse LGBTIQ+ people and families is contained in a recent [discussion paper](#) and [infographics](#) which were developed to support Victoria's first whole-of-government LGBTIQ Strategy.^{15 16}

LGBTIQ+ communities and their supporters in Victoria identify improvements to mental health, inclusion in education settings, regional and rural inclusion, inclusion in health services, and reduced discrimination in the workplace and public settings as important community priorities.

¹¹ Victorian Agency for Health Information (VAHI). (2020). *The health and wellbeing of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex and queer population in Victoria: Findings from the Victorian population health survey 2017*. (Accessed 4/10/20)

¹² VLGA (2020). *Rainbow resource for Victorian councils: Supporting lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex and queer diversity and inclusion in local government* (Accessed 12/8/20)

¹³ Victorian Agency for Health Information (VAHI). (2020). *The health and wellbeing of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex and queer population in Victoria: Findings from the Victorian population health survey 2017*. (Accessed 4/10/20)

¹⁴ National LGBTI Health Alliance (2020). *Snapshot of mental health and suicide prevention statistics for LGBTI people*. (Accessed 13/08/20)

¹⁵ Department of Premier and Cabinet (2020). *Discussion paper for the Victorian LGBTIQ Strategy*. (Accessed 13/08/20)

¹⁶ Department of Premier and Cabinet (2020). *Infographics for the Victorian LGBTIQ strategy*. (Accessed 13/08/20)

Community members consistently highlight the need for:

- Stronger protection of rights and access to justice;
- Higher quality and more inclusive services;
- Stronger representation and voice, including through an intersectional lens;
- Stronger mainstream community visibility and inclusion;
- Greater connections within LGBTIQ+ communities;
- Improved data, research and evidence to underpin planning and programs;
- Greater accountability for delivering improved health, wellbeing and equality outcomes.

These themes also align with perspectives specifically in relation to the role of local councils.

The VLGA resource referred to in section 3 cites a community survey undertaken by the VLGA and Victorian Gay and Lesbian Rights Lobby at Midsumma in 2016. The survey outlines a range of expectations that LGBTIQ+ communities have of local councils, including that they advocate for and publicly support LGBTIQ+ residents, provide inclusive health and community services, and consult community members on the issues that affect them.¹⁷

These strategies are important because they have a direct relationship to the health and wellbeing of LGBTIQ+ people and families living in local communities.

VicHealth for example has found that LGBTIQ+ Victorians who feel connected to their community report higher resilience, subjective wellbeing and life satisfaction, but that major disparities remain – only 6 in 10 regional LGB Victorians agree that ‘people around here can be trusted’ compared to 8 in 10 regional heterosexual Victorians; only two thirds of LGBTIQ+ Victorians agree ‘people around here are willing to help their neighbours’ compared to three quarters of non-LGBTIQ+ Victorians.¹⁸

Between November 2016 and June 2017, the Victorian Government visited 23 rural and regional towns as part of an LGBTI Equality Roadshow. An evaluation found the Roadshow had delivered a number of important community impacts, many of which are also relevant to outer metropolitan communities such as Knox. These included the value and importance of:

- Physically implementing programs in communities;
- Working in equal partnership with individuals from marginalised groups;
- Selecting safe venues and spaces;
- Identifying and engaging influencers and decision makers;
- Bringing in wider mainstream community groups and individuals; and
- Developing a basic training model that the community can take back and replicate.¹⁹

The findings of each of these processes establish a need for, and the value in local councils considering how they respond to the rights, needs and aspirations of LGBTIQ+ people and families across the full range of their functions – including as service provider, program partner, community facilitator, advocate, employer, contractor, planner and law maker.²⁰

7. Support to Knox LGBTIQ+ communities

A brief desktop review was undertaken in the development of this paper to identify supports currently offered to LGBTIQ+ communities in Knox. The desktop review involved internet-based research using a range of key search terms and focused on those services and programs delivered by Knox-based providers or specifically to Knox-based communities.

While this section is not likely to comprehensively capture all programs and other planning efforts directly targeting these communities, it does provide an insight into the range and gaps in services

¹⁷ VLGA (2020). *Rainbow resource for Victorian councils: Supporting lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex and queer diversity and inclusion in local government*, p. 8 (Accessed 12/8/20)

¹⁸ VicHealth (2015). *VicHealth indicators survey 2015: Supplementary report, sexuality*. (Accessed 13/08/20)

¹⁹ Besley, M., and Chandler, P. (2018). *LGBTI equality roadshow evaluation report*. Storyscape and Collective Insights for the Victorian Department of Premier and Cabinet Equality Branch.

²⁰ VLGA (2020). *Rainbow resource for Victorian councils: Supporting lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex and queer diversity and inclusion in local government*, p. 12 (Accessed 12/8/20)

currently offered. To the extent some services may exist but are not listed, it also provides an insight into how easily they may be found by LGBTIQ+ community members.

7.1 Knox Council-delivered programs and supports

The first finding in this section is that a significant proportion of services and supports provided in Knox are delivered by Council itself, although with limited scope.

The Knox City Council website hosts an [information page](#) with links to its own programs, as well as to other key LGBTIQ+ groups and organisations. It is one of the few organisations in the municipality to do so.

Knox Council delivers a range of support groups and programs for same-sex attracted and gender diverse (SSAGD) young people and also supports to their parents. These groups are also [listed on the Council website](#), and are routinely referred to by other organisations and groups – including those outside of the municipality.

Groups include:

- Free 2 Be Me: delivered fortnightly after school hours for young people aged 11-14 (delivered in partnership with Knox Headspace);
- 4 Me: for young people who aged 14 - 18 who live, work, study or hang out in the City of Knox (delivered in partnership with Knox Headspace);
- Emerge: a fortnightly support group for people aged 18-25;
- Knox Rainbow Youth Action Group: For LGBTIQ+ people aged 16-25 who are keen to develop new skills and are passionate about advocacy; and
- Parent's Group: Monthly meeting for parents and carers of LGBTIQ+ children/young people to discuss the unique challenges and joys of raising LGBTIQ+ children.

Knox Youth Services have twice been recipients of HEY grants. First in [Round 7 \(2017-18\)](#) for a youth-led initiative to produce a short film – Masked - and again in [Round 9 \(2019\)](#) to produce a sequel, MASKED 2. The film follows the journey of a young person as they come out and aimed to improve SSASGD/LGBTIQ+ young people's mental health and increase options for support. The original film has been viewed over 100,000 times.

Council has recognised programming gaps for LGBTIQ+ people exist within its other service settings, including for example within family services, and aged programs.

Knox Council is currently developing the *Engaging our older LGBTI community project* in partnership with Val's LGBTI Ageing and Aged Care (a program of Rainbow Health Victoria) and older members of the LGBTI community in Knox. The project will:

- design a communications and engagement strategy to support identification and engagement opportunities with older LGBTI community members;
- deliver targeted LGBTI cultural awareness training to Council staff, along with co-designed and co-facilitated community education training at libraries, senior citizen centres and senior's groups over a 12-18 month period; and
- support establishment of a new Knox Seniors LGBTI Allies and Friends Group.

The project is being initiated over a similar timeframe as the needs analysis project is being delivered.

In addition to these services and programs, Knox Council has invested in an internal LGBTIQ+ Working Group since March 2017. This is in part a response to Knox being a key employer within the region, including of LGBTIQ+ people and their allies.

The group is comprised of interested staff and aims to coordinate, inform and influence Council's response to issues impacting LGBTIQ+ people in the community and organisation. The group achieves this by identifying and enabling practical actions and providing strategic advice to enhance Council Plans to support the LGBTIQ+ community in Knox.

Included among the group's key achievements throughout 2019 were:

- Participation in Pride March: Attended by approximately 30 people including the Mayor and another Councillor, CEO, staff and young people;

- Participation in IDAHOBIT Day: Featuring a morning tea, flag raising ceremony, opening of the Rainbow path, and guest speakers featuring local police GLOs and young people;
- Delivery of an introductory LGBTIQ+-inclusive training session by Rainbow Health Victoria;
- Regular attendance at the LGPro Rainbow Network Special Interest Group;
- A screening of the film 'Masked' (as above) attended by staff and management;
- Submission of a case-study for VLGA Rainbow Resource referred to throughout this report; and
- Starting discussions to plan a genderless toilet initiative.

One of the key initiatives the Knox LGBTIQ+ Working Group is keen to explore is Council's readiness to undertake Rainbow Tick Accreditation.

Developed by Rainbow Health Victoria, Rainbow Tick is a national accreditation program for organisations committed to safe and inclusive practice, and service delivery for LGBTIQ+ people. At present no Council programs have sought or achieved Rainbow Tick accreditation.

7.2 LGBTIQ+ programs and supports delivered by others in Knox

A range of methods were undertaken to identify organisations in Knox that provide LGBTIQ-specific programming or market themselves as LGBTIQ+ inclusive.

A broad internet search of key terms was undertaken and the websites of Knox Council key partner agencies as listed in Council's Community and Council Plan were also explored. Further searches explored My Aged Care and NDIS providers in the region.

Outside of Council, the internet and website search methods uncovered only a very limited number of organisations explicitly targeting services and programs to LGBTIQ+ people and their families living in Knox. Services found to be explicitly targeting LGBTIQ+ communities included:

- **Eastern Domestic Violence Service (EDVOS)**: Delivering a range of family violence programs and supports, including a specific focus on LGBTIQ+ families, EDVOS is one of only two Rainbow Tick accredited services in the region;
- **Family Access Network (FAN)**: The second Rainbow Tick accredited service in the EMR, FAN delivers a range of programs and supports to homeless and other at-risk young people, with a specific focus on LGBTIQ+ young people. FAN is a current recipient of a HEY grant (Round 9) to create *Rainbow Tours*, supporting access to LGBTIQ+-inclusive spaces for young people;
- **Women's Health East (WHE)**: WHE have undertaken a broad range of research and primary prevention projects to explore family violence, sexual health, respectful relationships and other issues for LGBTIQ+ women and young people;
- **Knox Headspace**: Although not clear from its website whether it delivers other targeted services in its own right, Knox Headspace is a partner in the delivery of Council-run groups for SSAGD young people as indicated above;
- **EACH**: the only explicit LGBTIQ+ reference on its website relates to Accessible Psychological Interventions (API) mental health supports, but with a referral to the SEMPHN. EACH previously secured a HEY grant (Round 2) to deliver an integrated program of services to enhance mental health outcomes for SSASGD/LGBTIQ+ young people through workshops, resources, skills development and health promotion.
- **Bridges Connecting Communities**: Formerly Knox Community Volunteers, BCC undertook an inclusion project in 2018 to explore making their service more accessible to LGBTIQ older people and volunteers.

For a range of other services, it was less clear what direct programs and supports they are offering to LGBTIQ+ people and families. For example:

- **Eastern Health**: The Eastern Health Strategic Plan 2017-22 recognises LGBTIQ people but does not identify any specific focus and it is not clear from their website whether any specific programs exist. In 2016 Eastern Health established a Rainbow Equality Working Group which has 'made real in-roads in creating a truly welcoming environment for our LGBTIQ staff, volunteers, patients and visitors', though it is not clear how. The same page also refers to participation in IDAHOBIT, and there is also evidence of support and commitments made during the marriage equality debate;

- **Eastern Community Legal Centre (ECLC):** The [ECLC Strategic Plan 2020-23](#) identifies LGBTIQ communities as a priority community but no further information is available on the website;
- **Eastern Primary Health Network (EMPHN):** The [EMPHN Needs Assessment Report 2018](#) recognises the specific mental health and palliative care needs of older LGBTI people but no other groups, and the website is not clear whether specific programs are delivered. The [Regional Integrated Mental Health, Alcohol and Other Drugs and Suicide Prevention Plan](#), a partnership between key regional stakeholders, makes no reference to LGBTIQ+ people and families; and
- **Eastern Mental Health Service Coordination Alliance (EMHSCA):** The [EMHSCA Strategic Direction and Work Plan 2019-21](#) makes no reference to LGBTIQ+ people and families.

A search of the [My Aged Care](#) website for *social outing, group and visitor* providers in the 3152 postcode area yielded 46 results, of which 8 indicated an LGBTI specialty.

These services included for example:

- Uniting Social Support Individual Eastern Regions: The Uniting Vic Tas website includes a message of LGBTI inclusion on its [homepage](#), as well as references throughout, including an [asylum seeker LGBTIQ+ peer support group](#), a [values commitment to diversity](#) inclusive of LGBTIQ+ people and evidence of [participation in Pride march](#).
- Uniting AgeWell Eastern Metro Home Care: The general Uniting AgeWell website includes [specific information](#) for LGBTI people.
- Eastern Volunteers Resource Centre: Website contains a [specific encouragement](#) for LGBTIQI community involvement.
- Care Connect
- Knox City Council
- Australian Multicultural Community Services – Social Support Individual
- CO.AS.IT Italian Assistance Association
- Vision Australia Ringwood

In the absence of Rainbow Tick accreditation or further available information on their websites, it is difficult to determine the basis on which some of these organisations have determined their LGBTI-inclusive credentials.

A search on clickability for NDIS providers in the Knox area yielded 23 listings. None identified an LGBTIQ+ specialization. The website of NDIS Local Area Coordinator for the region, Latrobe Community Health Service contained no reference to LGBTIQ+ services, programs or statements of inclusion.