

Inquiry into anti-LGBTIQ+ hate crimes in Victoria: Submission



1 May



The voice for
local government

No one understands the challenges and opportunities facing Victoria in the 21st century better than local councils. From rapidly evolving technology to social changes, shifting economies to environmental pressures, our local communities and the governments that represent them—are at the forefront of multiple transformations happening simultaneously.

As the peak body for the Victorian local government sector, the Municipal Association of Victoria (MAV) offers councils a one-stop shop of services and support to help them serve their communities.



ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

The Municipal Association of Victoria acknowledges the Traditional Owners of Country throughout Victoria, and recognise their continuing connection to lands, waters, and culture.

We pay our respect to Elders past and present who carry the stories, traditions, cultures, and aspirations of First Peoples, and who forged the path ahead for emerging leaders.

We support local government's commitment to strengthen relationships with Victoria's First Peoples communities and for it to encourage greater unity, knowledge, cultural awareness and respect for the first occupants of our land — through its strong community links and local representation

DISCLAIMER AND COPYRIGHT

This submission has been prepared by the Municipal Association of Victoria (MAV). The MAV is the statutory peak body for local government in Victoria, representing all 79 municipalities within the state. © Copyright MAV

Table of contents

1	<i>Executive Summary</i>	3
2	<i>Introduction</i>	4
3	<i>Response to the Terms of Reference</i>	5
4	<i>Conclusions/Findings</i>	12
5	<i>Recommendations</i>	13

1 Executive Summary

The Municipal Association of Victoria (MAV) established by the *Municipal Association Act 1907* is the legislated peak body representing Victoria's 79 local councils. The MAV welcomes the opportunity to contribute to the inquiry into anti-LGBTIQA+ hate crimes and draws on the direct experience of local government in advancing LGBTIQA+ inclusion, community safety and social cohesion across metropolitan, interface, regional and rural communities.

Local councils play a frontline role in preventing and responding to hate motivated harm through strategic planning, inclusive policy development, community engagement, service delivery and the creation of safe and welcoming public spaces. However, councils are operating in an increasingly challenging environment characterised by coordinated online hate, misinformation and disinformation, intimidation of councillors and staff, and are mobilised across the state by anti-LGBTIQA+ influencers and hate groups. These dynamics have a direct impact on councils' ability to deliver inclusive programs and public events, with varying effects depending on local capacity and resourcing.

This submission highlights growing concerns about the online radicalisation of young people, particularly adolescent and young adult men, through digital platforms linked to far-right extremism, homophobic, transphobic, misogynistic and "manosphere" networks. While Victoria has made important progress through legal reforms, policing initiatives and community support services, their effectiveness relies on consistent, well-resourced implementation at the local level and stronger prevention-focused approaches.

MAV also identifies significant gaps in data, coordination and accountability. Current hate crime data underrepresents the scale of harm experienced by LGBTIQA+ communities, particularly those facing intersecting forms of disadvantage including Rainbow Mob, people with disability, and multicultural and multifaith communities. Social media platforms continue to play a central role in facilitating harm, with limited accountability and inadequate responses to coordinated abuse.

This submission calls for clear statewide leadership and partnership with local government. Key recommendations include resourcing councils to lead place-based prevention and early intervention; developing consistent guidance, data sharing and intelligence frameworks; strengthening accountability for digital platforms; supporting the Commissioner for LGBTIQA+ Communities to coordinate cross-sector action; and establishing mechanisms to address disinformation at scale.

MAV urges the Victorian Government to work collaboratively with local government to deliver a coordinated, prevention-focused response that protects councillors, staff and communities, strengthens social cohesion, and ensures LGBTIQA+ Victorians can participate safely and fully in civic life across the state.

2 Introduction

The Municipal Association of Victoria (MAV), as the peak legislated peak body representing Victoria's 79 local councils, welcomes the opportunity to contribute to this inquiry into anti-LGBTIQA+ hate crimes.

Victorian local governments play an active and visible role through dedicated strategic planning, representative community engagement, tailored service delivery, and the adoption of inclusive organisational policies and standards. This work aims to contribute to the prevention of hate-motivated harm by strengthening safer public spaces, increasing social cohesion, and supporting early intervention pathways for discrimination and violence.

The capacity to implement this work, however, varies across councils. Metropolitan councils generally demonstrate greater resourcing and consistency than interface, regional and rural councils, reflecting uneven local capacity and access to support.

This submission draws on the experiences of local government in delivering inclusive LGBTIQA+ initiatives within an increasingly complex and challenging environment. It outlines emerging issues affecting councils and the impact of hate crimes and the risk of hate-motivated behaviour on the human rights, safety, health and wellbeing of LGBTIQA+ communities and LGBTIQA+ representative councillors across Victoria.

3 Response to the Terms of Reference

The communication and recruitment methods of anti-LGBTIQA+ influencers and hate groups that endorse anti-LGBTIQA+ hate crimes, including those creating and sharing online content steeped in racism, misogyny, transphobia, homophobia, far-right ideology and unhealthy masculinities.

Victorian councils have increasingly been targeted by coordinated misinformation and disinformation campaigns by anti-LGBTIQA+ influencers and hate groups that endorse anti-LGBTIQA+ hate crimes. These campaigns have amplified hateful, polarising narratives and in some extreme cases direct threats have been made in relation to council LGBTIQA+ programs and public events.

As a result, many councils are now adopting highly cautious approaches when planning or delivering specific public initiatives. This has included engaging more security measures which greatly increase the overall costs or running exclusive targeted invitation only events. In some cases, councils have opted not to run these activities at all. Additionally, pressure from hate groups have influenced the calls for censorship within public places such as local libraries, particularly in relation to Rainbow Storytime activities and collections. These responses run counter to councils stated commitments to diversity, inclusion, and community participation, and risk unintentionally marginalising the LGBTIQA+ community to which these initiatives are intended to support.

We also hear experiences from councils of anti-LGBTIQA+ hate groups deliberately exploiting regulatory and enforcement bodies, such as WorkSafe and Victoria Police, that frame LGBTIQA+ inclusion initiatives as workplace safety risks for employees. This tactic places additional administrative and reputational pressure on councils and can deter participation in otherwise lawful and inclusive activities.

The actions of anti-LGBTIQA+ commentators and hate groups targeting local government in Victoria is significant and deeply harmful. Their actions threaten the safety and wellbeing of council staff working in LGBTIQA+ programs, policy and events, particularly those with lived experience, and deliberately target people who identify as LGBTIQA+. Their actions have the potential to, and do, detrimentally impact and undermine local social cohesion.

Councils must be able to develop inclusive policies, deliver public events and programs in partnership with LGBTIQA+ communities without fear, intimidation, or threats from a minority of individuals acting with malicious and/or criminal intent.

Recommendation:

The Victorian Government develop and resource a coordinated, whole-of-state response to misinformation, disinformation, and threats targeting LGBTIQA+ inclusion at the local government level. This could include:

- Clear guidance and protocols for councils on responding to coordinated harassment and threats related to LGBTIQA+ activities and programs.
- Centralised monitoring and rapid response systems to reduce the burden of councils and individuals having to respond in isolation.
- Strong leadership at both the state and local government level that reinforces there will be real consequences for those that commit intimidation, hate based harassment and criminal threats.

Current strategies to counter anti-LGBTIQA+ hate crimes, particularly among young people, and how these could be strengthened

It is widely acknowledged that the radicalisation and coordination of anti-LGBTIQA+ hate leading to hate crimes often occurs online. Young people, particularly adolescent and young adult men, are disproportionately involved, with strong links to far-right extremism, homophobic, transphobic, misogynistic, and “manosphere” movements operating locally and internationally.

Reporting by *Q News* indicates that alleged offenders in multiple incidents were aged between 13 and 20, illustrating the speed at which young people can be drawn into anti-LGBTIQA+ hate through social media, short-form content and peer validation. The absence of prior criminal histories in many cases highlights the critical importance of early intervention.

Victoria’s prevention response needs to drastically shift from a traditional reactive model and move towards interrupting the pathways that lead to potential hate violence and criminal actions. Current strategies including public warnings and intelligence-led responses linked to dating apps and social platforms, legal reforms targeting online incitement and “posting and boasting” behaviours, the Safe Schools program, and specialist LGBTIQA+ support services for young people experiencing hate or harassment, are vital to this prevention. These efforts however would be significantly strengthened through coordinated engagement that enables and supports local government across Victoria to take a more leadership role. As a health and wellbeing setting Local Government plays a key role in the design of strategies, policies and services that enhance representation and participation across diverse groups.

Recommendation:

The Victorian Government partner with and resource local government to lead place-based, prevention-focused responses that strengthen safety, inclusion and early intervention to prevent anti-LGBTIQA+ hate. This could include:

- Funding or co-funding councils to deliver targeted youth outreach through council-run youth services, facilities and partnerships (e.g. youth drop-ins and sports club engagement) for cohorts at higher risk of online radicalisation.
- Partnering with peak bodies to support councils to implement a consistent, statewide, evidence-informed and LGBTIQA+ inclusive prevention framework across council youth and other relevant services.
- Supporting councils to promote visible allyship across council workplaces, facilities and communications through simple, practical initiatives (e.g. rainbow/ally accessories and signage).
- Strengthening age-appropriate online safety education and reporting pathways delivered through council services, in partnership with the Australian eSafety Commissioner.
- Building the capability of council staff, youth services and community-facing teams to prevent and respond to online harm, including evidence capture, reporting and escalation to eSafety.
- Supporting councils to use libraries as prevention hubs for digital literacy on misinformation, online grooming, reporting tools and algorithmic amplification.

Current anti-LGBTIQA+ hate crime prevention initiatives, and how these could be strengthened

Across Victoria, a mix of government and community efforts is helping to push back against anti-LGBTIQA+ hate crimes. Stronger hate and “posting and boasting” laws have set clearer boundaries, while services like the Rainbow Door helpline offer direct support to people who are targeted. Victoria Police is also working on prevention and early intervention through initiatives such as the LGBTIQA+ Liaison Officer program, aimed at building trust and improving responses when incidents occur. Alongside this, broader prevention efforts like Respect Victoria’s ‘Pride, Respect, Equality campaign’ and the ‘Being Valued toolkit’, are focused on shifting attitudes and creating safer, more respectful workplaces and communities.

Together, these initiatives form a solid foundation, but their real impact depends on how effectively they are taken up and supported at the local community level. This is particularly important in relation to Victoria’s updated anti-vilification and “posting and boasting” laws responding to anti-LGBTIQA+ hate crimes. Their impact depends on how well they are understood and put into practice at the local level. What is vital from a local government perspective is making these laws work on the ground, through clear guidance, early intervention, practical reporting pathways and coordinated responses to online and offline harm, so councils can prevent escalation, support staff and community members, and maintain social cohesion.

At the October 2025 Victorian State Council members resolved to condemn vilification, hate speech, and prejudice against all marginalised groups, and to commit to working with local councils to ensure the safety and inclusion of all Victorians regardless of race, religion, ability or disability, sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, or migration status.

Overall, these efforts underscore a shared commitment across government and communities to confronting anti-LGBTIQA+ harm and strengthening safety and inclusion at the local level.

Recommendation:

The Victorian Government should fund and support, in collaboration with the Municipal Association of Victoria (MAV) and local governments, a coordinated statewide local government response to prevent anti-LGBTIQA+ hate crimes, strengthen community safety, and uphold inclusive, values-based leadership at the local level. This should include:

- Implementing a positive duty for organisations to take reasonable and proportionate steps to prevent vilification, as is currently the case for discrimination, sexual harassment and victimisation matters under the Equal Opportunity Act 2010.
- Establishing a Citizens' Assembly on Information Integrity (Victoria) bringing together 100 randomly selected Victorians in an independent deliberative process to develop recommendations for a statewide strategy on local responses to disinformation. The strategy would play a similar role to the Victorian Statewide Public Health and Wellbeing Strategy, guiding local government action, and draw on the *Disinformation in the City Response Playbook* to set priorities for programs, partnerships, advocacy, and research at both local and state levels.
- Co-funding the Citizens' Assembly on Information Integrity with a State contribution of \$372,000 (alongside MAV and University of Melbourne in-kind and financial support).
- Developing a concise community safety guide for councils and community sectors outlining how to prevent and respond to online hate and vilification, protect LGBTIQA+ councillors and staff, support safe delivery of public events, and provide clear, role-specific guidance for council teams, with targeted implementation support for regional and rural councils applying the Rainbow Ready Roadmap.
- Standardising local reporting, hotspot mapping and shared learning across councils (via MAV) to identify trends and prevent escalation.
- Funding the development and delivery of bystander training, clear response procedures (SOPs) and safety planning systems for councils.
- Providing government-funded wellbeing, protection and escalation pathways for councillors and staff who are targeted.
- Enabling councils to use sport, recreation and community funding levers to require inclusive codes of conduct and complaint processes.

The role and responsibilities of social media and digital platform owners in preventing and responding to anti-LGBTIQA+ hate crimes

Social media platforms play a powerful role in shaping public debate and community safety, yet responses to anti-LGBTIQA+ hate are often slow, inconsistent and ineffective. Polluted online information environments directly affect local government. Disinformation and targeted hate campaigns erode trust, discourage community participation, disrupt council meetings and increasingly target LGBTIQA+ councillors and inclusive policies. Councils are managing these impacts day-to-day, but their tools are limited, often restricted to moderating comments or closing online forums, while harmful content continues to circulate and cause further division.

Digital platform owners must take greater responsibility. This means acting quickly to remove hate, threats and incitement, disrupting coordinated harassment, enforcing their own standards consistently, and making reporting simple and transparent, especially where online abuse risks real-world harm.

Stronger action is needed to ensure platforms are not passive enablers of harm. Social media companies, along with anti-LGBTIQA+ influencers and hate groups that use these platforms to incite violence, must face clear legal and criminal consequences.

Recommendation:

The Victorian Government advocate in collaboration with local government for stronger Commonwealth measures to address anti-LGBTIQA+ hate online. While the Online Safety Act 2021 and Commonwealth criminal laws provide important tools, gaps remain in ensuring timely takedown, disruption of coordinated hate, and meaningful platform accountability. Platforms should be subject to clear enforceable duties to rapidly remove harmful content, cooperate with regulators and law enforcement, and face effective penalties for non-compliance, alongside clear legal consequences for individuals who incite hate or violence online

Existing empirical data regarding the prevalence and trends of anti-LGBTIQA+ hate crimes Australia-wide

While councils do not hold empirical data about anti-LGBTIQA+ hate incidents, councils and the MAV have welcomed the establishment of the National Hate Crimes and Incidents Database in 2025 as an important step forward. The development of this database is in early stages and currently captures only a portion of hate-motivated offending across jurisdictions. Community led reporting initiatives and qualitative research continue to reveal that anti-LGBTIQA+ offending is significantly higher than official statistics suggest.

While the data collection is improving, there's an urgent need for stronger and more consistent national, state and local government data framework, better integration of police, community and health data, and mechanisms that translate national insights into place-based prevention and early intervention.

Recommendation:

The Victorian Government and MAV advocate for the development of a comprehensive national anti-LGBTIQA+ hate crime database, alongside reforms within Victoria to enable this data to be shared with the local government sector to enable local government areas to have intelligence on emerging incidents and patterns within their municipality. Access to timely, relevant reporting would support councils to identify emerging trends and incidents within their municipalities and strengthen local prevention and response efforts.

Impact of anti-LGBTIQA+ hate crimes on diverse LGBTIQA+ communities, including Rainbow Mob, people with disability, and multifaith and multicultural community members.

From a local government perspective, anti-LGBTIQA+ hate crimes have a deeply harmful and disproportionate impact on communities already facing multiple forms of exclusion. Rainbow Mob, LGBTIQA+ people with disability, and those from multifaith and multicultural backgrounds are more likely to experience compounded harm, including heightened fear, isolation, reduced access to services, and disengagement from community life. These impacts are felt locally through lower participation in public spaces and events, increased safety concerns, and diminished trust in institutions.

The MAV also acknowledges that in Victoria the Justice Legislation Amendment (Anti-vilification and Social Cohesion) Act 2025 commenced on 20 September 2025, encompassing LGBTIQA+ people in anti-vilification legal framework for the first time, and allowing people to make complaints about intersectional experiences of hate (ref: VEOHRC statement 2 April 2025).

Recommendation:

The Victorian Government and MAV support the call for a comprehensive, intersectional and strengthened legal protections against anti-LGBTIQA+ hate and vilification, recognising that rising hate and violence most severely affects people at the intersections of disability, gender identity, race, religious belief or activity, sex, sex characteristics and sexual orientation. Effective prevention and response must acknowledge and address these layered impacts to ensure all Victorians can participate safely and fully in their communities.

Interjurisdictional strategies and methods to combat anti-LGBTIQA+ hate crimes across borders.

Effectively preventing and responding to anti-LGBTIQA+ hate crimes requires a coordinated, whole-of-government approach led by the Commonwealth and States and delivered in partnership with local government. Hate crimes increasingly occur across municipal, state and national boundaries, particularly through online platforms, making isolated responses less effective.

Councils are well placed to contribute to this effort. As place-based, multidisciplinary organisations, local governments have strong community connections, visibility of emerging risks, and the ability to coordinate locally across health, emergency and community services, community leaders and LGBTIQA+ organisations. This enables early intervention, local prevention and community-led responses that complement state and national action.

Councils cannot do this consistently or at scale without clear leadership from those levels of government responsible for defining and policing hate crimes. Interjurisdictional strategies must include shared frameworks, consistent data and intelligence-sharing, formal collaboration mechanisms across jurisdictions, and sustained resourcing. Without these supports, local governments are limited in their ability to respond to cross-border hate, online mobilisation and coordinated attacks that extend beyond their municipal boundaries.

Recommendation:

The Victorian Government lead a coordinated, interjurisdictional approach to combating anti-LGBTIQA+ hate crimes, in partnership with local government and national counterparts. This should include a clear statewide framework, formal mechanisms for collaboration and intelligence-sharing across borders, and sustained resourcing to enable councils to contribute their place-based insights, coordinate local prevention and early intervention, and respond effectively to hate that operates across municipal, state and online boundaries.

The relevant work of the Commissioner for LGBTIQA+ Communities, relevant government advisory groups, including but not limited to relevant community, health and law enforcement organisations to combat anti-LGBTIQA+ hate crimes.

The Commissioner for LGBTIQA+ Communities plays a critical leadership role in coordinating government, community, health and law-enforcement efforts to prevent and respond to anti-LGBTIQA+ hate crimes. The Commissioner’s work helps connect policy with lived experience, strengthen trust between institutions and communities, and align prevention, response and support across government. Advisory groups and community-controlled organisations further contribute essential expertise, particularly in relation to intersectional impacts, community safety, trauma-informed practice and culturally safe responses.

The MAV and local government sector benefit from this leadership through the Commissioner’s involvement on the MAV Community Safety and Resilience Advisory Panel, as well as through practical guidance, shared advocacy and stronger links between statewide strategy and place-based action. Councils rely on these relationships to support prevention, respond to incidents, and ensure LGBTIQA+ communities can participate safely in local civic life.

Recommendation:

The Victorian Government calls on the Commissioner for LGBTIQA+ Communities to partner with the MAV, to establish and support a formal coalition of councillors, council officers, local government peak bodies and relevant sector organisations. This coalition would strengthen LGBTIQA+ advocacy within the local government sector, improve coordination with health and law-enforcement partners, and support consistent, place-based prevention and responses to anti-LGBTIQA+ hate across Victoria.

4 Conclusions/Findings

Local government is uniquely positioned to contribute to the reduction in anti-LGBTIQA+ hate crimes. As the level of government closest to community and among the most trusted institutions, councils play a critical role in shaping safe public spaces, delivering inclusive services and supporting early intervention.

This submission demonstrates that while many councils are actively advancing LGBTIQA+ inclusion, their efforts are increasingly undermined by coordinated online hate, misinformation, intimidation and cross-border mobilisation. These pressures directly affect councillors, staff and communities, inhibit inclusive public activity and risk eroding social cohesion, particularly in councils with fewer resources.

Councils have the reach, infrastructure and community connections to deliver place-based prevention and early intervention. However, this work cannot be sustained or scaled without clear statewide leadership, consistent guidance, shared data and intelligence, and dedicated resourcing.

The MAV therefore calls on the Victorian Government to work collaboratively with local government to establish a coordinated, prevention-focused framework that enables councils to act confidently, protect staff and communities, and ensure LGBTIQA+ Victorians can participate safely and fully in civic life across the state.

The evidence presented highlights several critical findings:

- Anti-LGBTIQA+ hate crimes and vilification are increasingly organised, digital, and trans-local in nature, demanding responses that go beyond individual councils acting in isolation.
- Young people are being rapidly radicalised through online ecosystems, underscoring the urgency of prevention-focused, early intervention approaches led in community settings.
- Legal reforms and policy initiatives, while welcome, will only be effective if they are understood, operationalised and embedded at the local level through clear guidance, resourcing and coordinated implementation.
- The impacts of hate are disproportionately felt by LGBTIQA+ people facing intersecting forms of disadvantage, requiring responses that are explicitly intersectional, culturally safe and trauma informed.
- Variability in local government capacity, particularly between metropolitan, regional and rural councils, risks deepening inequities unless addressed through statewide leadership and support.

5 Recommendations

The following table outlines the complete list of the MAV recommendations to the Inquiry into LGBTIQ+ hate crimes in Victoria.

Recommendations

The communication and recruitment methods of anti-LGBTIQ+ influencers and hate groups that endorse anti-LGBTIQ+ hate crimes, including those creating and sharing online content steeped in racism, misogyny, transphobia, homophobia, far-right ideology and unhealthy masculinities

The Victorian Government develop and resource a coordinated, whole-of-state response to misinformation, disinformation, and threats targeting LGBTIQ+ inclusion at the local government level. This could include:

- Clear guidance and protocols for councils on responding to coordinated harassment and threats related to LGBTIQ+ activities and programs.
- Centralised monitoring and rapid response systems to reduce the burden of councils and individuals having to respond in isolation.
- Strong leadership at both the state and local government level that reinforces there will be real consequences for those that commit intimidation, hate based harassment and criminal threats.

Current strategies to counter anti-LGBTIQ+ hate crimes, particularly among young people, and how these could be strengthened

The Victorian Government partner with and resource local government to lead place-based, prevention-focused responses that strengthen safety, inclusion and early intervention to prevent anti-LGBTIQ+ hate. This could include:

- Funding or co-funding councils to deliver targeted youth outreach through council-run youth services, facilities and partnerships (e.g. youth drop-ins and sports club engagement) for cohorts at higher risk of online radicalisation.
- Partnering with peak bodies to support councils to implement a consistent, statewide, evidence-informed and LGBTIQ+ inclusive prevention framework across council youth and other relevant services.
- Supporting councils to promote visible allyship across council workplaces, facilities and communications through simple, practical initiatives (e.g. rainbow/ally accessories and signage).
- Strengthening age-appropriate online safety education and reporting pathways delivered through council services, in partnership with the Australian eSafety Commissioner.
- Building the capability of council staff, youth services and community-facing teams to prevent and respond to online harm, including evidence capture, reporting and escalation to eSafety.
- Supporting councils to use libraries as prevention hubs for digital literacy on misinformation, online grooming, reporting tools and algorithmic amplification

Current anti-LGBTIQ+ hate crime prevention initiatives, and how these could be strengthened

The Victorian Government should fund and support and meaningfully partner with the Municipal Association of Victoria (MAV) and local governments, a coordinated statewide local government response to prevent anti-LGBTIQ+ hate crimes, strengthen community safety, and uphold inclusive, values-based leadership at the local level. This should include the Victorian Government:

- Implement a positive duty for organisations to take reasonable and proportionate steps to prevent vilification, as is currently the case for discrimination, sexual harassment and victimisation matters under the Equal Opportunity Act 2010.
- Establish a Citizens' Assembly on Information Integrity (Victoria) bringing together 100 randomly selected Victorians in an independent deliberative process to develop recommendations for a statewide strategy on local responses to disinformation. The strategy would play a similar role to the Victorian Statewide Public Health and Wellbeing Strategy, guiding local government action, and draw on the *Disinformation in the City Response Playbook* to set priorities for programs, partnerships, advocacy, and research at both local and state levels.
- Co-fund the Citizens' Assembly on Information Integrity with a State contribution of \$372,000 (alongside MAV and University of Melbourne in-kind and financial support).
- Develop a concise community safety guide for councils and community sectors outlining how to prevent and respond to online hate and vilification, protect LGBTIQ+ councillors and staff, support safe delivery of public events, and provide clear, role-specific guidance for council teams, with targeted implementation support for regional and rural councils applying the Rainbow Ready Roadmap.
- Standardise local reporting, hotspot mapping and shared learning across councils (via MAV) to identify trends and prevent escalation.
- Fund the development and delivery of bystander training, clear response procedures (SOPs) and safety planning systems for councils.
- Provide government-funded wellbeing, protection and escalation pathways for councillors and staff who are targeted.
- Enable councils to use sport, recreation and community funding levers to require inclusive codes of conduct and complaint processes.
-

The role and responsibilities of social media and digital platform owners in preventing and responding to anti-LGBTIQ+ hate crimes

The Victorian Government advocate in meaningful partnership with local government for stronger Commonwealth measures to address anti-LGBTIQ+ hate online. While the Online Safety Act 2021 and Commonwealth criminal laws provide important tools, gaps remain in ensuring timely takedown, disruption of coordinated hate, and meaningful platform accountability. Platforms should be subject to clear enforceable duties to rapidly remove harmful content, cooperate with regulators and law enforcement, and face effective penalties for non-compliance, alongside clear legal consequences for individuals who incite hate or violence online

Existing empirical data regarding the prevalence and trends of anti-LGBTIQA+ hate crimes Australia-wide

The Victorian Government and MAV advocate for the development of a comprehensive national anti-LGBTIQA+ hate crime database, alongside reforms within Victoria to enable this data to be shared with the local government sector. to enable local government areas to have intelligence on emerging incidents and patterns within their municipality. Access to timely, relevant reporting would support councils to identify emerging trends and incidents within their municipalities and strengthen local prevention and response efforts.

Impact of anti-LGBTIQA+ hate crimes on diverse LGBTIQA+ communities, including Rainbow Mob, people with disability, and multifaith and multicultural community members.

The Victorian Government and MAV support the call for a comprehensive, intersectional and strengthened legal protections against anti-LGBTIQA+ hate and vilification, recognising that rising hate and violence most severely affects people at the intersections of disability, gender identity, race, religious belief or activity, sex, sex characteristics and sexual orientation. Effective prevention and response must acknowledge and address these layered impacts to ensure all Victorians can participate safely and fully in their communities.

Interjurisdictional strategies and methods to combat anti-LGBTIQA+ hate crimes across borders.

The Victorian Government lead a coordinated, cross-jurisdictional approach to combating anti-LGBTIQA+ hate crimes, in partnership with local government and national counterparts. This should include a clear statewide framework, formal mechanisms for collaboration and intelligence-sharing across borders, and sustained resourcing to enable councils to contribute their place-based insights, coordinate local prevention and early intervention, and respond effectively to hate that operates across municipal, state and online boundaries.

The relevant work of the Commissioner for LGBTIQA+ Communities, relevant government advisory groups, including but not limited to relevant community, health and law enforcement organisations to combat anti-LGBTIQA+ hate crimes.

The Victorian Government calls on the Commissioner for LGBTIQA+ Communities to partner with the MAV, to establish and support a formal coalition of councillors, council officers, local government peak bodies and relevant sector organisations. This coalition would strengthen LGBTIQA+ advocacy within the local government sector, improve coordination with health and law-enforcement partners, and support consistent, place-based prevention and responses to anti-LGBTIQA+ hate across Victoria.

MAV would be pleased to provide clarification on any information in this submission. For further information, please contact, Kath Brackett, Director Community & Sector Development at k.brackett@mav.asn.au

Municipal Association of Victoria
Level 5, 1 Nicholson Street, East Melbourne VIC 3002
PO Box 24131, 6 Southern Cross Lane, Melbourne VIC 3000
Telephone: 03 9667 5555 Email: inquiries@mav.asn.au
www.mav.asn.au