

Consultation report

prepared for Maribyrnong City Council

Jason Rostant

First phase consultation summary report: Maribyrnong LGBTIQ+ Strategy and Action Plan 2021-2025

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Document purpose and contents

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This document provides a summary of consultations undertaken for Maribyrnong City Council in November 2021.

Conversations were designed to gather feedback to inform the development of an LGBTIQ+ (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex, Queer and Questioning, and Asexual) Strategy and Action Plan for the municipality.

This document presents an overview of:

- the focus group engagement and online survey including their content and engagement activities
- stakeholders who engaged in conversations
- a summary of insights collected from participants
- key messages and themes

The structure of the document is set out below.

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Background

Introduction

The Maribyrnong City Council Plan 2021 – 2025 establishes a vision for “an inclusive, flourishing, progressive city that cares for its residents and its environments”.

One of the key actions is to develop an LGBTIQA+ Strategy and Action Plan with the support of an LGBTIQA+ Advisory Committee to be established by December 2021.

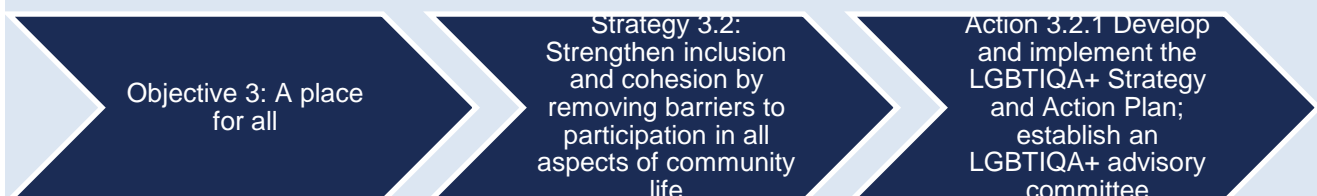
A series of focus groups were held between 13th and 26th November with internal and external stakeholders including Council staff, community members and local service providers. The sessions were designed and delivered Jason Rostant Consulting.

The focus groups were complemented by an online survey that was open from 8th November – 24th December 2021, and a [background paper](#) to support discussions.

Background paper

- An introduction setting the context for development of the Maribyrnong City Council's LGBTIQA+ Strategy and Action Plan
- Demographic and health and wellbeing information about the Maribyrnong community
- An overview of LGBTIQA+ people and families living, working, studying and socialising in the City of Maribyrnong
- An overview of broader LGBTIQA+ community needs and expectations, including of local government
- A summary of Maribyrnong Council's work with LGBTIQA+ communities to date
- Project links to broader Council policy and strategies

Annual Council Action Plan 2021/22

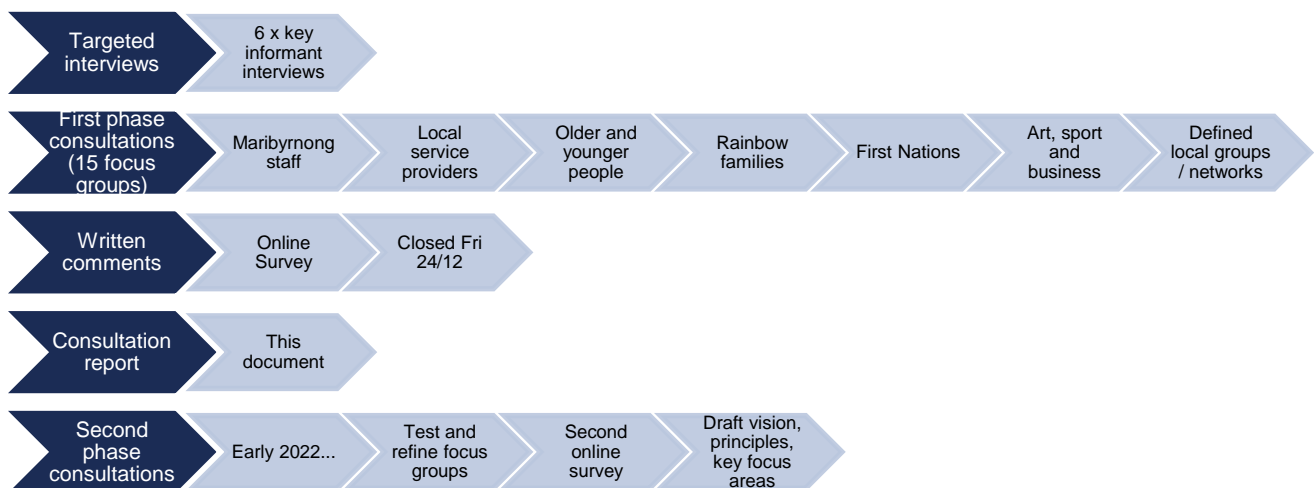




Approach and participants

Approach (first phase)

An engagement plan was developed to maximise opportunities for community participation which included a blend of targeted and open focus groups relevant to different interests and experiences. These were offered inside and out of office hours, and on weekends. Engagement was complemented by an online survey on Council's digital engagement platform *Your City, Your Voice*.



Participants

Approximately **210 participants** took part in the engagement opportunities offered in November and December 2021 representing different ages, cultural backgrounds, abilities, sexual orientations and gender identities, family structures and relationships. Participants also represented a diverse range of local services and other community interests.



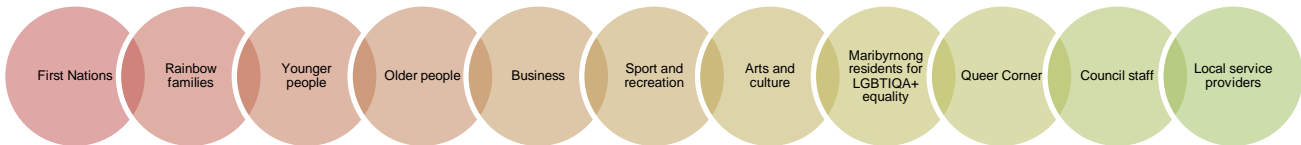


Overview: Focus groups

Focus groups

In total, fourteen online focus groups were delivered across two weeks in November 2021. Focus groups ranged from 90 minutes to two hours in length.

The primary purpose was to engage as diverse a range of community perspectives as possible within available resources. The focus groups comprised a mix of open invitation and targeted sessions.



Focus group discussion 1: Vision for LGBTIQ+ people in Maribyrnong

Thinking about LGBTIQ+ people and their families who live, work, study and recreate in Maribyrnong. They are thriving, healthy and happy...

Q. What are their lives like?

Q. What do they see/hear/feel experience?

Focus group discussion 2: Current gaps, barriers and limitations

Thinking about the factors that prevent or limit this vision...

Q. What are the current issues for LGBTIQ+ people and their families in Maribyrnong?

Q. What barriers do these communities face?

Q. How have communities been impacted by COVID-19?

Focus group discussion 3: Opportunities for a stronger future

Thinking about opportunities to bridge where we are and where we want to get to...

Q. What steps can be taken to ensure LGBTIQ+ people and families in Maribyrnong are thriving?

Q. What do you think Council could or should do?

Q. What role should LGBTIQ+ communities and others play?



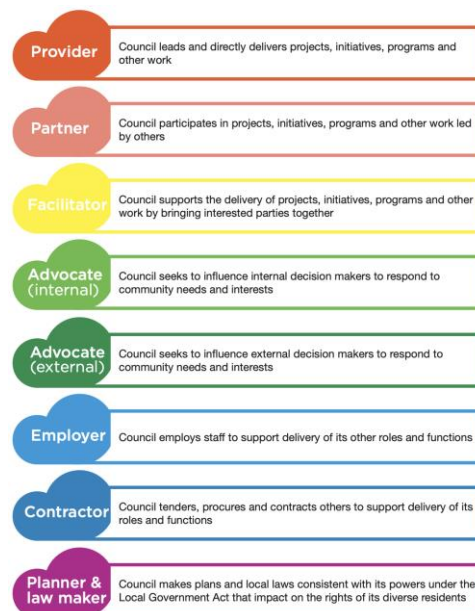
Overview: Online survey

Online survey

A survey was hosted on the online digital engagement platform *Your City, Your Voice* between November and December 2021 with 114 responses received.

Survey questions

1. Can you name three positive things about Maribyrnong that support LGBTIQA+ people and their families?
2. What are three less positive things about Maribyrnong that could be improved to better support LGBTIQA+ people and their families?
3. What role can Council play to positively influence LGBTIQA+ safety, participation and inclusion, health and wellbeing in Maribyrnong?
4. Can you identify any specific actions Council could take?



Source: VLGA

Online survey: Key findings

The most positive thing that supports LGBTIQA+ people and their families in Maribyrnong was diversity and community attitudes.

Council support, events and facilities, ranked as the second highest positive thing that supports LGBTIQA+ people and their families.

The least positive thing that could be improved to better support LGBTIQA+ people and their families was the need for more inclusive support services and businesses.

From the list of options provided(see page 9), *Support LGBTIQA+ community visibility and inclusion* was the most commonly identified way Council could positively influence LGBTIQA+ safety, participation and inclusion, and health and wellbeing.

In terms of specific actions Council could take to support this, the majority chose:

- External relationships: this focused around greater partnerships, advocacy and relationships with the LGBTIQA+ community.
- Internal actions: this included staff training and funding.
- In line with identification of inclusive support services and businesses as the area that could be most improved, the community would also like more inclusive support services and businesses.



Future vision and community strengths

Future vision

First phase focus groups commenced with an exploration of the future vision for LGBTIQ+ people and families in Maribyrnong. Participants identified key aspects of LGBTIQ+ experience as well as of the community in which LGBTIQ+ people and families live, work and study.

LGBTIQ+ people and families are healthy and happy

LGBTIQ+ people and families are safe and visible

LGBTIQ+ people and families are included and connected

LGBTIQ+ people and families have a voice

The community celebrates diverse LGBTIQ+ identities

A range of accessible services is locally available

Broad health and wellbeing inequalities are addressed

Council demonstrates unequivocal leadership

Community strengths

Focus group and online survey participants were invited to identify current community strengths and assets that contribute to a supportive environment for LGBTIQ+ people and families in Maribyrnong. The most commonly identified community strengths included:

A diverse community

- Maribyrnong is a diverse, welcoming and inclusive community that celebrates difference and where LGBTIQ+ community members are increasingly visible

Vibrant venues and supportive businesses

- Maribyrnong has a vibrant venue, pub and club culture and LGBTIQ+ owned and supportive businesses (most notably Pride of our Footscray, also Seddon Deadly Sins, Bar Josephine, Cafe Hahn, Trouble in Dreams)

Council support

- Council's work to support and acknowledge LGBTIQ+ people, families and communities is recognised - including its policy work, support for business, youth services, libraries, family supports, swim nights, etc

Locally accessible services and community groups

- A growing number of locally accessible groups and clubs, online networks, social justice support groups and accessible health services is inclusive of LGBTIQ+ communities (most notably Queer Corner, OutWest, Good Karma Network, Eleanor Clinic, cohealth)

Local arts, music and festivals

- Local Council programming and by other local organisations (most notably Misdumma Westside, Footscray Community Arts, Footscray Pride March) is inclusive of LGBTIQ+ communities

Sport and recreation

- Locally accessible sporting clubs, gyms, swim nights, Pride cup and Bulldog Pride are exemplars



Current gaps, barriers and limitations

Focus group participants were invited to identify current gaps, barriers and limitations impacting the health, wellbeing and social and economic inclusion of LGBTIQ+ people, families and communities in Maribyrnong. Commonly identified **issues** included:

Many LGBTIQ+ people remain disconnected, isolated and invisible

Discrimination and violence against LGBTIQ+ people persists

Services, groups, networks and information are hard to find or don't exist locally

Services and systems are often hetero- and cis-normative

LGBTIQ+ people experience minority stress and deploy mental labour

Physical spaces and infrastructure are often unsafe or unwelcoming

LGBTIQ+ people have been disproportionately impacted by COVID19

Council's leadership role and commitment are not currently clear

When asked about the least positive things about Maribyrnong for LGBTIQ+ people, the most commonly identified **challenges** included:

Lack of LGBTIQ+ inclusive services especially health, MH, AOD, housing, FV, employment

Lack of safe spaces, events and facilities

Lack of community visibility and representation, and the need to improve diversity

Community homo-bi-trans-phobia and safety

Lack of community education and advocacy

Lack of Council visibility, promotion and media

Needs of specific groups

Many participants recognised that the issues identified above are not experienced by LGBTIQ+ people, families and communities equally, and that an **intersectional lens** is important for understanding the diversity of LGBTIQ+ experience and need in a range of settings. Groups identified as being at particular risk of exclusion in Maribyrnong included:

- ✓ Younger LGBTIQ+ people
- ✓ Older LGBTIQ+ people
- ✓ LGBTIQ+ people from CALD backgrounds, especially refugees and recent migrants
- ✓ Trans, gender diverse and non-binary people
- ✓ LGBTIQ+ people with a disability, mental health and alcohol and other drug issues
- ✓ LGBTIQ+ people experiencing poverty and/or homelessness

Definition: Intersectionality

Many people within LGBTIQ+ communities live with other forms of inequality or discrimination. How these overlapping and interconnecting forms of oppression link to other aspects of identity is often called 'intersectionality'.

Many LGBTIQ+ people also experience forms of prejudice like racism, ableism and classism. This is on top of and combined with prejudice based on their gender, sexuality or sex characteristics.

Recognising intersectionality is vital to ensuring LGBTIQ+ communities can celebrate diversity and contributes to improving all LGBTIQ+ lives.

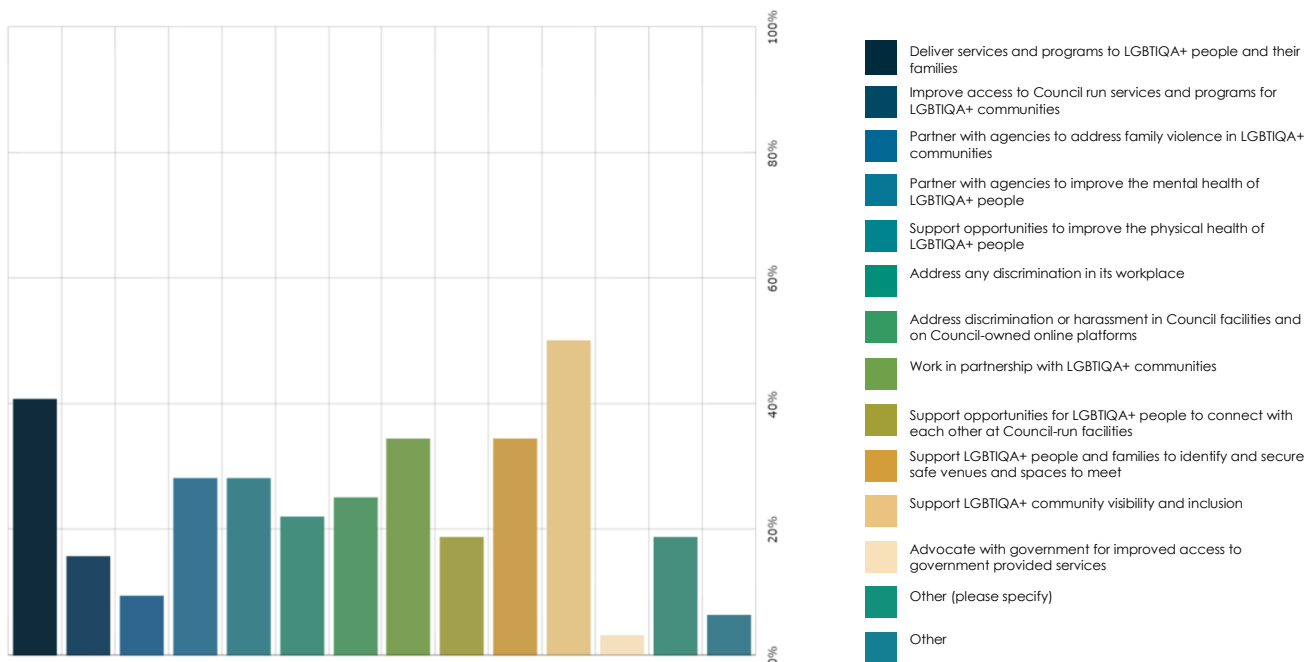
(Source: Adapted from Pride in our future: Victoria's LGBTIQ+ strategy 2022-32)



Council role and future opportunities

Participants were invited to consider the range of local government roles and functions, and to identify specific areas in which the Maribyrnong City Council might take future action through a LGBTIQA+ Strategy and Action Plan.

Survey respondents were invited to select up to five listed options they thought Council could use to positively influence LGBTIQA+ safety, participation and inclusion, and health and wellbeing in Maribyrnong:



Future opportunities for action identified by focus group and survey participants included in the following thematic areas (with the last three featuring more strongly in focus groups). These themes will inform the development of key focus areas and initiatives in the Maribyrnong LGBTIQA+ Strategy and Action Plan:

