



GLBTI inclusive practice: working with rural communities

Catherine Barrett & Kylie Stephens, 2012

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About Gay and Lesbian Health Victoria

Gay and Lesbian Health Victoria is located within The Australian Research Centre in Sex, Health and Society at La Trobe University. The role of the Unit is to enhance and promote the health and well being of gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender and intersex (GLBTI) people in Victoria. This is achieved through training, developing health resources, maintaining a research and information clearinghouse and by providing advice to Government on the planning and development of future GLBTI programs. In 2011 Gay and Lesbian Health Victoria partnered with the Centre for Excellence in Rural Sexual Health (CERSH) to adapt and deliver its education program *How² create a GLBTI inclusive service* to rural services.

For more information go to: www.glhv.org.au or contact: Catherine Barrett on (03) 9285 5297 or c.barrett@latrobe.edu.au

About the Centre for Excellence in Rural Sexual Health (CERSH)

The Centre for Excellence in Rural Sexual Health (CERSH) was established in 2008 and is funded by the Department of Health, Victoria. . CERSH is situated at the Rural Health Academic Centre, University of Melbourne in Shepparton. The vision is that all rural Victorians have access to quality sexual health care, information and support that is tailored to their individual needs. The purpose of the Centre is to design, implement and evaluate programs that provide practical solutions to improve the prevention of sexually transmissible infections (STIs) in rural Victoria. We promote a positive and respectful approach to sexual health and equity of sexual expression, and actively challenge discrimination, exclusion and social inequities. One of our key priorities for 2011-12, in partnership with GLHV, is to support organisations to create inclusive health services for rural GLBTI community members. For more information go to www.cersh.com.au or contact Kylie Stephens on 0417054040 or kylies@unimelb.edu.au

Cover image: The Love Sculpture – a community arts project undertaken by Grampians Community Health to engage rural communities in writing messages of support for GLBTI people in their local community.

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Introduction

This document outlines the issues and opportunities for rural health and human services implementing the National Standards for gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender and intersex (GLBTI) inclusive practice. This document is intended to complement the National Standards for GLBTI inclusive practice developed by Gay and Lesbian Health Victoria.

The National Standards and the accreditation processes were developed in response to increasing requests from the GLBTI community. In particular, the most frequent request to Gay and Lesbian Health Victoria is from consumers who want a list of GLBTI inclusive health or human services. Most consumers are aware that some services communicate that they are GLBTI friendly through Rainbow flags or by listing their service in GLBTI media. However, GLBTI consumers increasingly want assurances that these services understand and are responsive to the needs of GLBTI people. At the same time Gay and Lesbian Health Victoria receive numerous requests from service providers wanting guidance on how to be more inclusive of GLBTI consumers.

In response to these requests, Gay and Lesbian Health Victoria identified the opportunity to develop a systemic approach to helping services understand and respond to the needs of GLBTI consumers. Through conversations with service providers it became apparent that it would be useful to establish a benchmark for inclusive practice, through the development of standards and indicators.

About the National Standards for GLBTI inclusive practice

The standards build on generic recommendations for GLBTI inclusive practice outlined in *Well Proud: A guide to GLBTI inclusive practice for health and human services* developed by the Department of Health Victoria¹ by including a series of quality based practice indicators. The six GLBTI inclusive standards are:

1. Access and intake processes
2. Consumer consultation
3. Cultural safety
4. Disclosure and documentation
5. Professional development
6. Organisational capacity

The development of these standards and indicators provides a bench mark against which services can clearly identify where improvements can be made. The Standards can be independently accredited for the first time in Australia. This project is called the Rainbow Tick, an initiative of Gay and Lesbian Health Victoria (GLHV) and was developed in collaboration with the Quality Improvement and Community Services Accreditation (QICSA) and received funding from the Victorian Department of Health.

¹ Department of Health Victoria. (2008). *Well Proud: A guide to GLBTI inclusive practice for health and human services*. Available from: www.health.vic.gov.au/glbti/mac/resources.htm.

The aims

The aims of the Standards are to assist health and human service organisations to understand and develop services that are inclusive of GLBTI people. In particular, the aims of inclusive practice are to:

1. Assist organisations to understand the needs of GLBTI consumers
2. Support organisations to develop services that meet the needs of GLBTI consumers
3. Improve services to GLBTI consumers

Understanding the aims of GLBTI inclusive practice is important. Some service providers believe that the success of inclusive practice can be measured by an increased number of GLBTI consumers revealing their sexual orientation or gender identity because it feels safe to do so. While this may be the case it is important to remember that the aim of inclusive practice is to ensure that the needs of GLBTI consumers are understood and that they feel valued and respected, regardless of whether or not they disclose.

The Standards and related indicators are structured to slot into existing quality improvement frameworks. They are also structured to provide criteria against which an accrediting agency, the organisation itself and its consumers can assess the degree to which these standards are being met.

The importance of rural considerations

The documentation of rural considerations for the Standards is as much about the process as it is the end product (this resource). The development of this resource involved significant consultation with rural services to check the relevance and application of the Standards to rural services. It identified a number of issues that needed to be articulated to ensure the Standards were relevant to rural services. Perhaps the most significant of these was the close relationship between many services and their local community and the implications for the development of GLBTI inclusive practice.

How to use this resource

In the following section the six standards are presented. Each standard has an essence statement presented in bold and italics. Next, there is statement summarising the intent of the standard in a nutshell. Then the rural considerations are listed. This document is not intended to be used as a 'stand alone' resource. Rather it is intended to sit alongside (and be incorporated into) documents relating to the Standards.

Standards

Standard 1: Access and intake processes

Standard: Access and intake processes send a message of welcome to GLBTI consumers.

In a nutshell

At the first point of contact with an organisation, many GLBTI consumers will search for indications that it is safe to disclose their sexual orientation or gender identity issues. Organisations can communicate to GLBTI consumers that they are welcome by displaying GLBTI posters, referring to GLBTI consumers in information about their service, and by promoting their organisation to the GLBTI community.

Indicators

- 1.1: At intake and assessment staff include GLBTI information in their service orientation processes.
- 1.2: The organisation welcomes GLBTI consumers through a range of different strategies that are appropriate to the media and / or environment.
- 1.3: The service includes GLBTI information and images in resources for consumers and staff.
- 1.4: The organisation promotes its services to the GLBTI community.

Rural considerations

- 1. Communicating a message of welcome at the point of entry can be particularly important in rural areas for GLBTI people who don't feel safe disclosing in the community.
- 2. Some service providers may have difficulty understanding the importance of providing a welcome to GLBTI consumers at the point of intake and assessment because they believe that:
 - a. They don't have a local GLBTI community
 - b. If there were any GLBTI people in town they would know about it.
- 3. In reality, many GLBTI consumers in rural areas are unlikely to disclose their sexual orientation or gender identity until the service demonstrates that it welcomes GLBTI consumers and that those GLBTI consumers who disclose will be safe from discrimination.
- 4. GLBTI clients may be reluctant to disclose their sexual orientation or gender identity if admissions and intake staff are known to them in the community or are friends of friends etc.
- 5. Anonymity, confidentiality and privacy can be more difficult to provide in small rural communities. Rural organisations may need to build their reputation and credibility among the GLBTI population as a safe and welcoming service, and recognise that this trust can easily be eroded if confidentiality and privacy has been compromised.
- 6. Some specialist organisations in rural locations may find it challenging to provide services to GLBTI clients due to funding limitations and existing policies and practices (e.g. domestic violence services, support groups).
- 7. The lack of local GLBTI services in rural areas may limit the opportunities for referral to GLBTI services locally. Issues that rural communities may need to tackle include:

- a. GLBTI consumers may wish to access services in another locality, city, across state borders rather than use local services and support groups.
 - b. Workers should therefore support this to happen if requested and be prepared to provide information about support and service options beyond the local area.
8. GLBTI consumers may need to relocate residence and locality if inadvertent disclosure occurs and results in discrimination in their town.
9. Rural organisations have the capacity to utilise their strong formal and informal networks to coordinate a systemic and consistent approach to improving access and intake processes and displaying messages of welcome.
10. Some organisations in rural areas have the capacity to provide personal care, support, assisted referral and follow-up through the health and community care systems.

Standard 2: consumer consultation

Standard: GLBTI consumers are consulted about, and participate in, the planning, development and review of the service.

In a nutshell

GLBTI consumers can provide a valuable source of information for organisations developing GLBTI inclusive services. Participation by GLBTI consumers can assist organisations to identify consumer needs, develop appropriate services and evaluate the effectiveness of their service changes.

Indicators

- 2.1: The organisation works with GLBTI consumers to identify their needs and utilises this information to develop appropriate services.
- 2.2: The organisation has a system for the ongoing monitoring of its GLBTI consumers to identify changing needs and evaluate outcomes of service improvements.
- 2.3: As part of its ongoing assessment of consumer experience, the organisation analyses its performance in working with GLBTI consumers and undertakes appropriate service improvements accordingly.

Rural considerations

1. A consultation process in rural areas may need to be designed very differently to accommodate the close relationship between the service and the community. The successful development of GLBTI inclusive services may require the engagement and/or development of the community.
2. Rural communities can utilise state-wide services and supports, such as the Safe Schools Coalition of Victoria, to provide information and advice that can assist in building community support for GLBTI inclusive services.
3. If there is no visible GLBTI presence in town, a well managed communication and media strategy may be the first step to encourage GLBTI people to contact the organisation.
4. Information about consumer consultation can be disseminated through locally recognised sources such as the local hairdressers, post office etc, as well as specific GLBTI community magazines that people may subscribe to or access over the internet.
5. Framing community consultation broadly in terms of diversity may provide the opportunity for GLBTI people to be involved without having to 'out' themselves.
6. Providing a range of options for feedback from GLBTI people, such as community surveys, can be a useful way of gauging interest in supporting the service to develop GLBTI inclusive practice.
7. In rural areas it can be useful to avert possible public criticism by developing a strategy to provide the community with information on why GLBTI inclusive practice is necessary, for example, data on the mental health of young GLBTI people in rural areas.
8. If few GLBTI clients provide feedback, consultation with existing GLBTI community groups and their friends, family and allies may provide a broader perspective.
9. Community consultation may involve establishing a GLBTI community group to build or develop GLBTI supports in the community.

10. Any consultation process will require the organisation to manage the potential risk to GLBTI clients and community members to ensure that their participation in the process is safe and non-discriminatory.
 - a. This includes asking consumers to what extent they have thought about their risk management in terms of participation (ie: the risk of being 'outed' and risk of encountering discrimination if they are identified as GLBTI).
 - b. If engagement with GLBTI clients and community members is new for the rural organisation, then it will be important to build trust prior to identifying actions.
11. By taking a participatory, long term approach to consultation and feedback processes, rural organisations can improve their ability to identify what works locally, build respect, demonstrate its values, and strengthen ownership among GLBTI clients and community members.
12. Rural services may be able to work collaboratively with similar services to plan and facilitate one consultation processes.
13. Rural organisations may be able help promote and celebrate local GLBTI inclusivity by tapping into existing strengths, achievements, celebrations, and sources of pride in the local community.

Standard 3: cultural safety

Standard: services and programs identify, assess and manage risks to ensure the cultural safety of GLBTI consumers.

In a nutshell

GLBTI culture refers to the language, beliefs, practices and symbols used to articulate or express sexual orientation or gender identity. Organisations need to ensure that potential and actual risks to the cultural safety of GLBTI consumers are identified and that procedures are implemented to manage and respond to these risks.

Indicators

- 3.1: The organisation disseminates information about cultural safety across its programs and services and to other organisations.
- 3.2: The organisation's clinical risk management systems include strategies to identify and manage potential risks to the cultural safety of GLBTI consumers for program and service level activity.
- 3.3: The organisation has processes in place to respond to breaches of the cultural safety for GLBTI consumers by staff, consumers, visitors or volunteers.

Rural considerations

- 1. The lack of visibility of GLBTI clients and the (perceived or real) small numbers of GLBTI community members can impact on service providers' awareness of the importance of cultural safety.
- 2. Rural services may not understand the importance of an organisational wide approach to developing GLBTI inclusive practice and so may instead rely on one staff member (often a GLBTI member) as the change champion.
- 3. If there are small numbers of GLBTI consumers, a rural service may inadvertently apply a 'one size fits all' approach to GLBTI people, rather than attend to the unique needs of individual clients.
- 4. A rural organisation may be able to commit to protecting the confidentiality of GLBTI consumers but have more difficulty providing anonymity (for example, people may see a GLBTI person attending a GLBTI group). This needs to be made clear to GLBTI consumers and community members.
- 5. Rural services need to carefully consider the resources available and allocated to GLBTI inclusive practice across the organisation to ensure that their capacity matches expectations of GLBTI consumers and community members.
- 6. Rural organisations may be able to increase their capacity and share responsibility to tackle the issues associated with cultural safety in their local rural context by working collaboratively with other organisations and networks.
- 7. By building strong, trusting relationships with the local GLBTI community, rural organisations may be able to receive regular feedback from the GLBTI community and GLBTI consumers about potential cultural risks and solutions.

Standard 4: disclosure and documentation

Standard: GLBTI consumers feel safe to provide personal information, including disclosure of sexual orientation or gender identity, because they know systems are in place to ensure their privacy.

In a nutshell

While all services are bound by privacy requirements, GLBTI consumers may feel particular anxiety about disclosure for fear of inadvertently being “outed” to others. As well as having systems in place to ensure that GLBTI consumers feel able to provide relevant information to staff, services must ensure that staff and volunteer responses to disclosure are positive and are respectful and that staff respect the consumer’s wishes relating to disclosure and documentation. GLBTI consumers may need additional assurances of confidentiality before they trust the system.

Indicators

- 4.1: Information about sexual orientation is collected if it is directly related to, and reasonably necessary for, an organisation’s functions or activities
- 4.2: Staff signal to consumers that they are welcome to discuss their sexual orientation or gender identity
- 4.3: Staff respond in a positive and respectful way to disclosure
- 4.4: Information about sexual orientation or gender identity is collected from the individual it relates to, unless that is unreasonable or impractical
- 4.4: Staff check how consumers would like this information recorded and take reasonable steps to inform the consumer about how the information may be used, who may access it and the consequences of not providing it
- 4.6: Staff inform GLBTI consumers that information about sexual identity or gender orientation is confidential, clarify when disclosure is appropriate and inform consumers how information will be used and stored.

Rural considerations

1. It is particularly important that staff understand their responsibilities in relation to confidentiality in small towns where a GLBTI person who is ‘outed’ may have no further options to receive services and support.
2. Disclosure may be complicated for a GLBTI person who has contacts in the organisation that don’t know their sexual orientation or gender identity.
3. GLBTI people that are closeted and receiving home services in rural areas may go to particularly great lengths to hide their sexual orientation or gender identity from staff if they are worried that staff may pass on information to others.

Standard 5: Professional development

Standard: professional development is provided to ensure all staff in the service are confident about GLBTI inclusive practice and understand their responsibilities in relation to service delivery to GLBTI consumers.

In a nutshell

Services which pride themselves on “treating everybody the same” usually default to treating everybody as though they are heterosexual. It is important that all staff, volunteers and board members of the service, irrespective of their position and responsibilities, receive appropriate and practical training in GLBTI cultural competency, and in specific strategies relevant to GLBTI service delivery.

Indicators

- 5.1: The education program systematically identifies the needs of the whole of organisation and regularly reviews practices to ensure that staff and volunteers understand their responsibilities (including legal responsibilities) in relation to GLBTI consumers and embrace culturally sensitive practices.
- 5.2: The organisation assists staff, volunteers and board members of the service to reflect on their own values and beliefs about GLBTI people and the impact these have on services
- 5.3: Education is provided to identify and challenge stereotypes and assumptions about GLBTI people
- 5.4: The organisation keeps up to date with current trends in the field of GLBTI service provision and uses evidence to educate staff on how to improve outcomes for its GLBTI consumers.
- 5.5: The organisation participates in professional associations and other forums in its field regarding the provision of services to GLBTI consumers.

Rural considerations

1. Education needs to consider cultural context of the local community.
2. Understanding the cultural context of the local community needs to be acknowledge that some staff conduct outreach in other townships and rural areas with a range of cultural contexts.
3. Education that provides rural based statistics can show the level of disadvantage, assist to identify disadvantage and discrimination as a rural issue, and may help staff and community members to understand the importance of GLBTI inclusive practice.
4. Education that offers opportunities for staff to hear from GLBTI people about their story or life experience can break down stereotypes for rural people that have not met a GLBTI person.
5. Staff in rural areas live and work in their community – it is important to discuss the implications of this including:
 - a. How staff separate their community persona from their professional responsibilities.
 - b. How professional development can help the service to develop the local community.
6. The values and beliefs of staff have an impact on their responses to GLBTI consumers. It is important that staff are provided with opportunities to reflect on what GLBTI inclusive practice means for them as workers and a members of their local rural community.

7. Where service provider's responses to GLBTI clients are embedded in their own personal values and beliefs, this presents a particular challenge for GLBTI clients, when there are no alternative services.
8. Professional supervision needs to assist staff to understand their responsibilities in relation to the provision of services to GLBTI clients. This can slip of the agenda if it is not highly visible in rural areas.
9. Staff working on GLBTI inclusive practice may need to be prepared for questions/concerns and issues being identified out of work (eg: in the local supermarket) because they are known for working on GLBTI inclusive practice.
10. Despite the evidence that some rural areas have higher levels of homophobia some rural services demonstrate leadership and develop innovative strategies for GLBTI inclusive practices.
11. Rural services are often innovative about how they organise and deliver training to overcome obstacles such as distance and financial constraints eg: often collaborate across services.

Standard 6: organisational capacity

Standard: The organisation embeds GLBTI inclusive practice across all organisational systems and continuously seeks opportunities for improvements.

In a nutshell

The capacity of organisations to provide GLBTI inclusive services needs to be supported by ensuring that the standards outlined in this document are embedded in the organisational culture. Organisational managers need to demonstrate strong leadership in GLBTI inclusive practice and employees need to demonstrate followship by supporting GLBTI inclusive practice and identifying opportunities to improvements.

Indicators

- 6.1: The standards outlined in this document are reflected in the organisation's mission statement, vision, position descriptions, service contracts, performance appraisal system, service models and quality management plan.
- 6.2: The organisation models respect for diversity by facilitating representation from the GLBTI community amongst paid staff and volunteer positions including the Governance body and other organisational bodies.
- 6.3: The organisation has an integrated GLBTI consumer feedback system which ensures continuous quality improvement and planning in relation to these standards.
- 6.4: The organisation has systems for monitoring compliance with these standards and making continuous improvements to enhance GLBTI inclusive practice.

Rural considerations

- 1. It is important that organizations plan for and allocate resources to community development and engagement.
- 2. The organization can build support for GLBTI inclusive services by modeling GLBTI inclusive practice in its employment policies and processes.
- 3. Services need to understand and address the issues for GLBLTI staff in rural services, such as homophobia from other service providers, volunteers and clients.
- 4. The organisation needs to consider the sustainability of GLBTI inclusive practice initiatives to ensure that staff and clients who disclose as part of the service development process are not placed in a vulnerable position (outed and without support) if the activities cease.
- 5. There is the potential to increase the recruitment and retention of GLBTI staff in organizations that value and understand the needs of GLBTI people.
- 6. The collaboration with other rural services can assist organizational capacity building.
- 7. Local members of the GLBTI community may provide valuable support to assist the organisation to develop its capacity if engaged in a respectful way.
- 8. Partnerships and networks that exist in rural areas, eg: medicare locals, Primary care partnerships, can provide the opportunity to advocate for GLBTI inclusive practice

Resources and further information

Gay and Lesbian Health Victoria (GLHV)

www.glhv.org.au

GLHV was established to enhance and promote the health and well being of GLBTI people in Victoria. The Unit provides support for health care providers and the community through training, the development of health resources and an information clearing house.

The Centre for Excellence in Rural Sexual Health (CERSH)

www.cersh.org.au

The Centre for Excellence in Rural Sexual Health (CERSH) is funded by the Department of Health, Victoria and situated at the Rural Health Academic Centre, University of Melbourne in Shepparton. CERSH coordinates sexual health professional networks, and offers professional development and training in the clinical and health promotion arenas. CERSH supports evidence-based sexual health promotion programs in partnership with other agencies and networks.

General resources

CAN Victoria

www.can.org.au

The Country Awareness Network Victoria Inc. (CAN) is a community based, not for profit, non government membership organisation funded, in part, by the Department of Human Services Victoria (DHS AND DOH). CAN provides information, education, support, referrals and advocacy to Victorian rural/regional communities regarding HIV/AIDS, Hepatitis C, other Blood Borne Viruses and Sexually Transmitted Infections.

Goulburn Valley Pride Shepparton

Goulburn Valley Pride (GV Pride) is Greater Shepparton's Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex, Queer, Ally (GLBTIQA) social group located in the Shepparton/Goulburn Valley/North-East Victorian region – friends/family of the GLBTIQA community most welcome too! We host social events such as movie nites, 10 pin bowling, coffee, trips to major GLBTIQA events, bush walks, restaurants/night clubs/pubs/dance parties, info sessions, home shopping parties & more. GV PRIDE INC. – providing a safe space for friendship, family, networking and fellowship! More info @ www.gvpride.org or phone/SMS Cris on 0400 053 892 or email gvpride@gvpride.org

Hume Phoenix (Albury-Wodonga)

Hume Phoenix is a social support group for Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer and Intersex (GLBTIQ) people, and their family and friends, living in the Albury-Wodonga region. The incorporated group organises a range events to connect people in the area and provide a safe space for those new to the GLBTIQ community. Hume Phoenix also aims to increase acceptance and tolerance of the GLBTIQ community by raising the profile of the group in a positive manner. Hume Phoenix also aims to promote health-based messages, specific to the GLBTIQ community, to its members.

Contact Hume Phoenix: Mobile: 0458 216 464 Email: hume phoenix@yahoo.com Facebook: Become a [Friend of Hume Phoenix](#) Snail Mail: PO Box 1155, Albury NSW 2640. <http://hume phoenix.com.au/>

PLWHA Victoria

www.plwhavictoria.org.au

The peak advocacy, education, advice, support and social networking body for all People Living with HIV/AIDS in Victoria.

PFLAG

www.pflagvictoria.org.au

A group of parents, families and friends of gay, lesbian and bisexual people who offer support and friendship to families, particularly parents, and also to members of the GLBTI community who may need support in coming out to their families and friends.

PFLAG Greater Shepparton

We are a group of parents, families and friends of gay, lesbian and bisexual people who meet once a month and offer support and friendship to families, particularly parents, and also to members of the GLBTI community who may need support in coming out to their families and friends. We offer support through public education and advocacy, to end discrimination and secure equal civil rights. PFLAG aims to provide a vital link between GLBTI people and the wider community. We meet at UnitingCare Cutting Edge, 136 Maude Street, Shepparton at 7.30pm. For more info contact Glenys on 0409 626 647 or email pflagshepparton@ucce.org.au – More info @ <http://www.go.to/pflagshepparton>

Rainbow Families

www.rainbowfamilies.org.au

A website providing information, support and a resources forum for parents, partners and prospective parents who identify as being GLBTI and their families, friends and allies.

TransGender Victoria

www.transgendervictoria.com

A community based organisation supporting the Victorian transgender community, their family, friends, partners and others. The organisation advocates for legislative reform and works with government and community groups in all aspects of human rights for transsexuals and cross-dressers alike.

Uniting Network Australi

Uniting Network Australia is the national network for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered people, their families, friends and supporters within the Uniting Church in Australia. We proudly participate in helping the Church wrestle with issues of faith, sexuality and membership and work for greater inclusivity within the Church. More info @ <http://www.unitingnetworkaustralia.org.au/> or contact Revd Dr Robert Stringer (0418 419 742) or Revd Leanne Jensi (0409 516 857).

Victorian AIDS Council and the Gay Men's Health Centre

www.vicaids.asn.au

An organisation that aims to improve the health and social and emotional well-being of the Victorian HIV positive and GLBT communities by providing care, support and advocacy to the HIV positive community and service providers.

Way Out

www.wayout.org.au

WayOut, Rural Victorian Youth & Sexual Diversity Project is a partnership between Cobaw Community Health Service and Gay & Lesbian Health Victoria. The project works with communities in rural Victoria to raise awareness about homophobia and to provide an environment that is welcoming to same sex attracted young people.

Young people - general

Rainbow Network

www.rainbownetwork.net.au

Rainbow Network Victoria is the statewide network for anyone who works with same sex attracted, bisexual, queer, or transgender young people in community or school-based settings.

Roz Ward, 215 Franklin Street, Melbourne 3000, T:03 9285 5131 F:03 9285 5220

E: r.ward@latrobe.edu.au

W: www.rainbownetwork.net.au

Safe schools coalition

<http://safeschoolscoalitionvictoria.org.au/about>

Safe Schools Coalition Victoria is a coalition of schools and individuals dedicated to creating safer educational environments where same sex attracted and gender questioning young people are supported, where every family can belong, where every teacher can teach and every student can learn. The coalition provides training, resources and consultancy for every school in Victoria to support sexual diversity and gender diversity, and thereby enhance school performance.

Roz Ward, 215 Franklin Street, Melbourne 3000, T:03 9285 5131 F:03 9285 5220

E: r.ward@latrobe.edu.au

W: www.safeschoolscoalitionvictoria.org.au

Minus 18

www.minus18.org.au

Minus18 is Australia's largest youth run network for same sex attracted and gender diverse teens.

Minus18 connect young people online and through events, to reduce social isolation and help them make friends. While Minus18 events take place in Melbourne, the Minus18 Website is used by tens-of-thousands-of young people Australia wide to connect with each other. Whether you're a guy who likes guys, a girl who likes girls, or just unsure - Minus18 is the place for you. Contact:T / 9660 3900.

E / info@minus18.org.au A / Level 8, 225 Bourke St, Melbourne VIC, Australia, 3000

Rural youth groups

A list of rural youth groups is provided on the *Way Out* website for the Rural Victorian Youth and Diversity Project available at: <http://www.wayout.org.au/> - a summary of the groups and information from the site is provided below.

B-EPIC

B-EPIC is a youth driven group that aims to raise awareness in the community about sexual and gender diversity. We value friendship, acceptance, security and open mindedness.

We welcome all young people aged 16 – 25 who are concerned about the negative effects of homophobia and transphobia, irrespective of whether they are gay, straight, bi or not sure. We meet once a week for work and fun stuff like developing merchandise, planning talks to schools and going to events. We like pizza! If you would like a chance to meet up with other like minded people, have some fun and do things to make a positive change in your community, please contact us.

For further information contact Adam or Paula, our support workers at the CAN resource centre telephone 03 5443 8355 or email can@can.org.au

Diversity Group Shepparton

The Diversity Group is a social-support group for same-sex attracted & gender questioning young people in the greater Goulburn Valley. The Diversity Group provides an open, friendly and welcoming environment for young people to explore sexuality issues, get information, discuss concerns and talk with others about similar life experiences. The Diversity Group is supervised by professional adult leaders and offers safety and confidentiality. The Diversity Group is open to

same-sex attracted & gender questioning young people between the ages of 12 - 25 years. We hold fortnightly meetings in the Shepparton area on the 2nd & 4th Monday evenings of the month, generally between 6.00pm and 9.00pm. For any further information or if you would like to join the Diversity Group, please contact Damien Stevens (Community Development Worker – Diversity Project) @ UnitingCare Cutting Edge by phoning (03) 5831 6157 or SMS 0437 134 625 or email diversity@ucce.org.au and we will be more than willing to answer any questions you may have. Find us on Facebook too @ www.facebook.com/diversitygroup

DYNAMIC Colac

Get involved with the DYNAMIC Colac. We currently catch up fortnightly on a Wednesday. If you want to come along contact Emma Warton, Youth Development Worker at Colac Area Health. For more information on Ph. (03) 5232 5143 or Mobile. 0400 1310697
Or email: ewarton.cah@swarh.vic.gov.au

GASP Geelong

Geelong Adolescent Sexuality Project (GASP) is a social and support service for young people who are gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender or questioning their sexuality. *GASP is important because* approximately 10% of young people experience feelings of same sex attraction. Young people questioning their sexuality can feel isolated, depressed and experience homophobic abuse at school, in the home and on the street. GASP offers support, information, referral and social stuff for same sex attracted young people and aims to create a community that celebrates all young people. GASP holds support groups for young people who are same sex attracted or questioning their sexuality. Research indicates the positive impact peer support groups can have on the mental health and wellbeing of same sex attracted young people. Group membership leads to an increase in friendships and support and a reduction in isolation and alienation that is a direct result of homophobia. The group offers young people a chance to meet other young people who might be experiencing the same things. It runs throughout the year and has benefited many young people. Young people interested in this group can contact Jami Jones directly to arrange a meeting time on 5272 4977.

J.I.T.A! Wodonga

JUMP IN, TAKE ACTION (J.I.T.A!) Youth Diversity Group meet regularly in Wodonga to address issues facing same sex attracted and gender diverse young people living in the Wodonga and Albury area. If you would like to get involved contact Kat on 0438 540 013 or kathryn.ettwell@cobaw.vic.gov.au and keep checking back here for updates.

Macedon Youth WayOut Group

The MY WayOut Group is a Gay/Straight Alliance of young people from the Macedon Ranges who meet weekly and plan ways to raise awareness in their community about the issues facing same sex attracted youth. One of our latest projects was the BIG Picture event in Kyneton. We invited the local community to be a part of a photo to make the statement "Make Homophobia History". We had over 120 people of all ages join in and get a free hat with "Make Homophobia History" stitched in the front. Thanks to all those who joined in on the day. The picture has been transformed into 2 posters that are displayed in business' and services across the Macedon Ranges. The posters include information about the effects of homophobia.

WayOut!

WayOut is the Victorian Rural Youth and Sexual Diversity Project. The project works with communities in rural Victoria to raise awareness about homophobia and to provide an environment that is welcoming to same sex attracted young people. WayOut provides a range of services including:

- Training, support and research updates for workers

- Support to young people's groups
- Support to community groups and organisations
- Production and distribution of posters, information cards & stickers etc.
- Facilitating a group for young people in the Macedon Ranges Shire.

Phone(03) 5421 1619 or visit the website: www.wayout.org.au

Postal address: Cobaw Community Health Service 47 High Street Kyneton, VIC 3444

Whatever Morwell

Whatever meets regularly and provides a range of different activities, such as Guest Speakers, Recreational Activities, linking in with same sex attracted youth activities in other areas and developing projects to challenge homophobia in the Latrobe Valley Community. Whatever is a Youth Diversity Project run by young people from the Latrobe Valley and supported by Kilmany Uniting Care and Headspace. The group develops social action projects aimed at providing support and challenging homophobic attitudes in the community. "Whatever" welcomes all young people who are interested in working towards a safe and diverse community for all young people.

The group meets on a fortnightly basis for fun and activities, information and support and projects to challenge homophobia in our community. The group is an open, friendly and welcoming environment where you can be whoever and whatever you are! If you are interested in coming along phone Headspace on 51262899 or Helma at Luke's Place on 03 5135 3006

Check out our website www.whateveryouthdiversity.org.au for more information.

YUMCHA Warnambool

Yumcha is for anyone under 25 year olds, whether they are Gay, Lesbian, Straight, Bi or Transgender or anything! Our main goal is to remove discrimination in all forms, focusing on homophobia in the Warrnambool community and surrounding areas. We also aim to improve the lives of Gay, Lesbian, Bi and Transgender youths in this community. This also includes changing the community's perception of homosexuals. The group is completely confidential, you don't need to tell people you are attending and you don't have to disclose your sexuality. You are welcome to bring friends if you feel uncomfortable, but we know you won't). Yumcha meets on a weekly basis on a Monday usually between 4pm-5pm, At the Brophy Youth Building (don't feel threatened coming, there's so many other meetings on no one knows what your there for). During the holidays we usually have a break. For any enquires call our group facilitator Jackie Wallis on (03) 5561 8824 at Brophy! If you don't feel comfortable with this please feel free to come to Brophy and ask about Yumcha or contact an existing member if you know them! Yumcha is a drug and alcohol free group.

Zaque Ballarat

Zaque meets on a weekly basis at YHQ. Zaque holds a community meeting fortnightly and try to do an activity or fun event on the other weeks. The meetings are held between 4pm and 6pm.

Zaque is a Same Sex Attracted youth group for the Ballarat and surrounding areas. Zaque is a social networking group that provides a safe and welcoming place for all SSA youth. Check out ZAQUE on MySpace and Facebook or contact Ash McNeight, Same Sex Attracted Youth Project

Check out ZAQUE on MySpace and Facebook or contact Ash McNeight, Same Sex Attracted Youth Project Officer for more information on 03 5320 5644 or ashleymcneight@ballarat.vic.gov.au

Activities, projects and festivals

Diversity Project Shepparton

The "Diversity Project" aims to create a safer, more inclusive, and healthier community for young people in the City of Greater Shepparton (& beyond) who are same-sex attracted or gender-questioning. Funded by Victoria's Department of Health, the project has two components. The first provides support for young people whose access to appropriate health, education and housing are impacted by homophobia, or who, as a result of "coming out" have suffered relationships

breakdown and/or discrimination. Intensive support and case management is available to young people whose physical and mental health has been adversely affected by such discrimination. The second component is geared toward health promotion, where resources are produced and offered to schools, clubs, volunteer groups, health and community welfare providers to create more inclusive spaces, combat homophobia, and help young people feel safe to talk openly about their sexuality and gender with respect to their health, education or economic needs. The "Diversity (SSAGQYP social-support) Group" will continue to run fortnightly alongside both components of the Project. The Department of Health calls it the Same-Sex Attracted and Gender-Questioning Youth Support Program. We at UnitingCare Cutting Edge call it, simply, the "Diversity Project". The Diversity Project aims to make the City of Greater Shepparton (and beyond) a safe place for all people, free of homophobia and discrimination. Moreover, the Diversity Project works to ensure that young people grow and develop while feeling safe to talk about their feelings, thoughts and identities, and seek the right help when they need it. If you would like to know more about the "Diversity Project", please contact us via Facebook (www.facebook.com/diversityprojectshepparton) or phone 03 5831 6157 or SMS 0437 134 625 or email damien@ucce.org.au

OUTintheOPEN Festival Shepparton

OUTintheOPEN is Shepparton's newest festival celebrating community diversity. OUTintheOPEN was developed to address some of the inequalities faced by the local GLBTIQ communities and to build a more inclusive community in Greater Shepparton. The lead agencies for OUTintheOPEN are UnitingCare Cutting Edge and Primary Care Connect with many other organisations and community groups supporting the festival. Some of these include GV (Goulburn Valley) Pride, PFLAG (Parents, Family members & Friends of Lesbian & Gay people) Greater Shepparton, Diversity Project & Diversity Group (same-sex attracted & gender questioning young person's social-support group), GV Health, CERSH (Centre for Excellence in Rural Sexual Health), Relationships Australia, Goulburn Valley Primary Care Partnership (GVPCP), City of Greater Shepparton, Goulburn North East Women's Health, CAN Bendigo, the GV Hotel and Victoria Police (in particular local GLLO). The festival will consist of a health/well-being forum (venue TBA) and a Carnival day on the third weekend in November at the Victoria Park Lake. More info @ <http://www.outintheopen.org.au> or contact Damien on 0437 134 625 or damien@ucce.org.au