

# Switchboard Vic ANNUAL REPORT

—  
2020-21

CONNECTING AND  
SUPPORTING  
OUR COMMUNITY





Cover design by Jacq Moon.

Our community working together to support each other.



Switchboard is based on the lands of the Kulin Nations, always and forever the home of the Wurundjeri, Boonwurrung, Wathaurong, Taungurong and Djadjawurrung peoples.

We acknowledge that our work takes place on lands that are under colonial occupation and that Kulin Nation sovereignty was never ceded here. We hope to pay our respects to Kulin Nation elders, past and present and wish to extend this respect to any and all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People, and the Aboriginal or Torres Islander People in our staff and broader community.

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A note on photography – any photography in this report unless indicated that it is taken on-line, was taken within the Coronavirus (COVID-19) restrictions in Victoria 2020-2021.

Report design: jacqmoon.com

## SWITCHBOARD VICTORIA INC

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# OUR SWITCHBOARD JOURNEY



Switchboard Victoria Inc is a community based not-for-profit organisation that provides peer based, volunteer run support services for the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, queer, asexual (LGBTIQ+) communities and their allies, friends and families.

## 1991



**Originally called Gay and Lesbian Switchboard, the organisation was established in 1991 as a volunteer telephone counselling and referral service with seed funding from the ALSO foundation. Thirty years on, Switchboard remains volunteer driven and runs a range of services and projects.**

The vision of our founder David Sampson was to create a service, like the then London Gay Switchboard, for gays

and lesbians who had not yet come out to themselves or others, or who were socially isolated.

In 1991, a community meeting was held to establish a core group of people to set up the service. The founders insisted lesbians be at the forefront, and not just as "token members", and Heather Morgan came forward. Heather had worked for general telephone counselling service Crisis Line and became the new service's core trainer.

Our founders identified the value of a peer-based counselling service, delivered by LGBTIQ+ volunteers who shared and could affirm the experiences of our callers.

They committed to delivering a fully inclusive service, open to all callers without discrimination on the basis of sex, gender, gender expression, ethnicity, age, ability, religion, health, financial or social status, geographic location or isolation, sexual orientation or political belief.

*They committed to delivering a fully inclusive service, open to all callers without discrimination on the basis of sex, gender, gender expression, ethnicity, age, ability, religion, health, financial or social status, geographic location or isolation, sexual orientation or political belief*



## 2014

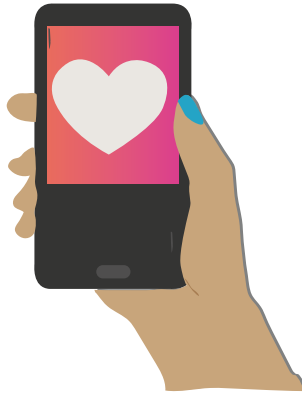
In 2014 we also significantly expanded our services to provide a volunteer-based home visiting service, now called **Out and About**, to reduce social isolation and improve community connectedness for older LGBTI Victorians.

## 2013

In 2013-14 Switchboard joined our phone service with services in other states to form Australia's first national LGBTIQ+ telephone and web-chat counselling service, now known as **QLife**.

By that time it was clear that the name Gay and Lesbian Switchboard reflected neither the callers' nor our volunteers' diversity in relation to sexuality and gender.

So in 2014, our members agreed to drop "Gay and Lesbian" and call the service Switchboard Victoria.



## 2017

In 2017 we established our **QTIPoC program**: QTIPoC stands for Queer, Trans and Intersex People of Colour. The program aims to further understanding within and beyond Switchboard on issues that affect accessibility and inclusion of QTIPoC.

## 2018

In 2017-18 we joined Queerspace/ Drummond street services, Thorne Harbour Health and Transgender Victoria in launching **w/respect**, Australia's first LGBTIQ+ integrated services response to LGBTIQ+ family violence.

## 2019

In 2018-19 Switchboard formally established our **suicide prevention service**, in February 2019 engaging our Suicide Prevention Manager.

In April 2019 the **Out and About** program was re-funded, following a decision in December 2018 where the program's funding was slashed by two thirds. Switchboard's broad-based campaign saved this valuable service. Since then we have been funded to expand the service to socially isolated LGBTI elders aged over 60, and to partner with and build the capacity of mainstream service providers.



## 2020

In 2020 in response to Coronavirus (COVID-19), we have transformed our service to respond to the needs of the LGBTIQ+ community during a world wide pandemic.

## 2021

As we move into a new era globally, Switchboard has grown as a service and know that we have the capacity and resilience as an important service for the LGBTIQ+ community in Victoria.

On the 28th September 2020, we launched **Rainbow Door**. Switchboard was named in the Mental Health Royal Commission in March 2021, to receive recurrent funding for the Rainbow Door.

In June 2021, the Victorian Pride centre became our new home.

► PURPOSE

We serve lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and gender diverse, intersex, queer and asexual (LGBTIQ+) people, their families, allies and communities.

► VALUES/PRINCIPLES

# WE ARE

/ INFORMED.

**We listen**, we reflect and we are well informed.

/ ACTIVE.

**We contribute** to our community and the world around us (we lean in and reach out)

/ ACCOUNTABLE.

We keep our **promises** to our members, to our LGBTIQ+ communities, to funders and to ourselves.

/ CONNECTED.

**We connect**, engage and mobilise communities, stakeholders and partners (we mobilise people power to empower our community).

/ RESPONSIVE.

**We respond** to the diversity of community need.

/ RESPECTFUL.

We are **empathetic** and meet people where they're at.

► MISSION

To provide peer-driven support services for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and gender diverse, intersex, queer and asexual (LGBTIQ+) people, their families, allies and communities.

► INTERSECTIONALITY STATEMENT

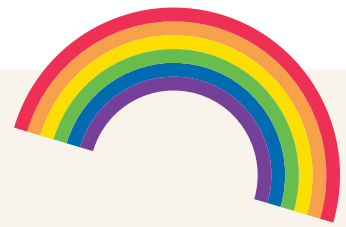
Switchboard is committed to ensuring that our work and service addresses the intersections between different forms of inequality, discrimination and disadvantage, including colonisation, racism and immigration status, and the role that these play in the oppression and discrimination of LGBTIQ+ peoples.

Staff members of Switchboard will engage with the intersectional work that takes place at Switchboard and will attend Switchboard's professional development sessions and events that address racism and intersectionality. Each staff member will undertake their own independent education on these issues to ensure they are informed and able to bring an intersectional lens to their work at Switchboard.

# What have we achieved together

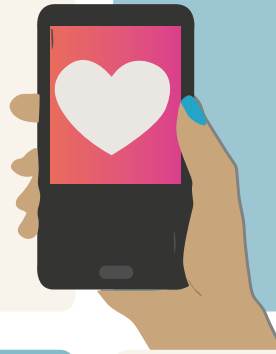
92

OLDER LGBTIQ+ PEOPLE SUPPORTED IN OUR OUT & ABOUT PROGRAM THIS YEAR



5780

PEOPLE LIKE OUR FACEBOOK PAGE

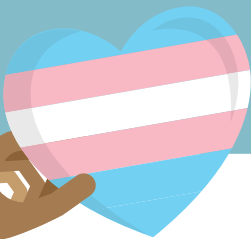


3308

CONTACTS TO QLIFE ON PHONE AND CHAT FROM SWITCHBOARD VICTORIA

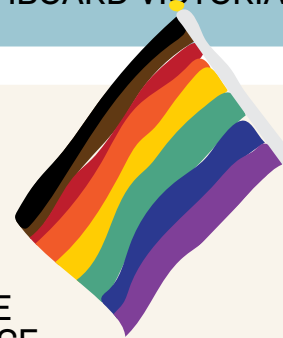
\$58,259

DONATIONS TO SWITCHBOARD



30

YEARS WE HAVE RUN THE SERVICE TO SUPPORT THE LGBTIQ+ COMMUNITY



Our Rainbow Door service has supported LGBTIQ+ people in Victoria through the COVID-19 health crisis.

13,210

CONTACTS THROUGH OUR NEW RAINBOW DOOR SERVICE

680

CLIENTS SUPPORTED FROM SEPTEMBER 2020 - 30 JUNE 2021.



# CONNECTING THE LGBTIQ+ COMMUNITY

## / QLIFE

Switchboard is the Victorian partner in the national telephone and web counselling, information and referral service QLife. This free peer based service is for LGBTIQ+ identifying people and those who have questions or concerns about LGBTIQ+ issues. This includes families, friends, teachers and coworkers of LGBTIQ+ people. This service is funded by the Commonwealth Department of Health.

## / COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS FOR OLDER PEOPLE

Switchboard runs Out and About, a social home visiting service for older LGBTI Victorians at risk of social isolation. This free service is coordinated in partnership with the National Community Visitors Scheme and is funded through the Commonwealth Department of Health.

## / ANTI RACISM

Switchboard runs a QTIPoC project aiming to build greater equity for Queer, Trans and Intersex Peoples and/or People of Colour and People of Faith.

## / RAINBOW DOOR

Rainbow Door is a free specialist LGBTIQ+ and BrotherBoys, SisterGirls helpline providing information, support, and referral to all LGBTIQ+ Victorians, their friends and family during the COVID-19 crisis and beyond.

Rainbow Door supports people of all ages and identities with issues that may include suicidal thoughts, family and intimate partner violence (including elder abuse), alcohol and other drugs, relationship issues, sexual assault, social isolation, mental health and wellbeing.

Through advice, referral and support from an experienced LGBTIQ+ peer, Rainbow Door helps LGBTIQ+ people navigate the system to access the supports we need.

## / SUICIDE PREVENTION

Switchboard has created its own postvention plan following the tragic suicide of our beloved staff member Ingrid Zhang. In the near future we will develop our suicide prevention resources for the broader LGBTIQ+ community.





# THANK YOU TO STAFF, VOLUNTEERS, AND LIFE MEMBERS

We want to say a sincere thank you to all Switchboard staff in enduring what has been a really tough year for many of us. Together we have adapted to the changing circumstances and managed to deliver over-and-above what anyone could expect.

Thank you to all of our volunteers who power so much of this work. It is only because of the time and dedication you give that we can continue to serve our communities.

Finally, thank you to our life members, who continue to guide us in line with the spirit of our founders.

## / OUR STAFF

**CEO:** Joe Ball

**Director of Services:** Meaghan Holden

**Out and About Program Manager:** Ada Castle / Meredith Butler (2021)

**Out and About Outreach Officer:** Meredith Butler

**Out and About Support Worker:** Vanessa Pidwell and Maggie Greenham

**Teleweb (Telephone and Webchat) Manager:** Libby Jamieson

**Counselling Supervisor:** Tracey Peterson-Esposito

**QTIPoC Program Manager:** Greg Rincon

**Suicide Prevention Manager:** Anna Bernasochi

**Suicide Prevention Officer:** Samina Hassan

**Bereavement Group Facilitator:** Grace Lee

**Executive Assistant:** Elizabeth Tanter

**Finance Officer:** David Hand

The names of our two Teleweb Team Leaders, 14 Helpline staff and two Teleweb trainers are not published for reasons of privacy and safety. We thank them for their work in family violence prevention and crisis support, and for supporting our QLife services during COVID-19.

For a list of the Switchboard Victoria 2019-20 Board members, see page 29.

## / OUR LIFE MEMBERS

- > Heather Morgan
- > David Samson
- > Chris Oxley
- > Carol Wilkinson
- > Michelle O'Sullivan
- > Julie Dyer
- > Libby Jamieson
- > Chris Mier
- > Dom Smith
- > Paul Cosgrave
- > Brian Murray
- > Peter Knight
- > Bruce Beet
- > Peter O'Grady
- > Nate Reid
- > Margaret Cannington
- > Bec Harris

### Life Members inducted in 2020:

- > Bridget Gargan
- > Hadyen Klemm
- > Shane Laing
- > Leanne Renfree
- > Vanessa Robertson
- > John Wall
- > Kenny Yu
- > Mon Hameed
- > Christine Haag



# Welcome from the Chair

**Sarah Marlowe, Chair**

Welcome to our Annual Report for 2020-21: a momentous year for Switchboard, and a challenging one for us all. It's been my privilege to lead an outstanding Board, working together to support Joe and our dedicated, growing staff and volunteer team, to be there for our communities through it all.

As a community-controlled, peer-delivered service, our staff, volunteers and members of our governing and advisory bodies share lived experiences, resilience and vulnerabilities with our service users. This is key to how we support our people. It's also core to our effectiveness, particularly as we do ongoing work to make our organisation more fully reflective of the diverse communities we serve.

A personal highlight this year was sharing my own lived experiences at the Rainbow Door launch, and the Victorian Mental Health Royal Commission quoting some of them to highlight the critical role of peer support and advocacy, including to navigate the service system. Some extracts follow.

I began volunteering on the Switchboard phones in 2016 ... [wondering] how I, a white, 40-something queer cis woman could offer 'peer support' to callers with very different experiences from mine ... Through my training and the work, I came to understand that 'peer' means safe. QLife callers often asked for reassurance that I was a member of the community. They felt safe to talk, knowing I too had faced experiences like internalised stigma, and the challenges of coming out, of finding partners and community, and of building a life as part of a minority community.

... [Since then] throughout the postal survey and pandemic, QLife has seen ever-increasing demand in call volume and the levels of mental distress and risk, prompting changes in our service mix and approach. On the Switchboard Qlife service, clinically-trained staff now provide live supervision to volunteers delivering the service. All staff and volunteers are trained in responding to suicidality (ASIST), family violence, elder abuse and a range of other risks. Increased volunteer confidence has led to higher rates of risk disclosure across our services.

QLife service users receive validation, information about support options, and the space for 'pre-contemplation conversations' – rehearsing what they might say, for example, to healthcare providers or crisis services. But for some, this is simply not enough to ensure they can navigate

to the supports they need, to address their current crisis and the long-standing stressors that have often led to it. Rainbow Door helps to fill this gap, providing support and advocacy to access longer-term services on the ground, whether LGBTIQ+ or mainstream.

\*

Like many in our communities, I'm part of a network of mutual support made up of chosen and biological family – mostly LGBTIQ+ people and a few wonderful allies. This network has been the go-to for many of us over decades in times of mental distress, infertility, parenting struggles, separation, loss and trauma. It has sustained us, sometimes even saved some of us.

But it frightens me now, to think back on the many crises we have muddled through, including serious mental illness, suicidality, complex trauma and PTSD, homelessness, addiction and intimate partner violence. The time when a service like Rainbow Door could have made the biggest difference to me was in my late 20s, when I was experiencing emotional, verbal and physical violence from my then partner, let's call her Miriam.

Like many people experiencing intimate partner violence, I didn't recognise it as such. It started slowly, and I believed was justified by the immense psychological pain Miriam experienced as the victim/survivor of child abuse. Back then, conversations about domestic violence were

*I love my community,  
as I love and am  
deeply committed  
to the value of peer  
support*



discouraged in the lesbian community – I remember articles in community media about how airing our ‘dirty laundry’ in public only fed homophobia.

Looking back, now I work in mental health, I believe Miriam was experiencing serious untreated mental illness. But she was extremely resistant to getting help, fearing homophobia and racism as a lesbian woman of colour, and likely the retriggering of her trauma through inexpert care. And even if I’d acknowledged her violence, and even if family violence services had been LGBTIQ+ inclusive, I would have resisted using them, for fear of exposing Miriam to racism, and compounding her trauma. Our situation was complex, and we had nowhere to go.

I was Miriam’s carer, her financial support and the object of her rage and pain. A service like Rainbow Door could have made such a difference for both of us. A service delivered by and for LGBTIQ+ people, explicitly anti-racist and able to address a range of issues, with the clinical expertise to assess the risks and address the complexity of our situation. As it was, Miriam’s physical violence and suicidality reached a point where I called in our community network to provide round-the-clock care to keep her safe, and so I could leave. And those same wonderful people also gave me refuge and the space to rebuild my life. We muddled through.

\*



Switchboard CEO Joe Ball and Sarah Marlowe at the opening of the Victorian Pride Centre, 2021

I love my community, as I love and am deeply committed to the value of peer support. But on their own, these things are simply not enough. LGBTIQ+ people need, and deserve, the additional support of specialist mental health, addiction, family violence and other services, and the safe intake and advocacy often required to access them.

Advocacy and navigation roles are well established in our service system: in family violence through the Orange Door, in disability, maternity care, mental health, cancer care and more. But when those roles sit within mainstream services,

the barriers remain that stopped 71% of participants in the seminal *Understanding LGBTIQ+ Lives in Crisis* study from accessing mainstream services during a personal crisis. Most significantly, the fear of discrimination or being ‘outed’.

Hence the need for intake and advocacy services specifically for LGBTIQ+ people, and for locating them in trusted, community-based and identifiably peer-delivered services – whether those peers are paid staff or volunteers. Services like Switchboard Victoria.



# From the CEO

**Joe Ball, CEO**

“Change is not made by heroic individuals. It’s made by groups and coalitions of very diverse kinds of people, usually working... standing together in a way that their work resonates with each other”

**Sarah Shulman (2021), on the power and legacy of ACT UP**

This report you’re reading symbolises 30 years since Switchboard first opened our doors, lines and hearts in 1991.

It’s important to pause and reflect on such a milestone and where we’ve come from: a vision by our founders, David Samson and Heather Morgan, of a volunteer peer-support service to improve the lives of our most vulnerable community members. 30 years later and I’m proud to say that this vision and our volunteers are still the driving force behind Switchboard today.

Whilst plans have been delayed due to COVID, rest assured there have been lively and collaborative consultations happening behind the scenes to bring Switchboard’s 30th Anniversary to life at the Victorian Pride Centre in 2022. With this said, I do believe we marked our 30 years in true Switchboard style, with a newly established and widely-embraced service for our community, the Rainbow Door.

Switchboard has continued to go from strength to strength over the past year, responding to ongoing challenges due to the pandemic with innovation, resilience and integrity. As you move through this annual report you will learn of the incredible accomplishments Switchboard has achieved in the past year. These achievements belong to each and every person who has contributed to Switchboard.

## Some key highlights from this year have included:

- Successfully opening a second phone line, the Rainbow Door during a pandemic, which was later recognised in the Mental Health Royal Commission. The Rainbow Door continues to receive Victorian sector wide recognition for the work we do in suicide prevention, mental health support and for the prevention of family violence. Areas of recognition have included our position as a sitting member of the Family Violence Reform Advisory Group, and as the first LGBTIQ+ Community-Controlled Organisation member of Victorian Peak Family Violence Organisation, Safe and Equal.
- Expansion of our dedicated Suicide Prevention Program, with our work growing into a nationally recognised service. Emblematic of this was the opportunity I was afforded to speak on the opening panel of the Roses in the Ocean National Conference, alongside the Federal Suicide Prevention Commissioner, Christine Morgan. Due to the ongoing passion and persistency of Switchboard’s Suicide Prevention Team, we are increasingly winning arguments alongside our partners and allies for inclusion and applying the ACT UP slogan of SILENCE = DEATH to the urgency of LGBTIQ+ suicide prevention.





Joe Ball - received the award for Outstanding 50 LGBTI+ Leaders 2020

- QTIPOC (Queer, Trans, Intersex People of Colour) marked its fourth year in operation. Increasingly, we refer to this program as our Anti-Racism work and while we have embarked on some ambitious projects over the past year (which you can read about further into this report), I believe some of the most important milestones have been in the everyday organisational changes: our recruitment processes, what questions we ask during interviews and who is asking those questions on our panels. The partnerships we hold are integral in this space to ensure accountability back to First Nations and People of Colour communities and we would like to acknowledge the ongoing work we are doing with Many Coloured Sky, Koorie Pride Victoria and Dardi Munwurro and thank them. We know we have lots of work to do within Switchboard and in the broader community to fight for racial equity and in response, I carry these words by Layla F.Saad with me now, and into the future: "Here's to doing what is right and not what is easy."



- 92 older people in our communities were supported through the Out and About service. Sometimes it's hard to remember we were ever out of lockdown in 2021, however Out and About participant, Stephanie (aged 80s) reminds us we were with her beautiful comment in response to her participation at the Switchboard Pride March: "It was the most amazing experience of my life bar none... I have never done it before... I will remember it all my life, it was so accepting." Stephanie's experience exemplifies why we organise our Pride Comes in All Ages bus at Midsumma, and we look forward to the bus and the Out & About contingent becoming a permanent fixture of the Switchboard Pride March.
- For QLIFE, six lockdowns created a tremendous challenge with volunteers and staff needing to tag team in and out as restrictions changed from week to week. It was heartwarming to see how our dedicated volunteers stuck with us through what was a demanding time for all and were quick to fill shifts as soon as they could. I am looking forward to peer supporters returning full time.

These highlights above, and all the ones to follow in this report, would not be possible without the collective efforts and motivation of every person involved with Switchboard. I believe our strength lies in our origins of a coalition organisation; a place where diverse members of our community came and continue to come together to improve the lives of all, with a keen recognition of those most vulnerable. We are an organisation of the community that listens to the community and most importantly, when the going gets tough we respond, whether that be with QTIPOC skills sharing workshops, the Rainbow Door program providing support, sending care packages to Out and About participants, running suicide bereavement groups or running online events.

Switchboard is not a person or a few key people, it is everyone. We are David Samson and Heather Morgan (our founders), we are our past and present board members, our volunteers, the visitor in the Out and About program and the people who are visited. We are the peer workers on Qlife, and the Rainbow Door team. We are the QTIPOC advisory group, the staffing team, the bereavement group facilitators, the ASIST trainers, the admin and finance team. We are the speakers at a conference, the person who passes our flyer onto someone who needs us, the person who donates every month, or when they can, the people on the streets marching, and in the meetings advocating. We are 30 years young. We are you, me, everyone who has ever played a part in this wonderful organisation we have all built together, and those who are yet to come.

The year ahead will no doubt be filled with another set of unique challenges, but what I'm certain of is our capacity to respond to anything that comes our way, thanks to the incalculable talent of our staff, our Board, and most importantly our volunteers.

Patricia Karvelas, Commissioner Ro Allen, Adrien Thia, Joe Ball and Georgie Harman at the Chillout Festival, March 2021



# Year in Review

In another tumultuous and unprecedented year, Switchboard events and fundraising initiatives provided some inspiring and fabulous highlights.



## Opening of the Victorian Pride Centre

May 2021 – Premier Daniel Andrews and Minister Martin Foley joined Switchboard Board Chairs and CEO's of other LGBTIQ+ organisations on a tour of the Victorian Pride Centre.

The Victorian Pride Centre is the new home of Switchboard Victoria



## Grove of gratitude - Chillout festival 2021

Switchboard joined other community members in a memorial tree planting. At Switchboard we dedicated three trees in the name of Ingrid Zhang, Shivane Mansfield and all the LGBTIQ+ people who have died by suicide.





Thorne Harbour Health Chair Janet Jukes with Switchboard CEO Joe Ball and Switchboard Chair Sarah Health.

## PRESIDENT'S AWARD

The Thorne Harbour Health (THH) President's Award is awarded by the current President. It is recognition for an individual or group in any field of endeavour that has had a positive impact on achieving the Vision and Mission of THH. The recipient is an individual or group that reflects or is closely aligned to, the values of the organisation.

Switchboard has been a key partner of THH for nearly 30 years and for a significant period, was based out of the Peter Knight Centre. With a great deal of overlap amongst staff and volunteers, the organisations share

similar histories, objectives and a joint philosophy of the importance of community-controlled health.

In recent years, Switchboard has expanded its range of offerings with QLife, Out and About, family violence, and suicide prevention work. Switchboard partners with THH in our policy work, our family violence work and in supporting our communities through tough times, such as during the marriage equality debate and during the pandemic. With Switchboards development of Rainbow Door, the relationship between our two organisations has grown closer. Switchboard's services are complimentary to THH's and together we share a joint vision of a better world for our communities.



Midsumma Pride March, May 2021



## Midsumma 2021

Midsumma Pride March, held in May due to COVID-19, pictured (above) inside the Pride Comes in All Ages Out and About bus (left) Switchboard staff and volunteers marching with the 30 year banner. March contingents were limited due to the COVID-19 restrictions.

# A new service to support our community

On 1st September 2020 we embarked on one of our most ambitious initiatives yet with the launch of Rainbow Door.

Rainbow Door is our free specialist LGBTIQ+ helpline providing information, support and referral to all LGBTIQ+ Victorians, their friends and family. We support people in our communities experiencing a diverse range of issues including suicidal thoughts, family and intimate partner violence, alcohol and drug abuse, relationship issues, sexual assault, and mental health issues.

We launched Rainbow Door to help support our communities to navigate the sometimes confusing or inaccessible web of mental health and other support services and systems.

## SUPPORT THROUGH LOCKDOWN

During the COVID-19 lockdowns, many LGBTIQ+ people were doing it particularly tough. Many were impacted by being forced to live with non-accepting family members, unable to escape abusive situations, and the increased impacts of social isolation. We are proud that Rainbow Door was there to help support people through this hard time with specialist advice and care.

We can see from the sheer number of people who have used the service since we launched, that Rainbow door has quickly become an essential service for our community.

**From 1st September – 30th June we have had 13,210 contacts to our service, and supported 680 clients.**

### INBOUND

**7022 contacts**

- > Calls: 2,689
- > SMS: 2,902
- > Email: 1,481

### OUTBOUND

**6138 contacts**

- > Calls: 2,067
- > SMS: 2,516
- > Email: 1,555

Additionally, we have now made the service more accessible, with free multi-language support services. Too often, people of colour and migrant communities can feel excluded from broader LGBTIQ+ communities. Making the Rainbow Door service available for people in their preferred language means a more effective, accessible service, and helps to bring our community together.

Rainbow Door not only offers support directly to members of our communities, but also gives specialist advice to mainstream services and care providers about how best to support their LGBTIQ+ clients.

The poster is a 3x3 grid of colored squares with various icons and text. The top row contains 'information' (purple square), a rainbow pattern (purple square), and 'referral' (teal square). The middle row contains a list of services (teal square), 'support' (pink square), and an illustration of a person on a phone (blue square). The bottom row contains 'Call. Text. Email.' (teal square), an illustration of hands holding a phone (yellow square), and a testimonial (teal square). The bottom section is a light orange bar with contact details and logos.

**information**

**referral**

**family violence**  
**relationships**  
**mental health**  
**suicide prevention**  
**sexual assault**  
**COVID-19**  
**all ages support**

**support**

**Call. Text. Email.**  
support. information. referral

**Rainbow Door is connecting all LGBTIQ+ people to the support services we need.**

1800 729 367  
0480 017 246  
support@rainbowdoor.org.au

10am - 6pm  
7 days a week

rainbowdoor.org.au | Rainbow Door | Q switchboard

Rainbow Door poster, 2020



## Praise for Rainbow Door

*I've called the Rainbow Door many times seeking high level LGBTIQ+ secondary consultation...Having a service where I can get a second opinion or advice and guidance to ensure I am responding in an ethical manner and reflecting current best LGBTIQ+ inclusive practice is invaluable. The staff at Rainbow Door are always responsive, informed and compassionate, they help me achieve best practice and sometimes give me a space to reflect, debrief and heal.*

**Starlady, Program Manager,  
Zoe Belle Gender Collective**



## ACHIEVEMENTS

In acknowledgment of the vital role that the Rainbow Door service now plays in our community, this year the Royal Commission into the Victorian Mental Health System advised that by the end of 2021 recurrent funding should be provided for Switchboard to deliver the service across our communities. This ongoing funding was confirmed in August 2021 with the Honorable Minister for Health, Martin Foley stating:

*Supporting Rainbow Door is just another step forward to helping LGBTIQ+ Victorians having the same opportunities to achieve good mental health as anyone*



This recommendation and subsequent confirmed funding is a powerful testament to the unique capacity of a community-controlled organisation to support our diverse communities.

## Top 5 reasons clients contact Rainbow Door:

1. Information about LGBTIQ+ services
2. Mental health
3. Peer support
4. Family violence – experiencing violence
5. Social isolation

## THE FUTURE

We know that now, with Victoria opening up, we will need to adapt to a new environment and the changing needs of our communities. Some people may struggle with isolation, anxiety and fear as restrictions ease. Others may begin to seek out more in-person support, therapy or medical care. Thanks to the support and advocacy of our communities and the expertise of the Rainbow Door team, we know that the service will continue to be there for LGBTIQ+ Victorians, whatever the future holds.

## THANK YOU

We thank the tireless LGBTIQ+ advocates and our partner services who contributed to the Mental Health Royal Commission's findings, including our colleagues at Rainbow Health for their groundbreaking research into the mental health outcomes of LGBTIQ+ Victorians. We acknowledge the leadership of Commissioner Ro Allen in championing LGBTIQ+ inclusion in the MHRC and their support for the Rainbow Door. We acknowledge the foundational work alongside Drummond Street Services, Thorne Harbour Health and Transgender Victoria in the previous With Respect partnership, and the role this played in shaping what would become Rainbow Door. And we acknowledge our ongoing partnership with Relationship Matters, including no-cost counselling for Rainbow Door clients.

Thank you to our reference group members who have volunteered their time to advise and shape the service.

- > Brenda Appleton, Transgender Victoria
- > Sally T Conning, Switchboard Regional Ambassador and LGBTIQ Elder
- > Rebecca Hunt, Victorian Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation
- > Rebecca Walton, Housing Aged Action Group
- > Jen Hargrave, Women with Disabilities Victoria
- > Scott Fogarty, Switchboard Volunteer
- > Daniela Davis, LGBTIQSB ACCO Advisor, Elizabeth Morgan House Aboriginal Women's Service
- > Allie Toby, Koorie Pride
- > Manu Keilom, Many Coloured Sky

And finally, a special thank you to Switchboard Chair Sarah Marlowe who shared her own lived experience as a survivor of intimate partner violence in the final report on the Mental Health Royal Commission, as testimony of the need for our service. See Sarah's Chair report for more.

# Being there for our older LGBTI community members

Out and About (OaA) is our program for older lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) people. We aim to reduce social isolation and loneliness through creating peer friendships and community connections.

## Our community visiting program grew significantly in 2020-21:

- › 36 new referrals
- › 80 current active participants
- › 92 older people supported over the year
- › Three care packages and regular newsletters sent to participants.

As the pandemic and restrictions impacted on our whole community, OaA staff increased their check-ins with both participants and volunteers. These check-ins resulted in increased phone support, referrals to QLife and Rainbow Door, community counselling, food delivery, technology support and aged care advocacy.

## Volunteer feedback

*I'm a huge K fan. I think we're getting along famously. Can't wait to be able to see her in person again, when the stars align for us to do so."*

*"She says we must have known each other in a past life, as we get on so well.*



## ACHIEVEMENTS

- › Purchase and rollout of technology for all OaA participants who needed it, enabling them to stay connected with our volunteers, family and friends.
- › Additional funding from the Commission for Senior Victorians for participant/volunteer matching, due to increase in the number of volunteers. This enabled us to engage two casual staff, Nat and Beth, to undertake home safety checks and matching/intake visits.
- › Increased engagement with services and LGBTI+ community in the regions, especially Gippsland, South-West Victoria, and our Strengthening Seniors Inclusion and Participation (SSIP) project partners in Cobaw, Sunbury, Banyule and Yarra.
- › ABC News story with OaA participant, Toni, also broadcast on a number of other platforms.
- › Hosted a discussion with LGBTI+ seniors and the Commissioner for Senior Victorians
- › Presentations given at Elder Abuse forum, Carers Victoria IDAHOBIT Video and PodCast and LGBTI Ageing and Aged Care Conference
- › Contributed to WIRE, ECCV and HAAG LGBTI Reference Groups and research on social isolation and homelessness.



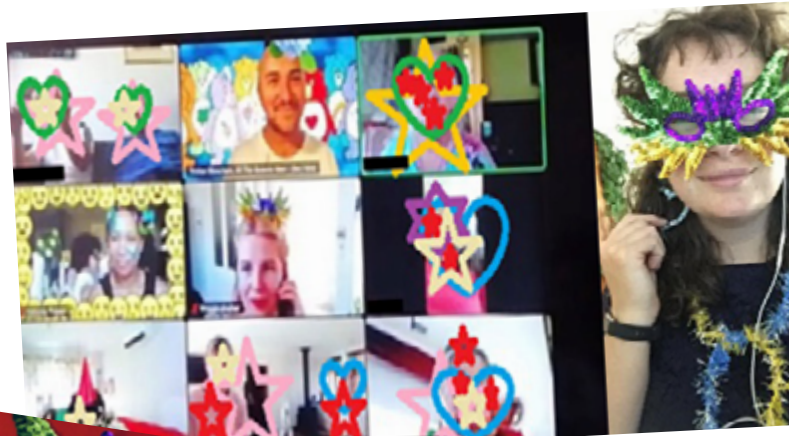
Fabulous letters written by Kingston LGBTIQ+ Youth Group organised and sent to all OaA participants who hugely appreciated this intergenerational connection



## Quote from LGBTI senior:

*Thank you. I am a 75 yo slightly incapacitated male. I could not have imagined a more delightful coffee and conversation companion."*

*"Please say hello to all the team and thanks for the masks. Also I loved the book of pictures of everyone and am thinking of framing them to keep me company when I get lonely.*



Out & About  
end of year  
online party,  
2020.



## VOLUNTEER UPDATE

Our volunteers continued to provide support through the pandemic, including virtual visits, phone calls, and letters. We are looking forward to once again being able to meet up face-to-face, as restrictions ease.

We support our volunteer team through inductions, training, and regular reflection, to ensure these intergenerational friendships are as meaningful and life-giving as they can be.

### Over 2020-21:

- › 264 expressions of interest were received for volunteering in OaA, taking our total volunteer pool to 1,124
- › 89 volunteers were supported, including 13 in regional and rural areas
- › 39 volunteers were trained, inducted and matched
- › 13 professional development sessions were run.

## THANK YOU

Our thanks to our various OaA funders:

- › Commonwealth Department of Health Community Visitor Scheme (CVS)
- › Victorian Government (SSIP and Volunteer Coordinator hours)
- › RACV Community Foundation
- › Thorne Harbour Health (Out, About & Connected)
- › City of Melbourne (Community Meals Subsidy)
- › Lesbians Inc (Pride March)
- › Transgender Victoria (SPARK)
- › Budget Direct (Variety of events and care packages)

## GOODBYE

In December 2020 we sadly said goodbye to the irreplaceable Ada Castle who guided the Out & About program through amazing growth and change since 2017. It was very hard to see Ada go but we are excited to continue working with her in her work as Health Promotion Officer at Grampians Wimmera.

## CHALLENGES

The success of the RACV-funded expansion of our service to socially isolated people who don't meet the criteria for the CVS Program has been inspiring, but also alarming, as the extent of isolation amongst older LGBTI+ people becomes apparent. This echoes growing international and national research showing that reluctance to access mainstream services is a major factor in social isolation for older LGBTI+ people. Currently, this part of our program is about 45% oversubscribed. We continue to seek further funding to extend this vital part of the service.

We have had wonderful support from some aged care services in facilitating contact between recipients and volunteers, under very difficult pandemic circumstances.

However, other participants were not so well supported by their aged care service. Some recipient's aged care homes banned volunteer visits arguing that only "family" could visit. This was very stressful for LGBTI recipients who have been rejected by biological family, who may only have LGBTI 'chosen family'. For some, this is only their CVS visitor.

These people were denied visitors due to aged care staff not understanding their LGBTI cultural needs. Many lack a private phone line or internet connection for confidential conversations and are unable to access advocacy services, or make a complaint about this.

# Suicide Prevention

## POSTVENTION RESPONSE PLAN

On February 24th we released our Postvention Response Plan preliminary findings. Postvention is a term for the support offered to people who have lost a loved one to suicide, which in itself helps to prevent suicide. The development of this Plan has been an enormous, hugely personal undertaking for much of our Suicide Prevention team, informed in part by Switchboard's own experience of postvention response when in 2018, Ingrid Zhang, a long-term volunteer and beloved staff member of Switchboard, died by suicide.

Prior to this report, there was little support or expertise available on postvention that was specialised for LGBTIQ+ communities, taking into account our specific needs and contexts. Our team is now working with the Victorian Government and Commissioner for LGBTIQ Communities to implement the report's recommendations at community level.



## OUR WORK PREVENTING LGBTIQ+ SUICIDE AND SUPPORTING BEREAVED COMMUNITIES



## WEBINARS AND TRAINING

This year we provided a number of webinars and trainings, sharing our learning and developing the skills of people in our communities to prevent and respond to suicide.

We have also created new webinars on suicide safety, giving our skills in suicide prevention back to our communities.

### Trainings we ran this year:

- > 2 How to Talk about Suicide Safely webinars
- > 7 ASIST workshops (Jan to May)\*
- > 5 safeTALK workshops\*

*\*Funded by North Western Melbourne Primary Health Network*

We have continued running a suicide prevention community of practice, supporting care providers to share their insights, learnings and research in suicide prevention, and this year we were invited to speak about our suicide prevention work at Health in Difference, Australia's national LGBTIQ+ health and wellbeing conference.

## NEW TEAM MEMBERS

Our team expanded this financial year with Suicide Prevention Program Officer, Samina starting in August 2020, and our Bereavement Group Facilitator, Grace in May 2021.

Samina has helped Switchboard increase the profile and reach of our suicide prevention work, including more than tripling our reach on the Suicide Prevention newsletter.

Grace has begun developing LGBTIQ+ bereavement groups in partnership with *Jesuit Social Services Support After Suicide*.



## LIVED EXPERIENCE OF SUICIDE BEREAVEMENT ADVISORY GROUPS

This year we have established the first Lived Experience of Suicide Advisory Group (LESAG) at Switchboard. They will advise on the development, implementation and evaluation of our programs.

Together, our Advisory Group, that consisted of an expert panel with Associate Professor Ruth McNair, Professor Katherine Johnson and Professor Myfanwy Maple\* and the Lived Experience Advisory Group\* helped us co-design the postvention research project, giving a range of valuable insights and advice.

The academic advisory group provided support, detailed feedback, helped to ensure the integrity of the research and gave encouragement throughout for what was an ambitious new area of research and difficult project.

We have worked in partnership with Jesuit Social Services to design and develop an LGBTIQ+ model of Support After Suicide's eight-week Early Bereavement Course, adapted specifically for LGBTIQ+ people. We consulted with LGBTIQ+ people who were past participants of the wider 8-week bereavement groups. Our report on these consultations will inform ongoing development of the program.

*\*Thank you to the generosity and passion of all members of the advisory group and Lived Experienced advisory group.*



**Join LGBTIQ+**  
**Support After Suicide**

An 8-week support group for community members who have lost someone to suicide

For more information, call 0484 088 647 or email [bereavement@switchboard.org.au](mailto:bereavement@switchboard.org.au)

In partnership with

switchboard Jesuit Social Services Support After Suicide

Poster to launch the Switchboard LGBTIQ+ Bereavement group

*Being able to go along to a service which removes that barrier of worrying about what people think about you in terms of sexual identity would be amazing. You want to make people feel as comfortable as possible and make it as accessible as possible. [An LGBTIQ+ group] would go a huge way to do that I think.*

– David, who lost his partner to suicide



We are very proud that in 2020 Anna Bernasochi was awarded a '30 under 30' award by Out for Australia for her achievements in leading Switchboard's Suicide Prevention Program.

# Anti-racism at Switchboard

QUEER, TRANS AND INTERSEX PEOPLE OF COLOUR PROGRAMS

This year Switchboard began the internal work to begin understanding the intersecting roles that race, racism and white supremacy play, both in our organisation and our communities.

As an organisation that aims to be representative and inclusive of the communities we serve, we know we need to do more work, to ensure that Switchboard services and practices are anti-racist. We are committed to trying our best to undo the ways in which we are all inculcated into systems that benefit some and harm others.

*Too often we have organisations whose aim is to liberate oppressed groups of individuals but still silo their programs and services by targeting only one aspect of a person's identity. Individuals can have many identities that overlap and multiply their oppression. We are all multidimensional and complex humans.*

## Switchboard Anti-Racism Organisational Change Plan



This anti-racism program at Switchboard has come about because of the leadership of the queer, trans, and/or intersex people of colour [QTIPoC] within our organisation and communities. We want to thank them for the incredible leadership they show in their communities and in this space.

## ACHIEVEMENTS

- › Established QTIPoC Advisory Committee
- › Six QTIPoC community members advise and provide insight into QTIPoC communities' needs from their professional and lived experiences.
- › Established QTIPoC Staff Affinity group
- › QTIPoC staff joined together to create an affinity group to build community and a sense of belonging amongst QTIPoC staff.
- › Supported establishment of the QTIPoC Board Committee (see Board report)
- › Racial Equity and Inclusion survey
- › Survey to establish a baseline of staff knowledge in applying a racial equity lens to the work of our organisation. The baseline data will provide an accountability mechanism for our organisation as we work to further our staff knowledge around advancing racial equity.
- › Changes to hiring and recruitment practices including diversifying selection panels and implementing anti-racism questions into interviews.
- › Released 'When Love Wins' Podcast with support from JOY FM. 'When Love Wins' is stories from the Australian marriage postal survey from the perspective of queer and trans people of colour.

➤ [When Love Wins - podcast.](#)  
[Listen via JOY FM](#)





### STAFF TRAINING

- › Aboriginal Cultural Safety training (VACCHO)
- › Supporting Queer Refugees and Asylum Seekers
- › Interrupting Biases for Hiring Managers
- › Minimising Microaggressions in the Workplace
- › Dia de los Muertos cultural celebration
- › Ramadan cultural celebration
- › Equity and Equality
- › Sexual Racism.

*Intersectionality is no small feat ... It will require the organisation as a whole to work together and join forces with other equality organisations to be able to learn from and extend networks. The goal of this process is to make Switchboard a more inclusive and accessible organisation. By using an intersectional lens when allocating funds, creating programs, or implementing policies, we can work towards a more inclusive and equitable organisation.*

#### Switchboard Anti-Racism Organisational Change Plan



Switchboard staff show solidarity in the campaign aimed at Coronavirus fuelled racism against Asian Australians.

### ANTI-RACISM READING GROUP

All staff read the book 'Me and White Supremacy', and discussed their reflections over three sessions. These reading groups offered a safe, inclusive space to become better informed on how to identify and respond to racism within ourselves, our workplaces, and in the community.

### EXTERNAL TRAINING AND PRESENTATIONS

- › Peer-support training to Many Coloured Sky's Queer Asylum Seeker and Refugee Peers group
- › Queer Refuge Seminar. Provided BridgeMeals with an overview of the QTIPoC program and Switchboard's other programs and services.

Receiving a Primary Response for Multicultural Communities grant (June 2021) allowed the QTIPoC Program to engage and support QTIPoC community members by creating and facilitating skill-building workshops (July to September 2021).

### THANK YOU

Special thanks to Manu from Many Coloured Sky for the amazing work you do for the Queer Asylum Seeker and Refugees Peer group, and for your continuous collaboration with Switchboard.

# QLife/ TELEWEB

**QLIFE IS A NATIONAL LGBTIQA+ PEER-SUPPORT HELPLINE PROVIDING ANONYMOUS, FREE, 'SINGLE SESSION' SUPPORT.**

Switchboard now runs two seven-day a week helplines under the Teleweb Program, QLife and Rainbow Door. Our helplines work hand-in-hand, providing a teleweb support option for LGBTIQA+ Victorians from 10am to midnight, seven days a week.

## ACHIEVEMENTS

Despite the challenges of COVID, a huge amount of development work has taken place in the QLife program, including:

- > Development of a National Practice Framework
- > Implementation of a new phone system
- > Data development and reporting
- > Development of a new training framework
- > Development of the frequent contact model.

As the Victorian QLife partner, Switchboard works closely with the four others – **Twenty10** (NSW), **Diverse Voices** (QLD), **Living Proud** (WA) and **LGBTIQA+ Health Australia** – to provide a national peer-support service for LGBTIQA+ community members and others affected by a range of issues. Common themes include gender, sexuality, relationships, family, community, isolation and mental health.

## MAINTAINING SUPPORT THROUGH THE PANDEMIC

The COVID-19 pandemic and public health responses to it had a range of impacts on our communities, which were often shared by those seeking support through the QLife service.

Many struggled with unemployment, health fears, accessing services, poverty, social isolation, and mental health challenges.

However, many of our callers also noted how much some government responses to the pandemic had improved their lives during this period.

For example, the increase to JobSeeker made a profound difference to those living in poverty. Free and accessible childcare (while it was available) was incredibly helpful to parents, and telehealth increased the accessibility of health services, making a real difference for some people with disabilities, and people living in remote and regional areas. Many clients reflected that they would like to see these changes continue post-COVID.

Through QLife, we have contact every day with people who are very isolated and alone. Many tell us that we are the only people they can speak to about their lives, and who hear, acknowledge and celebrate them for who they truly are. It's an absolute privilege to provide a service that connects so personally with people across our communities, especially through such a challenging period.

### THIS YEAR QLIFE IN VICTORIA HAD:



**2965**  
PHONE  
CONVERSATIONS



**343**  
ONLINE  
CHATS



## VOLUNTEER UPDATE

For 30 years, volunteers have delivered what is now the Victorian QLife service, providing a unique place for LGBTIQ+ people to come together and care for our own, and a rewarding way for volunteers to contribute to their communities.

However, the pandemic and associated restrictions meant that for the first time ever, we temporarily replaced our wonderful QLife peer-support volunteers with paid staff, to keep the service operating. This decision was a key part of our COVID-19 safety planning, minimising the number of people in the phone room to protect people's health. Other QLife partners faced similar impacts, including staff and volunteer shortages.

This temporary shift was a big decision for our Board and staff team. The spirit of volunteering is the very heart of Switchboard, and something we will never lose.

We are grateful to the peer supporters who were able to be recruited into those short-term paid roles, and to the funders who made it possible. As conditions change, we are greatly looking forward to returning QLife back to being a peer-volunteer service.

It was crucial during the lockdown period that we kept in close touch with our wonderful volunteers, including QLife volunteers temporarily unable to deliver the service. Thanks to everyone who stayed engaged, including through webinars with Monique, newsletters, supervision and zoom meetings. Unfortunately, health restrictions meant a pause on QLife volunteer recruitment during the past year. There is now a substantial waiting list of new people excited to join the program. We are so looking forward to welcoming back volunteers, old and new, as restrictions ease.

*Through QLife, we have contact every day with people who are very isolated and alone. Many tell us that we are the only people they can speak to about their lives, and who hear, acknowledge and celebrate them for who they truly are.*



## THANK YOU

Thank you to all the QLife peer supporters, in Victoria and across the whole QLife network, for all the work you do every day to support our communities.

Switchboard would also like to thank LGBTIQ+ Health Australia for their ongoing support throughout the year. We strongly value our relationship with LHA and their commitment to QLife. We look forward to doing so much more together in the year ahead to strengthen our service. Thanks also to our other state partners – Twenty10, Diverse Voices and Living Proud – who supported us as Victoria experienced multiple lockdowns and other challenges throughout COVID-19.



During 2020-21 Switchboard supported our community with a number of social media images to support safety and wellbeing.



# In memory

**Sadly, two Out and About participants passed away over the last year.**

Evelyn B was in residential aged care and is survived by her loving lifelong partner Leila.

Bill L was a new referral we never got to meet.

We also want to acknowledge those from our Victorian LGBTIQ+ communities who have died from deaths that could have been prevented, had they not experienced discrimination and systematic oppression in their lifetime. This includes too many who have died by suicide.

**We remember you and honour your memory by continuing to fight for a better world.**



## SUPPORTING OUR COMMUNITIES THROUGH THE PANDEMIC

As a trusted community voice, Switchboard's social media channels have proven invaluable during the pandemic. There have been periods where our social reach into our LGBTIQ+ communities far exceeded that of even State Government channels. As such, it was necessary for us to begin liaising with the State Government to make sure that our key messages and information aligned.





## Switchboard Board Members: 2020-21



**/ SARAH MARLOWE**  
Chair, Governance Committee, QTIPOC Committee, Communications and Fundraising Committee



**/ AMELIA ARNOLD**  
Deputy Chair, Chair of Communications and Fundraising Committee



**/ ALICE DRURY**  
Secretary, Chair of Governance Committee



**/ BLAKE LESCHEN**  
Treasurer, Chair of Business and Finance Committee



**/ RASHMI KUMAR**  
General member, Chair of QTIPOC Board Committee



**/ ALIYA AHMAD**  
General member, QTIPOC Committee, Communications and Fundraising Committee



**/ ELSA TUET-ROSENBERG**  
General member, QTIPOC Committee, Governance Committee



**/ JENNA TUKE**  
General member, Governance Committee



**/ MAMA ALTO**  
General member, QTIPOC Committee, Communications and Fundraising Committee



**/ MILLA GALEA**  
General member, Business and Finance Committee, Governance Committee



**/ REBECCA HUNT**  
General member, QTIPOC Committee, Governance Committee



**/ SARA TIMMS**  
General member, Governance Committee, Business and Finance Committee

# Accountability and transparency for our communities

Switchboard has continued to grow this year, with new staff, funding and programs, including our major new program, the Rainbow Door. Critical to our sustainable growth is the work that our CEO, staff and Board do together, to ensure we are as effective as we can be, in serving our communities.

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Our volunteer Board has an important, often invisible role. The Board is responsible for ensuring we meet our financial, legal and regulatory requirements and manage risk. The Board also guides the organisation's strategic direction, and seeks to ensure Switchboard is sustainable into the future.

Board members bring their professional experience and expertise from diverse sectors, as well as their lived and community expertise, and a shared commitment to Switchboard as a grassroots, community-based organisation.

## MANAGING RISK THROUGH THE PANDEMIC

Risk was a huge focus for the Board this year, both in terms of Switchboard's long-term development, and in supporting our response to the pandemic.

COVID-19 had major impacts on how we deliver our work, and the wellbeing of our communities: our service users, volunteers and staff. We were all living through it together, and the risks we needed to manage were multidimensional.

Throughout the year, we received regular reporting on every aspect of this from the CEO and staff, including staff and volunteer wellbeing. We took some key decisions and provided additional support as needed, to ensure the CEO and team could attend to and manage these risks, while continuing to provide key services such as Out and About.

Some of the Board's most significant work this year was our support for the QLife program by taking the decision to move to a temporary paid staff team, to ensure the service could still be there for our communities at this challenging time. We are deeply grateful to everyone who made this possible, including our funders. See QLife report for more.

## RAINBOW DOOR AND CLINICAL GOVERNANCE WORK

Perhaps the most consequential work of the Board this year for the development and future of our organisation was the establishment of the Rainbow Door. This much-needed service was the crucial next step in Switchboard's development, complementing our peer-support service with a comprehensive information, support and referral service delivered by a skilled clinical staff team. See the Rainbow Door report and Chair report for more.



As our breadth of services, staff team and budget have grown, including with the Rainbow Door, so has our complexity and level of organisational risk we manage. Switchboard has a risk framework that helps us improve our decision-making, prevent and reduce potential harms, and support our long-term sustainability and growth. This year the Board and staff took significant steps in further implementation of this framework, including embarking on a comprehensive review and development of our clinical governance systems and approach.

## RECRUITMENT AND TRAINING

The pandemic resulted in an unusually large turnover in Board membership from 2019-20 to 2020-21, as people's lives, work demands and volunteering capacity changed. Recruitment is important work. Those with a seat at the table are empowered to make decisions that shape the future of our organisation.

This year we recruited seven new Board members:

Alice Drury – Secretary

Aliya Ahmed – Ordinary member

Mama Alto – Ordinary member

Milla Galea – Ordinary member

Rebecca Hunt – Ordinary member

Elsa Tuet-Rosenberg – Ordinary member

Jenna Tuke – Ordinary member

We are pleased to have a Board with such diverse skills and experience, including clinical, governance, financial and leadership expertise, and experience across government, the private/financial and NGO sectors, including mental health, legal, media, sexual assault, Aboriginal health and multicultural organisations.

Lived and community experience is another important dimension of expertise. We are pleased to again have a Board that includes multiple people of colour, trans and gender diverse people, people with lived experience of mental illness, suicidality, family violence, and parents, including parents of queer and gender diverse children.

Our new Board came together remarkably as a team, especially given we had to do it all via Zoom! We made major investments in training the new team, including internal and external governance and financial literacy training. This has been crucial to empower every member of the Board to participate, challenge each other, ask the difficult questions that are a key responsibility of every Board member, and contribute to every aspect of decision-making.

## OUR COMMITTEES

Much of the effectiveness of this year's Board is down to the work that happens at committee level. Committees are where Board members research and discuss recommendations, which are then brought to the Board for final discussion and decision.

### Governance Committee

This year the committee undertook significant research, scoping and planning for a major process to gather, consolidate, develop and document every aspect of Switchboard's approach to clinical governance. As a Board we have ultimate accountability for the safety and quality of Switchboard's services, and this work is a crucial building block to ensure we can do so in line with our expanded service profile and relevant government frameworks.

### Comms and Fundraising Committee

This year the committee provided specialist communications advice on key events and initiatives, and started work towards a policy on ethical partnerships, sponsorship and donations.

### Finance committee

This year, our small but very active committee worked closely with the Treasurer and CEO, supporting financial governance and reviewing the systems and policies to support Switchboard's financial planning, reporting and ultimate sustainability.

### QTIPoC Board Committee

This new committee aims to enhance the extent to which a racial justice approach informs Board discussions and decisions. Individual board members have brought this lens to the Board's work this year based on their lived, community and professional knowledge. Working closely with the CEO and QTIPoC Programs Manager, a key focus this year was working through how the other advisory bodies within Switchboard would work with this Committee, and the communication needed at different levels.

A key focus for 2021-22 will be on how the Board –as the organisation's governing body– develops and deepens our understanding and practice of what it means to bring a racial-justice approach to every aspect of our Board work.

*Committees are a great way to get involved in the work of Switchboard, and many Board members are first of all members of our Board committees. To find out more, email Joe on [ceo@switchboard.org.au](mailto:ceo@switchboard.org.au) or Sarah on [chair@switchboard.org.au](mailto:chair@switchboard.org.au).*



# Treasurer's Report

**Blake Leschen, Treasurer**

Despite the ongoing challenge of operating in a COVID-19 environment, Switchboard continued to experience a significant amount of growth throughout the 2020/21 financial year.

Through combined efforts by our Board members, Finance Committee and in my role as Treasurer, Switchboard has successfully retained existing funding as well as securing additional funding to continue delivering our critical support services during a time of great need. Strict financial oversight and responsible financial policies have enabled Switchboard to scale-up services to meet increasing demand, whilst mitigating the risks associated with fast-paced growth in an uncertain operating environment.

Grant funding from the State Government, and to a lesser extent the Federal Government remains Switchboard's primary source of revenue, representing 91% of total revenue earned. Total revenue increased by 80% from the previous financial year to almost \$2.1 million (2019/20: \$1.9 million). This increase can primarily be attributed to significant and recurring funding from the State Government to deliver services associated with the Rainbow Door program. Additional once-off funding was also secured for use in the Qlife and Out & About programs to respond to increased demand during the pandemic. Funding received from donations, bequests, training, consultancy, and workshop fees remained largely consistent with the prior year, representing only a small portion of total revenue earned.

Switchboard successfully responded to the increased funding by scaling up service delivery across all its programs in a responsible and sustainable way. Total expenditure increased by 56% from the previous financial year to just over \$2 million (2019/20: \$1.2 million). As a service provider, over 90% of this expenditure relates to people costs i.e. wages, salaries, superannuation, training, etc. Through a comprehensive budget process including ongoing refinements as additional funding became available, total actual expenditure was largely aligned to our expectations.

Unlike the prior year's overall net deficit position, Switchboard achieved a net surplus of \$77,425 and maintained a healthy cash flow throughout the financial year, never dropping below the minimum cash reserve outlined in the reserves policy, with a closing cash balance of over \$1.3 million.

During the financial year, the re-establishment of the Finance Committee comprising myself as Chair, Sara Timms and Milla Galea introduced another layer of financial governance critical to the successful and sustainable growth of Switchboard. Key achievements of the committee included assistance in the preparation of the 2021/22 budget, monthly financial reporting to the Board, the costing of project plans, the successful appointment and implementation of a third-party salary packaging provider, interpretation and compliance with the newly introduced portable long service leave scheme, the development of a service agreement register and preliminary preparation of various finance policies regarding cash reserves and corporate partnerships/sponsorships. I'd like to personally thank Sara and Milla for their invaluable contributions as committee members.

Looking to the future, the growth of Switchboard is expected to continue. I anticipate total revenue and expenditure to increase by 30 - 50% during 2021/22, due to the increased capacity of the *Rainbow Door service*, launch of the *Suicide Prevention Bereavement Groups*, move to the Victorian Pride Centre and additional premises to house our phone room services. The re-engagement of volunteers in Qlife should decrease the overall cost of the Qlife program, as it shifts away from an employee-based service back to a volunteer-based service. Funding has also been set aside for special and critical projects, including website upgrades and a Suicide Prevention Hub, a 30th anniversary celebration, a CMS upgrade and new roles for Volunteer Coordination and Communications.

On reflection, the 2020/21 financial year is one that I am immensely proud of. Each year Switchboard continues to go from strength to strength and has proven it can respond to even the greatest challenges and provide critical support services to our community.

## Structure / planning

<b>Introduction</b>	
<b>Revenue overview</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>› Revenue: Up 80% from the previous financial year (2019/20: \$1.1 million). Rainbow Door, additional COVID-19 response funding for Qlife and Out &amp; About, including Working For Victoria.</li> <li>› Grants: \$1.9 million (91% total revenue) – 70% State Government, 30% Federal Government</li> <li>› Donations &amp; bequests: \$113,000</li> <li>› Training, consultancy &amp; workshop fees: \$20,000</li> </ul>
<b>Expenditure overview</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>› Expenditure up 56% from the previous financial year (2019–20: \$1.2 million)</li> <li>› People costs: \$1.7 million (88%)</li> <li>› Rainbow Door staff, casual helpline workers during pandemic</li> </ul>
<b>Net surplus and accumulated funds</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>› Net surplus: \$77,425. Significant improvement from the prior year’s deficit.</li> <li>› \$1.3 million cash &amp; cash equivalents. Most funds received in advance for future service delivery.</li> </ul>
<b>2021–22 forecast</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>› Revenue and expenditure should increase between 30 – 50%.</li> <li>› Volunteers should return to Qlife and Out &amp; above, reducing the cost of the programs overall.</li> <li>› Scale up of Rainbow Door.</li> <li>› Introduction of new roles – volunteer coordinator, communications officer.</li> <li>› Kick off suicide prevention bereavement groups.</li> <li>› Fit out the VPC and additional phone room.</li> </ul>
<b>Finance committee</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>› <b>Responsibility</b> – provide financial oversight and offering advice and support on operational finance matters.</li> <li>› <b>Strategic focus</b></li> <li>› <b>Priorities / initiatives</b> – annual budget, monthly financial reporting, funding strategies, review and assist in costing project plans, support with year-end activities, maintain service agreement register.</li> <li>› <b>Successes</b> – engage a third-party salary sacrifice provider, comply with new PLSL requirements, develop a service agreement register, develop policies – corporate sponsorship / partnership, reserves, debit card.</li> </ul>

# Financials

## INCOME STATEMENT FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30 JUNE 2021

	2021 \$	2020 \$
<b>INCOME</b>		
Department of Health (Federal)	186,81	128,500
Department of Health & Human Services (State)	822,483	227,193
Department of Jobs, Precincts and Regions (State)	260,816	-
Department of Premier & Cabinet (State)	180,000	-
Donations received	58,259	55,916
Drummond Street Services	-	230,909
Interest Income	454	693
National LGBTI+ Health Alliance	388,338	196,696
North Western Primary Health Network	64,566	69,170
Other Grants	6,215	41,638
Bequests	55,670	-
Consultancy Fees	2,168	-
Membership Fees	241	-
Other Income	50,000	54,725
RACV	-	150,000
Training & Workshop Fees	18,823	4,455
<b>TOTAL INCOME</b>	<b>2,094,852</b>	<b>1,159,895</b>



# Financials

## INCOME STATEMENT FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30 JUNE 2021

EXPENDITURE	2021 \$	2020 \$
Accounting, audit & consultancy fees	6,196	6,369
Advertising, promotions & marketing	11,259	13,865
Bank fees	-	-
Brokerage costs	45,677	-
Clinical supervision	21,794	18,611
Depreciation	-	-
Donations & Sponsorships	-	825
Events & functions hosted and attended	7,284	11,595
Fixed asset write off	-	6,099
Food & catering	2,145	15,655
Human resources support	7,104	4,761
Insurance	1,788	236
IT expenses	23,631	7,587
Leave entitlements	20,885	37,893
Office expenses	2,869	2,259
Other expenses	610	224
Postage, printing & stationery	5,922	4,566
Rent	19,793	19,032
Salaries & wages	1,580,519	972,569
Superannuation	148,166	90,387
Subscriptions	44,709	8,322
Telephone & Internet	11,082	7,821
Training	8,776	4,651
Travel	4,005	22,094
Volunteer costs	8,023	4,015
Workers compensation	35,190	33,067
<b>TOTAL EXPENDITURE</b>	<b>2,017,427</b>	<b>1,292,503</b>
<b>Net surplus/(deficit) attributable to the Association</b>	<b>77,425</b>	<b>(132,608)</b>

This income statement is extracted from the audited Special Purpose Financial Statements that are to be lodged with the ACNC.

# Financials

## BALANCE SHEET FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30 JUNE 2021

	2021 \$	2020 \$
<b>CURRENT ASSETS</b>		
Cash and cash equivalents	1,309,399	1,620,237
Accounts and other receivables	53,615	23,498
Prepayments	8,530	4,583
<b>TOTAL CURRENT ASSETS</b>	<b>1,371,544</b>	<b>1,648,318</b>
<b>NON CURRENT ASSETS</b>		
Property, plant and equipment	36,103	-
<b>TOTAL NON-CURRENT ASSETS</b>	<b>36,103</b>	<b>-</b>
<b>TOTAL ASSETS</b>	<b>1,407,647</b>	<b>1,648,318</b>
<b>CURRENT LIABILITIES</b>		
Trade and other creditors	178,850	179,577
Amounts received in advance	746,053	1,084,307
Provisions	110,187	63,917
<b>TOTAL CURRENT LIABILITIES</b>	<b>1,035,090</b>	<b>1,327,801</b>
<b>NON-CURRENT LIABILITIES</b>		
Provisions	-	25,385
<b>TOTAL NON-CURRENT LIABILITIES</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>25,385</b>
<b>TOTAL LIABILITIES</b>	<b>1,035,090</b>	<b>1,353,186</b>
<b>NET ASSETS</b>	<b>372,557</b>	<b>295,132</b>
<b>EQUITY</b>		
Accumulated funds	372,557	295,132
<b>TOTAL EQUITY</b>	<b>372,557</b>	<b>295,132</b>

# Financials

## STATEMENT OF CHANGES IN EQUITY FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30 JUNE 2021

	Accumulated funds \$	Total \$
<b>Balance as at 1 July 2019</b>	<b>427,740</b>	<b>427,740</b>
Surplus/(deficit) attributable to the Association	(132,608)	(132,608)
<b>Balance as at 30 June 2020</b>	<b>295,132</b>	<b>295,132</b>
Surplus/(deficit) attributable to the Association	77,425	77,425
<b>Balance as at 30 June 2021</b>	<b>372,557</b>	<b>372,557</b>

# Financials

## STATEMENT OF CASH FLOWS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30 JUNE 2021

	2021 \$	2020 \$
<b>CASH FLOWS FROM OPERATING ACTIVITIES</b>		
Receipts from funding agencies and grants	1,540,866	1,934,412
Receipts from other sources	185,161	115,096
Payments to employees and suppliers	(2,001,216)	(1,126,956)
Interest received	454	693
<b>Net cash generated from/(used in) operating activities</b>	<b>(274,735)</b>	<b>923,245</b>
<b>CASH FLOWS FROM INVESTING ACTIVITIES</b>		
Payment for property, plant and equipment	(36,103)	(6,099)
<b>Net cash (used in)/provided by investing activities</b>	<b>(36,103)</b>	<b>(6,099)</b>
Net increase/(decrease) in cash held	(310,838)	917,146
Cash and cash equivalents at beginning of financial year	1,620,237	703,091
<b>Cash and cash equivalents at end of financial year</b>	<b>1,309,399</b>	<b>1,620,237</b>

# Financials

## INCOME STATEMENT FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30 JUNE 2021

**SWITCHBOARD (VICTORIA) INC**  
**ABN 81 367 786 099**  
**STATEMENT BY THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

---

The Board of Directors has determined that the association is not a reporting entity and that this special purpose financial report should be prepared in accordance with the accounting policies outlined in Note 1 to the financial statements.

In the opinion of the Board of Directors the financial report as set out on pages 2 to 10:

- 1 Presents a true and fair view of the financial position of the Switchboard (Victoria) Inc as at 30 June 2021 and its performance for the year ended on that date.
- 2 At the date of this statement, there are reasonable grounds to believe that the Switchboard (Victoria) Inc will be able to pay its debts as and when they fall due.

This statement is made in accordance with a resolution of the Board of Directors and is signed for and on behalf of the Board of Directors by:

**Chairperson**

20-Sep-2021 | 09:45:45 AEST

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Sarah Marlowe**

**Treasurer**

18-Sep-2021 | 16:29:51 AEST

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Blake Leschen**

Dated this

day of September 2021

# Financials

INCOME STATEMENT FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30 JUNE 2021

TOWARDS A VISION SHARED



**Collins & Co  
Audit Pty Ltd**

127 Paisley Street  
Footscray VIC 3011  
Australia

Phone (03) 9680 1000  
Fax (03) 9689 6605

[www.collinsco.com.au](http://www.collinsco.com.au)

**SWITCHBOARD (VICTORIA) INCORPORATED  
A.B.N. 81 367 786 099  
INDEPENDENT AUDITOR'S REPORT TO THE MEMBERS**

**Opinion**

I have audited the accompanying financial report of Switchboard (Victoria) Incorporated (the Association), which comprises the balance sheet as at 30 June 2021, and the income statement, statement of changes in equity and cash flow statement for the year ended on that date, a summary of significant accounting policies and other explanatory notes and the statement by the members of the Board.

In my opinion, the financial report of the Association is in accordance with *the Australian Charities and Not for Profits Commission Act 2012* and *the Associations Incorporation Reform Act 2012*, including:

- i. giving a true and fair view of the Association's financial position as at 30 June 2021 and of its performance for the year ended; and
- ii. complying with Australian Accounting Standards as per Note 1, *the Australian Charities and Not for Profits Commission Act 2012* and *the Associations Incorporation Reform Act 2012*.

**Basis for Opinion**

I conducted my audit in accordance with Australian Auditing Standards. My responsibilities under those standards are further described in the Auditor's Responsibilities for the Audit of the Financial Report section of our report. I am independent of the Association in accordance with the ethical requirements of the Accounting Professional and Ethical Standards Board's APES 110 Code of Ethics for Professional Accountants (the Code) that are relevant to my audit of the financial report in Australia. I have also fulfilled our other ethical responsibilities in accordance with the Code.

I believe that the audit evidence I have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for my opinion.

**Emphasis of Matter - Basis of Accounting and Restriction on Distribution**

I draw attention to Note 1 to the financial report, which describes the basis of accounting. The financial report has been prepared to assist Switchboard (Victoria) Incorporated to meet the requirements of the *Australian Charities and Not for Profits Commission Act 2012* and *the Associations Incorporation Reform Act 2012*. As a result, the financial report may not be suitable for another purpose. My opinion is not modified in respect of this matter.

**Responsibilities of Management and Those Charged with Governance for the Financial Report**

Management is responsible for the preparation and fair presentation of the financial report in accordance with the financial reporting requirements of the applicable legislation and for such internal control as management determines is necessary to enable the preparation and fair presentation of a financial report that is free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error.

In preparing the financial report, management is responsible for assessing the Association's ability to continue as a going concern, disclosing, as applicable, matters relating to going concern and using the going concern basis of accounting unless management either intends to liquidate the Entity or to cease operations, or has no realistic alternative but to do so.

Those charged with governance are responsible for overseeing the Association's financial reporting process.

# Financials

INCOME STATEMENT FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30 JUNE 2021

TOWARDS A VISION SHARED



**Collins & Co  
Audit Pty Ltd**

127 Paisley Street  
Footscray VIC 3011  
Australia

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#### Auditor's Responsibilities for the Audit of the Financial Report

My objectives are to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial report as a whole is free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error, and to issue an auditor's report that includes our opinion. Reasonable assurance is a high level of assurance but is not a guarantee that an audit conducted in accordance with Australian Auditing Standards will always detect a material misstatement when it exists. Misstatements can arise from fraud or error and are considered material if, individually or in the aggregate, they could reasonably be expected to influence the economic decisions of users taken on the basis of the financial report.

As part of an audit in accordance with Australian Auditing Standards, I exercise professional judgement and maintain professional scepticism throughout the audit. I also:

- Identify and assess the risks of material misstatement of the financial report, whether due to fraud or error, design and perform audit procedures responsive to those risks, and obtain audit evidence that is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for my opinion. The risk of not detecting a material misstatement resulting from fraud is higher than for one resulting from error, as fraud may involve collusion, forgery, intentional omissions, misrepresentations, or the override of internal control.
- Obtain an understanding of internal control relevant to the audit in order to design audit procedures that are appropriate in the circumstances, but not for the purpose of expressing an opinion on the effectiveness of the registered entity's internal control.
- Evaluate the appropriateness of accounting policies used and the reasonableness of accounting estimates and related disclosures made by the responsible entities.
- Conclude on the appropriateness of the responsible entities use of the going concern basis of accounting and, based on the audit evidence obtained, whether a material uncertainty exists related to events or conditions that may cast significant doubt on the registered entity's ability to continue as a going concern. If I conclude that a material uncertainty exists, I am required to draw attention in my auditor's report to the related disclosures in the financial report or, if such disclosures are inadequate, to modify my opinion. My conclusions are based on the audit evidence obtained up to the date of my auditor's report. However, future events or conditions may cause the registered entity to cease to continue as a going concern.
- Evaluate the overall presentation, structure and content of the financial report, including the disclosures, and whether the financial report represents the underlying transactions and events in a manner that achieves fair presentation.

I communicate with those charged with governance regarding, among other matters, the planned scope and timing of the audit and significant audit findings, including any significant deficiencies in internal controls that I identify during my audit.

Auditor: **Frederik Ryk Ludolf Eksteen**

ASIC Registration Number: **421448**

Address: **Collins & Co Audit Pty Ltd, 127 Paisley Street, FOOTSCRAY VIC 3011**

Signature:

Date:

**24 September 2021**

# Financials

## INCOME STATEMENT FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30 JUNE 2021

**SWITCHBOARD (VICTORIA) INC**  
**ABN 81 367 786 099**  
**CERTIFICATE BY THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

---

I, **Sarah Marlowe** and I, **Blake Leschen** hereby certify that:

- (a) We are members of the Board of Directors of the Switchboard (Victoria) Inc.
- (b) We attended the annual general meeting of the association held on 20 November 2021.
- (c) We are authorised by the attached resolution of the Board of Directors to sign this certificate.
- (d) This special purpose financial report was submitted to the members of the association at its annual general meeting.

**Chairperson**

20-Sep-2021 | 09:45:45 AEST

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Sarah Marlowe**

**Treasurer**

18-Sep-2021 | 16:29:51 AEST

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Blake Leschen**

Dated this

day of November 2021



# THANK YOU FOR SUPPORTING OUR WORK

We would like to acknowledge all the individuals and organisations that have made donations to Switchboard over the last year. Your donations have ensured ongoing service provision of our core essential services. We could not have done it without you.

## / FUNDERS

- › City of Melbourne
- › City of Port Phillip
- › Department of Health (Federal)
- › Department of Health and Human Services
- › Department of Jobs, Precincts and Regions (State)
- › Department of Premier and Cabinet
- › Family Safety Victoria
- › Lesbians Inc
- › National LGBTI Health Alliance
- › North West Melbourne Primary Health Network
- › RACV Community Foundation
- › Safe and Equal (formerly DV Vic)
- › The Laird
- › The Pride Foundation
- › Transgender Victoria – SPARK
- › Victorian Government
- › Working For Victoria
- › YACVic

## / SUPPORTERS

- › Bendigo Aboriginal Development Corporation (SSIP)
- › Beyond Blue
- › City of Yarra (SSIP)
- › City of Banyule (SSIP)
- › Cobaw Community Health (SSIP)
- › Domestic Violence Victoria
- › Jemma Bates/ Bates and Co
- › Koorie Pride Victoria
- › LGBTIQ+ Health Australia
- › LivingWorks
- › Many Coloured Sky- Queer Refugee and Asylum Seeker Peers (QRASP)
- › Queerspace – Drummond Street Services
- › Rainbow Health Victoria
- › Relationship Matters
- › Victorian Commissioner for LGBTIQ+ Communities – Ro Allen (former)
- › Victorian Commissioner for LGBTIQ+ Communities – Todd Fernando (current)
- › Victorian Minister for Health – Martin Foley
- › Roses in the Ocean
- › Support After Suicide – Jesuit Social Services
- › Transgender Victoria
- › Thorne Harbour Health
- › Val's LGBTI Ageing and Aged Care



## MAKE A DONATION

### ONCE OFF OR REGULAR DONATION

If you would like to make a once off donation and/or become a regular donor, you can do so through our [Give Now Account](#)

