

Switchboard Victoria
ANNUAL REPORT

2022-23



OUR BODIES
OUR LIVES
OUR FUTURES





Switchboard Victoria is based on the unceded lands of the Yaluk-ut Weelam clan of the Boon Wurrung peoples. We pay our respects to all Elders of yesterday and today and extend those respects to all Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples across this country we know as Australia.

We recognise Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples as diverse individuals, with a historic and continuing connection to culture, land and waters – a right and responsibility that was stolen and remains unceded to this day.

We acknowledge the strength and resilience of all Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples who identify with LGBTIQASB+ communities, particularly Brotherboys and Sistergirls. We recognise that First Nations peoples have always had rich and diverse understandings and practices of sexuality and gender, and that homophobia and transphobia were introduced under colonial occupation.

Switchboard Victoria acknowledges that sovereignty has never been ceded and our work takes place locally and nationally on what always was and always will be Aboriginal land.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people should be aware this publication contains images and names of deceased persons.

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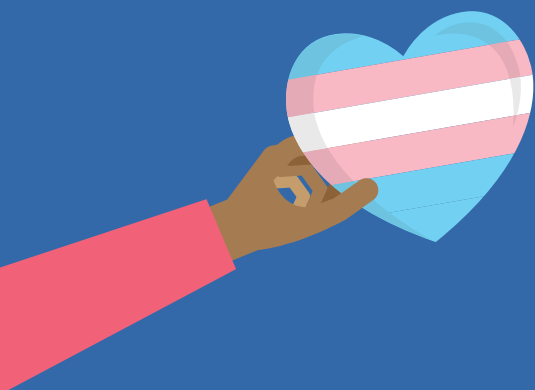
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YOUR SUPPORT CHANGES LIVES

Every tax-deductible donation makes a difference.

givenow.com.au/switchedonforswitchboard

Our bodies, our lives, our futures

This year brought another wave of challenges for our community. Challenges to our autonomy over our own bodies. Challenges to how we choose to live. Challenges to what our futures look like. Challenges to our right to have a future. Challenges to our lives.

And yet. This year was also about connection. As a community, we stood up, we stood together. While our bodies, our lives and our futures look different for each of us, there is a place here for all of us.

This year's annual report records some of those connections and challenges. Above all, it reflects Switchboard's unwavering commitment to our community. To supporting you by being a part of community-led campaigns for bodily self-determination. To creating spaces for those who need support now and into the future.

It's also about the world we want to create – one where our diverse struggles are collectively addressed. Where each of us has the freedom to shape our lives, health, bodies, families, and communities. Our futures.



Switchboard staff with LGBTQIA+ community members and allies at the Reclaim the Streets rally, Transgender Day of Visibility, March 2023.

We are Switchboard

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 (LGBTIQA+) communities and their allies, friends and families.

Our values and principles

> **Informed:**

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

> **Active:**

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

> **Accountable:**

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

> **Connected:**

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

> **Responsive:**

We respond to the diversity of community need.

> **Respectful:**

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

Intersectionality statement

Switchboard is committed to ensuring our work and services address the intersections between different forms of inequality, discrimination and disadvantage, including colonisation, racism and immigration status, and the role these play in the oppression and discrimination of LGBTIQA+ people.

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

Statement of faith

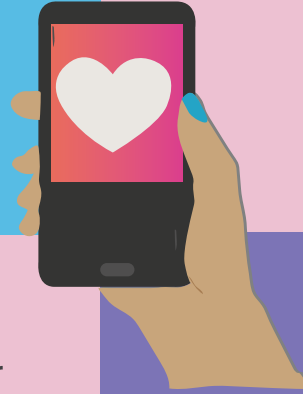
At Switchboard we embrace and support people in and across our LGBTIQA+ communities who have various beliefs, practices, and feelings when it comes to issues of faith and religion. This is extended not only to those who use our services but to our membership, staff, volunteers and Board members.

The full statement of faith is available on our [website](#).

What we achieved together

669

visits made to 93 older LGBTI+ people supported by our Out & About program



18,501

contacts received through our Rainbow Door service

3,950

calls to Rainbow Door

1,759

clients supported through Rainbow Door

9,197

texts to Rainbow Door

5,354

emails to Rainbow Door

3,880

contacts received through our QLife peer supporters in Victoria

2,960

calls to Switchboard QLife peer supporters

72,000

call minutes to Switchboard QLife peer supporters

920

QLife webchats

60+

people supported through our suicide prevention bereavement program

40+

participants in the lived experience of suicide network

150+

registrations for Switchboard's QTIBPoC workshops and events

\$133,208

in public donations to Switchboard



150+

volunteers across programs

6000

visits to CHARLEE suicide prevention hub

37,000

visits to Switchboard's website

25,000

visits to Rainbow Door's website



4,108

followers on Instagram



7,639

people follow us on Facebook

6,681

people like us on Facebook



Connecting the LGBTIQ+ community

Peer phone and web counselling and referral

Switchboard is the Victorian partner in the national QLife telephone and web peer support, information and referral service, funded by the Australian Commonwealth Government. This free peer-based service is for LGBTIQ+ people and those with questions or concerns about LGBTIQ+ issues including families, friends, teachers and co-workers of LGBTIQ+ people.

Reducing isolation for older people

Our Out & About program aims to reduce social isolation and loneliness through creating friendship and connection between LGBTI+ seniors in Victoria and peer volunteer visitors.

Preventing suicide

Switchboard's Suicide Prevention program puts responding to the challenges of suicide among LGBTIQ+ communities at the core of Switchboard's work. We work nationally to provide suicide prevention, intervention and postvention programs, with an emphasis on building community resilience through peer-led and lived experience activities.

Anti-racism

The Queer, Trans, Intersex and Bla(c)k and/or People of Colour (QTIBPoC) program aims to build greater equity for LGBTIQ+ people who are Bla(c)k, People of Colour and/or people of faith through storytelling and workshops driven by lived experience. Our QTIBPoC program is a space to co-create, co-exist, and envision cultural shifts for and by Bla(c)k and/or People of Colour and people of faith. In addition, the QTIBPoC program builds internal capacity to meet QTIBPoC community needs across all of Switchboard's services and areas of work.

Rainbow Door

A free specialist LGBTIQ+ service providing phone and web-based information, support and referral for people experiencing suicidal thoughts, family violence (including elder abuse) and issues with housing, alcohol and other drugs, relationships, sexual assault, legal issues, mental health and wellbeing, and social isolation. Rainbow Door also provides specialist secondary consultation to other services.

Training

Switchboard delivers a range of training to the community and service sector organisations. Courses include: LGBTIQ+ inclusive practice; how to recognise and respond to family/intimate partner violence; how to talk about suicide safely; everyday racism in the workplace; and peer support training. Switchboard is also accredited to deliver LivingWorks programs ASIST (Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training) and safeTALK.

Supporting families

Our Rainbow Families program connects and supports LGBTIQ+ parents, co-parents, carers and their families through social events, online support groups and advocacy. The program co-ordinates a community of practice to support services to develop and deliver rainbow family-inclusive better practice across Victoria. Rainbow Families offers consultation, training and support to all levels of government.

Our heartfelt thanks

The success of the work we do at Switchboard relies on the dedication and hard work of our supporters, volunteers, staff and life members.

Thank you for everything you have done for Switchboard and for the LGBTIQ+ community in a year when our bodies, our lives and our futures were scrutinised and debated, and the need for Switchboard's services reached new levels.

Our volunteers

We are so grateful for the efforts of all our volunteers and recognise the work of our service delivery program volunteers, advisory group members, events volunteers, and Board members.

We also thank those who have volunteered their time in an informal capacity, from giving feedback to helping us carry our banner at Pride. Each person who gives their time is an important part of Switchboard and plays a vital role in helping us serve our communities.

While Switchboard is unable to name individual volunteers for privacy reasons, we would like to acknowledge the valued contributions of our advisory group members, including these members who have chosen to be named: Arlie Jace Barwell-Chung, Lara Dickson, Axel Garay, Heather P. Ghelle, Jess Hand, Xin Hu, James Seow, Melitta St Just, Kathryn Wilson, Emily Unity, Rue Liew, and Mangatjay McGregor.

Switchboard's volunteer Board members are listed on page 32.

Our staff

Switchboard's leadership team is indebted to its staff, who support our communities through their vital work. They include administration and finance staff, QLife team leaders, volunteer coordination staff, Rainbow Door team leaders, Rainbow Door helpline staff, supervision staff, Suicide Prevention program staff, QTIBPoC program staff, Out & About program staff, and communications, training and casual staff.

For privacy and safety reasons, we don't publish the names all our staff, but we see your work and thank you for everything you do.

Switchboard's leadership team is listed on page 32.

Our life members

Thanks to their vision and dedication, Switchboard's founders made possible everything the organisation has been, and all it is today. Their work changed lives and we remain indebted to, and inspired by, the path they forged.

- > Heather Morgan
- > David Samson
- > 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
- > Bridget Gargan
- > Hadyn Klemm
- > Shane Laing
- > Leanne Renfree
- > Vanessa Robertson
- > John Wall
- > Kenny Yu
- > Mon Hameed
- > Christine Haag
- > Sarah Marlowe
- > Chris Oxley (died 2021)



We can't thank you enough

Switchboard is particularly grateful to our monthly donors, the individuals and organisations who fundraise for us, and those who make significant contributions.

Special thanks

- › Australian Nursing and Midwifery Federation
- › Cowen Family Foundation
- › Laird Hotel
- › Ross Haughey, Jared Heath and their wedding guests
- › Tinder

Big thanks

- › AM Reruns
- › CirrusRed Consulting
- › Dirtypawz
- › Drag Me Home!
- › Euphoria Social
- › Keysborough College
- › Methodist Ladies' College
- › Naylor Stewart Foundation
- › Open Door Pub Co
- › Platform Exhibitions
- › RMIT College of Vocational Education (staff)
- › Western Victoria Women's Winter Baseball
- › Yarra Valley Hockey Club

Funders

Thank you to the funders and organisations who support our work:

- › Australian Government Department of Health and Aged Care
- › Australian Nursing and Midwifery Federation (Victorian branch)
- › City of Port Phillip
- › Commonwealth Volunteer Recognition Program
- › LGBTIQ+ Health Australia
- › North Western Melbourne Primary Health Network
- › Officeworks
- › RMIT
- › Suicide Prevention and Response Office, Victorian Government
- › Suicide Prevention Australia
- › Victorian Department of Families, Fairness and Housing
- › Victorian Department of Health
- › Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission
- › Victorian Government

Collaborators and sponsors

Thank you to our partners, who share Switchboard's vision of safer futures for LGBTIQ+ communities in which we can all thrive:

- › All The Queens Men
- › Australian Association of Gerontology (LGBTI special interest group)
- › Australian Research Centre in Sex, Health and Society
- › Banyule City Council
- › Bendigo & District Aboriginal Co-operative
- › Beyond Blue
- › Carolyn Gillespie
- › Celebrate Ageing
- › City of Darebin
- › City of Melbourne
- › Commissioner for Senior Victorians, Gerard Mansour (since retired)
- › Daniel Witthaus, Rural Pride Australia
- › Deakin University
- › Dementia Australia
- › Diverse Voices
- › Djirra
- › Drummond Street Services
- › Equality Australia
- › Ethnic Communities Council of Victoria (elder abuse advisory group)
- › Family Safety Victoria
- › GenWest
- › Georgie Harman
- › Give Out Day
- › Hares and Hyenas
- › Hon Ged Kearney MP
- › Hon Minister for Equality Harriet Shing
- › Hon Minister for Equality Martin Foley (until end 2022)
- › Housing for the Aged Action Group
- › Jackie Turner
- › Jesuit Social Services' Support After Suicide program
- › Josh Burns MP
- › JOY Media
- › Justice Connect
- › Kenton Miller
- › Koorie Pride Victoria
- › Liberty Financial Pride Network
- › Living Proud
- › Michelle Sheppard
- › Mind Australia
- › Minus18
- › National LGBTI+ CVS Community of Practice
- › Older Persons Advocacy Network
- › Perinatal Anxiety & Depression Australia (PANDA)
- › Pride Cup
- › Q+Law
- › QHub Geelong
- › Queer Sporting Alliance
- › Rainbow Health Australia, Pride in Prevention
- › Refuge Victoria
- › Relationship Matters
- › Renegade Pub Football League
- › Roses in the Ocean
- › Safe and Equal
- › SASVic (Sexual Assault Services Victoria)
- › Simon Ruth
- › Southside Justice
- › St Vincent Mental Health (staff Pride March volunteers)
- › The Little Social
- › Thorne Harbour Health
- › Trans Justice Project
- › Transcend
- › Transgender Victoria
- › Twenty10
- › Val's LGBTI Ageing & Aged Care
- › Victorian Commissioner for LGBTIQ+ Communities, Dr Todd Fernando
- › Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission
- › Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commissioner, Ro Allen
- › Victorian Pride Centre
- › Victorian Pride Lobby
- › Women's Health in the North
- › Yarra Ranges Council

Chairperson's report



Michelle O'Sullivan

Chairperson since November 2022

This was a significant year of growth for Switchboard. New programs were developed, and we received additional funding from the Victorian Government, which led to further expansion of our services.

Our focus was on several areas of development and advocacy, and we celebrated some significant milestones.

Among them was delivery of Switchboard's 50th training program to prepare volunteers for our frontline teleweb service. Switchboard is the Victorian partner in QLife and volunteers complete comprehensive peer support training.

Victorian Government funding was secured to develop a new strategic plan for 2024 to 2028 and community consultation was held to kick off this process.

These and many other initiatives were delivered by extraordinary people at Switchboard. While our work is a collective effort, and there are too many people to thank individually, I would like to mention outgoing Board member Alice Drury.

After joining the Board in November 2020, Alice fulfilled various roles, including secretary, governance committee representative, and general member. Alice, my warmest thanks for your commitment, and for bringing your strategic lens and legal mind to many of our processes and policies.

I also want to acknowledge Board member Rashmi Kumar, who was Acting Chairperson from July to November, when I was appointed Chairperson at the AGM. Thank you, Rashmi, for stepping up so capably, and for your ongoing service as Deputy Chairperson.

Thanks, also, to Switchboard's CEO Joe Ball, who has steered Switchboard through another challenging year with vision, grace, and integrity. I look forward to working with Joe and the Board, including some new members, in 2024.

Among our goals for the year ahead is working together to undertake a community engagement and consultation process around our new strategy, so that our services will be delivered for all LGBTIQ+ folks across Victoria.

We will do this with respect for one another and our community, and we will work effectively to ensure our responsibilities as a not-for-profit and service organisation are met.

In closing, on a more personal note, returning to Switchboard has been both a humbling and challenging experience for me.

As a life member who has been connected to Switchboard since 1993, I recognise the heart of the organisation that still exists after more than 30 years, delivering peer-based services to the LGBTIQ+ communities.

This is achieved with our employees, partners, and volunteers under the amazing commitments we hold ourselves to: to be informed, active, accountable, connected, responsive and respectful.

I believe it is the last commitment that enables us to be empathetic and truly meet people where they are at. Without respect, we would struggle to take on the challenges of what happens around us every day.



Rashmi Kumar

*Acting Chairperson July 2022
to November 2022*

This year saw the departure of Sarah Marlowe from the Board. Sarah had served as Chairperson for five years and saw Switchboard through an extraordinary period of change and growth.

During her tenure, Sarah oversaw the recruitment of CEO Joe Ball, the creation of Switchboard's strategic plan, and growth into the multi-million-dollar organisation Switchboard is today. She stewarded that growth while maintaining Switchboard's core purpose as a peer-based organisation, demonstrating just how impactful the community-focused and peer-based approach can be.

Along with Sarah, we farewelled other long-serving Board members, including Mama Alto, Sara Timms, Milla Galea, and Beck Hunt. They all made major contributions to a range of governance improvements, and we wish them well.

As they departed, we welcomed Elle Cartmill, Mitch Adjuk and Rani Pramesti onto the Board in November 2022. They have already made significant contributions to the Board's governance and capacity.

We also celebrated Switchboard's 30th birthday in 2022, as we weren't able to hold in-person gatherings in 2021. The occasion gave us an opportunity to reflect on the journey Switchboard has been on over the past 30 years. We heard from one of the co-founders, Heather Morgan, and others who have had a long association with Switchboard.

Unfortunately, 2022-23 saw an increase in aggression and opposition to the rights of trans and gender diverse people in a range of ways.

Switchboard has been a strong voice opposing these attacks on members of our community and affirming their rights.

Switchboard built on the success of its Suicide Prevention program, with the online resource CHARLEE, and a dedicated senior policy officer to progress Switchboard's contributions to implementing the recommendations of the Royal Commission into Victoria's Mental Health System.

We also welcomed Rainbow Families to Switchboard.

I was particularly pleased to see the growth in our QLife program, as well as the ongoing success of community engagement and organisational development through the racial equity and inclusion work led by Greg Rincon.



CEO's report

Joe Ball

The heart of Switchboard is found in our profound dedication and relentless work to foster the wellbeing and empowerment of the LGBTIQ+ community.

As an organisation, we are a community of volunteers, members, staff, and Board members, and we have continued this commitment for another year through strengthening and furthering our programs and leading and partnering in a series of remarkable endeavours and initiatives.

Among them was a historic yarning event in Geelong, when the Aboriginal health and LGBTIQ+ service sectors came together for the first time.

It was an honour to be present at this gathering, which emphasised the significance of working collaboratively to support rainbow mob and build a better future.

We loved having Uncle Jack Charles as guest of honour at our Wear It Purple Day event in August. His story telling was beautiful and generous, and we were deeply saddened by his death soon after.

In March, when British anti-trans activist Posie Parker visited Melbourne, Switchboard supported the trans and gender diverse community not only through our helplines but through active support and outreach to trans communities, including sending 50 care packages to older trans and gender diverse folks.

On Transgender Day of Visibility, we hosted a community breakfast, and Switchboard staff and volunteers marched behind our banner at the 3000-strong community rally that culminated in reclaiming the steps of the Victorian Parliament.

Our commitment to advocating for the wellbeing of our community extended to providing testimony at the Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide.

In this forum, Suicide Prevention Manager Anna Bernasochi and I shed light on LGBTIQ+ veterans who faced, and continue to face, discrimination and those who prior to 1992 experienced dishonourable discharge due to their sexual orientation.

The unsung heroes of Switchboard are undoubtedly the broader community of colleagues, loved ones and allies around us.



This unjust treatment has, regrettably, contributed to profound personal struggles and, in some cases, suicide.

During the Victorian Seniors Festival in October, Switchboard teamed up with the Victorian Pride Centre to host a special event.

It was a real honour to address the crowd of predominantly older LGBTIQ+ folks and speak to the discrimination and the dual challenge they face.

On Invasion Day in January, Switchboard staff joined the We-Akon Dilinja mourning service held by the Boonwurrung people. This acknowledgment of the indigenous history of the land reinforces our commitment to respecting and acknowledging the traditional custodians.

This year, Switchboard turned 31 and marked the occasion with a celebration which reflected on the thousands who have undergone helpline training and the expansion into five different programs.

The longevity of the organisation is a testament to its enduring impact and to the dedication of our volunteers, members, life members, Board, staff, partners, and funders.

Switchboard is what it is because of those who volunteer today and those who have volunteered over the decades.

Thank you to each volunteer who chooses to give so generously of their time across our QLife, Out & About, Suicide Prevention and QTIBPoC programs and advisory groups, and on our Board.

I want to make special mention of the staff at Switchboard and express my heartfelt appreciation for their exceptional dedication and commitment, and tireless support of the LGBTIQ+ community.

Your expertise, your empathy, and your unwavering support leave an indelible mark on the hearts and lives of those you touch.

I would also like to acknowledge outgoing Board members Alice Drury and Blake Leschen. Thank you for the countless volunteer hours between and during Board meetings when you have brought your skills and passion to making Switchboard stronger.

My thanks to Rashmi Kumar and Michelle O'Sullivan, who have each served as Chairperson this year. Rashmi, our Deputy Chair, took over from Sarah Marlowe in mid-2022, acting as chair until Michelle was elected in November.

Rashmi continues to provide valuable leadership on Board policy and in her significant contributions to the Board's Voice statement and Anti-Racism Organisational Change (AROC) plan.

Michelle has been both a confidant and a comrade to me this year. Thank you, Michelle, for your resilience and resolve and I look forward to our second year at Switchboard together.

The unsung heroes of Switchboard are undoubtedly the broader community of colleagues, loved ones and allies that wraps around each of us. The people who help us show up to this work.

The longevity of the organisation is a testament to its enduring impact and to the dedication of our volunteers, members, life members, Board, staff, partners, and funders.



Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commissioner, Ro Allen, Joe Ball, and Commissioner for LGBTIQ+ Communities, Todd Fernando, with Switchboard's Transgender Day of Visibility community pledge.



First meeting of the expert advisory group for the National Action Plan for LGBTIQ+ health and wellbeing.

I am thinking here of the first person you call when you've had a hard day or the people who celebrate you and thank you for continuing. It's the friend who says, "you inspire me", a partner who says, "you've got this", or a colleague at another organisation who laughs with you because they know exactly what you mean. On behalf of us all, thank you for supporting us.

The challenges of the past year as well as the current one – among them the cost of living, the Voice referendum, and the relentless discrimination against our communities – have seen Switchboard step up at every opportunity.

More than anything, they have strengthened our resolve as a united Switchboard community to work towards a more equitable and compassionate society for all.

Our journey

The history of Switchboard is held by many people. Here, we celebrate more than 30 years of achievements and notable moments, by highlighting a select few.

1992 Gay and Lesbian Switchboard formed

1996 First Executive Officer appointed

In May, Rachell Rose became Switchboard's first Executive Officer.

1997 Telstra provides vital support

Telstra's assistance ensured Switchboard could meet the cost of providing a free 1800 number throughout country Victoria. This was a considerable achievement for the Switchboard team given Telecom had refused to list Switchboard's 0055 information service numbers in 1992.



2001 S.O.S Save Our Switchboard

In July, Switchboard asked the community for help. Facing closure, a public campaign to raise \$25,000 was launched. Miss Candee, with Sasha Turner and Keith Corey Photography, devised a greeting card campaign that raised over \$4000.



Miss Candee in the Save our Switchboard campaign.

2002 State Government funding approved

After four attempts, Paul Cosgrave led the successful effort to secure DGR status for Switchboard.

2003 Deductible Gift Recipient (DGR) status secured

After beginning negotiations in 2001 to secure funding from the Victorian Government, Switchboard finalised recurrent funding from the then Department of Human Services in May 2002. The three-year grant for \$25,000 was signed off after considerable effort from the funding steering committee.

2008 - 2022

14 years at City Village

In 2007, the City of Melbourne offered subsidised office space leases to not-for-profit organisations. Switchboard was a successful applicant and operated from City Village on Bourke Street for 14 years from 2008.

Staff member Libby Jamieson in the Switchboard phone room, 2021.



2009 General Manager appointed

In October, Leanne Renfree joined as general manager, a position she would hold for seven years. Leanne was instrumental in the transition to our QLife partnership, and in setting up the Out & About program.



2013 QLife launches

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.

2014 Switchboard reaches more than \$100,000 in revenue

The first year that Switchboard's annual revenue reached over \$100,000 (\$159,295).

Gay and Lesbian Switchboard becomes Switchboard Victoria

On 24 June, a Special General Meeting passed a resolution to change our name to Switchboard Victoria, thanks to the work of Leanne Renfree and the governance sub-committee.

2017 Taking the lead for marriage equality

In response to public debates around the Australian Marriage Law Postal Survey, Switchboard took a community leadership role, ensuring the QLife service was promoted widely, along with the message that Switchboard was there for the community during difficult times.



Hitting the road

In 2017, then General Manager Joe Ball did a rural roadshow with then Commissioner for LGBTIQ+ Communities, Ro Allen, visiting 23 Victorian regional centres in six weeks.

2019

Suicide prevention service launches

In 2018-19 Switchboard formally established our suicide prevention service, engaging a suicide prevention manager in February 2019.

Switchboard appoints first CEO

Joe Ball moves into the role of Chief Executive Officer.



2020

Rainbow Door opens



Our specialist phone and web-based information, support and referral service arrived, and the Mental Health Royal Commission gave Switchboard recurrent funding.

2021 Switchboard moves to St Kilda

The Victorian Pride Centre became our new home.

2022

Online hub launches

In October, a suicide prevention hub created by LGBTIQ+ people is launched by Switchboard. CHARLEE (Connection, Hope, Action, Resources and Lived Experience Education) is dedicated to all LGBTIQ+ people – those who struggle, those who have survived, those who are carers and those who have died. See charlee.org.au.



2023

Switchboard advises Federal Government

Switchboard CEO Joe Ball joined the expert advisory group for the first 10-year National Action Plan for LGBTIQ+ health and wellbeing announced at Sydney World Pride.

Rainbow Families officially joins Switchboard

Founded in 2006, Rainbow Families Victoria (RFV) officially joined Switchboard after the Victorian Government issued funding to support transgender and gender diverse people after the divisive Let Women Speak anti-trans rally.



Year in review

JULY

Standing together for NAIDOC Week

We held a Facebook Live event where we chatted with Koorie Pride Victoria and called on non-Indigenous Australians to think about how they can get up, stand up and show up for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples every day.

Creating safer communities

Our CEO Joe Ball and Suicide Prevention Manager Anna Bernasochi welcomed colleagues from Living Works to discuss creating suicide-safer communities for LGBTIQ+ people across Victoria. It's through respectful partnerships that we can bring change.



AUGUST

Uncle Jack Charles drops by for a yarn

It was an honour to have Uncle Jack Charles join Switchboard and Koorie Pride Victoria to share his story at our Wear It Purple Day celebration. In a wide-ranging and generous conversation just weeks before he died, the beloved elder and activist reminded us of the power we can uncover in telling our own life stories, and the importance of finding the courage to ask for help when needed.



From left: Allison Toby, Uncle Jack Charles and Auntie Janet Gulpin with Switchboard QTIBPoC programs officer Jackie Sheppard at our Wear It Purple Day event.

Responsive practice report launches

Switchboard's innovation, adaptability and flexibility in transforming our teleweb services during the pandemic was detailed in a research report by the Australian Research Centre in Sex, Health and Society. *Responsive pandemic practice* examines LGBTIQ+ family violence service innovation in Victoria during COVID-19.



SEPTEMBER

Taking back the media

Switchboard joined other LGBTIQ+ community organisations at two successful public events to discuss how we can take back mainstream media narratives on gender diversity and support our community through negative experiences with media.

Networking for QTIBPoC

Drummond Street's (in)visible program and Switchboard's QTIBPoC program hosted a community networking event at the Victorian Pride Centre. We brought together LGBTIQ+ First Nations, Bla(c)k and People of Colour collectives, organisations, services and groups to network and have a yarn.



OCTOBER

Switchboard launches CHARLEE

Our new online suicide prevention hub by and for LGBTIQ+ people is launched with support from the Victorian Government.

DECEMBER

Yarning for a better future

We joined the Aboriginal health and LGBTQIA+ service sectors in Geelong for yarning about how to support rainbow mob and build a stronger and better future. In his keynote speech on behalf of the LGBTQIA+ sector, our CEO Joe Ball quoted Murri artist and activist Lilla Watson: "If you have come here to help me, you are wasting your time, but if you are here because your liberation is bound up with mine, then let us work together."



Attendees at the Aboriginal health and LGBTQIA+ service sectors yarning event in Geelong.

FEBRUARY

Marching with pride

We took part in the Midsumma Pride March with our friends, rainbow families, and communities. It was so wonderful to be back on the streets and at the festival.



MARCH

Switchboard supports Sydney World Pride



Victorian Commissioner for LGBTQIA+ Communities, Todd Fernando, Joe Ball, Bonnie Hart and Michael Gardiner following their presentation at Sydney World Pride.

Trans visibility morning tea at the Victorian Pride Centre



Switchboard hosted trans and gender diverse community members and allies at a Transgender Day of Visibility morning tea.

MAY

Creating communities of care

Switchboard's QTIBPoC and Suicide Prevention programs teamed up to deliver an inspiring panel discussion about change-making, activism and creating communities of care facilitated by Board member Rani Pramesti.

Angels fly high for IDAHOBIT

The Rainbow Community Angels made a colourful debut at Eltham Library, using their wings to shield families from protesters at a pop-up community Drag Storytime gathering after the library was forced to move its event online.



Providing vital support



The number of contacts to our specialist helpline increased by nearly 30 per cent, with demand continuing to outstrip capacity.

Rainbow Door responded to 18,501 phone calls, emails, and texts, helping our communities navigate mental health and other support services and systems.

More than 650 of those contacts were from people experiencing intimate partner and family violence.

Launched in September 2020, Rainbow Door provides free information, support and referrals for people experiencing family violence, including elder abuse, and issues including mental health, housing, alcohol, and other drugs.

This year, the service also gave 300 secondary consultations to build sector capacity and increase safety for LGBTIQ+ people accessing mainstream services.

TOP FIVE REASONS FOR CONTACTING RAINBOW DOOR



**MENTAL HEALTH/
WELLBEING
(INCLUDING SUICIDE
PREVENTION)**



**FAMILY VIOLENCE
(INCLUDING VICTIM-
SURVIVOR AND PERSON
USING VIOLENCE)**



GENDER, SEXUALITY



**SECONDARY CONSULTATION/
SECTOR CAPACITY BUILDING**



HOUSING

“Thank you for your phone call. It really helped get things in perspective emotionally. I feel connected again to our community.”

– Rainbow Door service user

“I’m really grateful for your service, you have been so helpful for us to plot our next steps.”

– Parent of a trans and gender diverse child

RESPONDING TO NEED



1,759
Service users
supported



18,501
Contacts
responded to

There was a focus on alignment with the Multi-Agency Risk Assessment and Management Framework (MARAM), which ensures services are effectively identifying, assessing, and managing family violence risk.

Work began on developing a practice framework to enhance MARAM alignment, clinical governance, client care and risk management response. Upskilling staff was also a priority.

Rainbow Door partnered with Thorne Harbour Health and the Australian Research Centre in Sex, Health and Society (ARCSHS) on research into gay, bisexual, trans and queer men using violence to identify meaningful and impactful

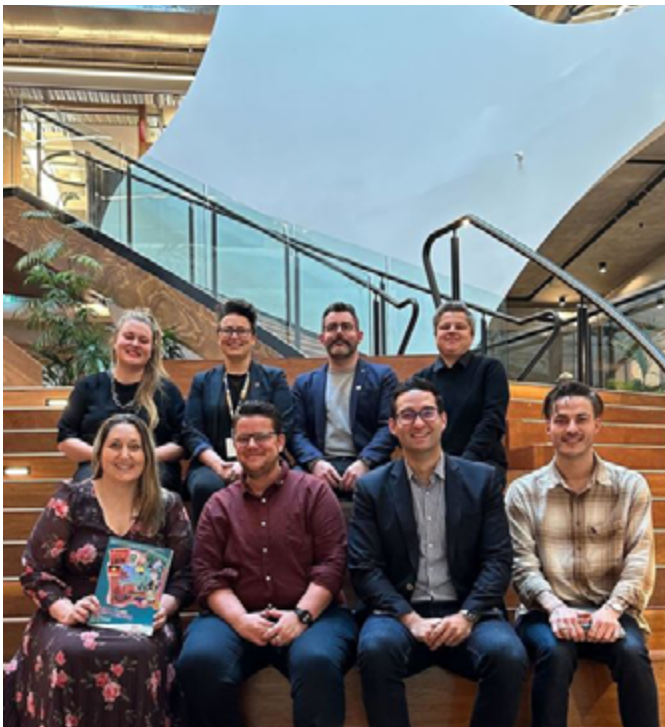
Highlights

- › Rainbow Door staff completed comprehensive training as part of a focus on alignment with the Multi-Agency Risk Assessment and Management Framework (MARAM), to support the program's family violence response
- › Staff also underwent Suicide Intervention Skills Training (ASIST) which teaches participants how to assist those at risk for suicide
- › New Rainbow Door Manager Jake Peterson was welcomed to the team
- › A review of the program's structure increased staffing consistency across shifts and improved rest and professional development opportunities for staff

behaviour recognition, service engagement and behaviour change.

A partnership with the Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission explored how we can support LGBTIQ+ people of faith around change or suppression practices.

Switchboard met with Assistant Minister for Mental Health and Suicide Prevention, The Hon Emma McBride, to discuss the suicide prevention, intervention, and postvention work at Switchboard, including Rainbow Door.



Switchboard staff met with political representatives to discuss suicide prevention. From top left, Anna M, Lara Hedberg, Jake Peterson, Claire Flynn. From bottom left, The Hon Emma McBride, Joe Ball, Josh Burns MP, Blake Leschen.

Thank you

- › Victorian Department of Health
- › Victorian Department of Families, Fairness and Housing
- › Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission
- › Family Safety Victoria
- › Safe and Equal
- › Thorne Harbour Health
- › Drummond Street Services
- › Koorie Pride Victoria
- › Refuge Victoria
- › Relationship Matters
- › Australian Research Centre in Sex, Health and Society
- › Rainbow Health Australia, Pride in Prevention
- › SASVic (Sexual Assault Services Victoria)
- › Q+Law
- › Southside Justice
- › Transcend
- › Jill Faulkner
- › Jackson Fairchild
- › Ada Conroy

Connecting with community

A milestone year for the helpline in Victoria saw an expanded team responding to more calls than ever before.

Increased funding saw QLife Victoria grow its workforce, enabling 3880 phone and web contacts, up from 2019 conversations the previous year.

The staffing boost also ensured consistency of service delivery and created employment pathways for QLife volunteers wanting to move into paid roles.

Switchboard is the Victorian partner in QLife, a national helpline providing telephone and webchat peer support, information, and referral services. The anonymous and confidential, free, peer-based service is for LGBTIQ+ people and those who have questions or concerns about LGBTIQ+ issues.

POWERING PEER SUPPORT



3880
phone and webchat
conversations



52%
increase in
conversations from
the previous year

"I needed advice about my child but the person chatting to me asked if I was okay and needed support too. So much kindness and compassion."

– QLife caller



“Living in a remote community there is no one I can talk to about LGBTI issues, and I really appreciate the compassion and understanding shown to me.”

– QLife caller

Highlights

- › The return of QLife volunteers in November 2022 after being stood down in March due to the COVID-19 pandemic
- › Funding from LGBTIQ Health Australia and the Australian Government for paid peer supporters to work alongside volunteers. Paid peer supporters kept the service running as we navigated the return to work of staff and volunteers
- › A total of 25 new volunteers completed 10 training sessions in an online or hybrid course between March and October

As with the previous year, most people who contacted QLife were seeking general conversation.

For many, the service is a safe and supportive way to counter loneliness and connect with the LGBTQIA+ community.

Disability, coming out, exploring gender identity, and navigating family relationships were the other most common reasons people contacted QLife in Victoria.

Being able to discuss such things with a peer, and share information in a confidential, affirming space, is profoundly important and powerful.

QLife grew to have its greatest-ever capacity to deliver the service, with more than 40 active volunteers, eight peer supporters, and five team leaders in full- and part-time roles.

This was made possible through ongoing Australian Government funding and a funding boost from the Victorian Government in response to increased anti-trans vilification in the wake of British anti-trans activist Posie Parker’s visit in March 2023.

As the Victorian QLife partner, Switchboard works closely with Twenty10 (NSW), Diverse Voices (QLD), Living Proud (WA) and LGBTIQ+ Health Australia.

QLife provides support to LGBTQIA+ Victorians from 3pm to midnight, seven days a week.

Thank you

QLife’s volunteers, paid peer supporters, team leaders, LGBTIQ+ Health Australia, and our partner sites Twenty10, Living Proud and Diverse Voices.

TOP FIVE REASONS FOR CONTACTING QLIFE



GENERAL CONVERSATION



DISABILITY



COMING OUT



EXPLORING GENDER IDENTITY



FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS

Standing together

The creation of a suicide prevention hub by and for LGBTIQ+ people was one highlight among many.

Launched in October, CHARLEE supports members of our community who are seeking help for themselves, supporting others in distress, or have been bereaved by suicide.

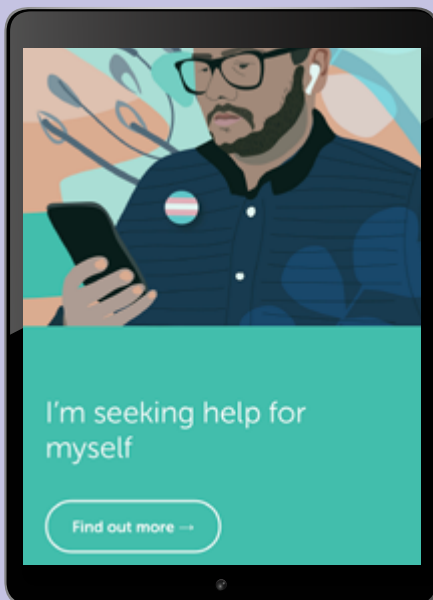
CHARLEE (Connection, Hope, Advocacy, Resources and Lived Experience Education) is an online hub co-designed with Switchboard's lived experience of suicide network.

The launch of CHARLEE coincided with the first public reporting of coronial data on LGBTIQ+ suicide deaths in Victoria. Switchboard was a key contributor to the report.

Our Suicide Prevention program provides peer-led suicide prevention, intervention and postvention programs, with a strong emphasis on building community resilience through peer-led and lived experience activities.

"If we never share, we are never seen."

– Mia, lived experience network participant



Sample of CHARLEE home page



The program runs skills-sharing workshops, webinars, and support groups for suicide bereavement as well as suicide awareness and intervention skills training.

In August, Uncle Jack Charles was guest of honour at our Wear It Purple Day celebration of LGBTIQ+ young people, in partnership with Koorie Pride Victoria (KPV).

The hybrid event, which featured Uncle Jack sharing outrageous and heartfelt stories in a yarn with KPV's Allison Toby, was a resounding success with more than 300 attendees.

This year saw our lived experience network grow to more than 40 members and the suicide bereavement program support 60-plus people.

As well as running two eight-week suicide bereavement groups, the program piloted drop-in groups, which proved important for participants. As a result, along with increasing capacity for providing peer support, our approach to service delivery became more sensitive and responsive.

This year, work began on the Declaration of LGBTIQ+SB Lived Experience of Suicide Leadership, part of a suicide prevention campaign to be launched by Switchboard in 2024.

Highlights

- › Launched CHARLEE, an online suicide prevention hub co-designed with our lived experience network, and received 6000 visits
- › Celebrated Wear It Purple Day with Uncle Jack Charles at an event attended by more than 300 people
- › Began development of the Declaration of LGBTIQ+SB Lived Experience of Suicide Leadership
- › Piloted lived experience-led drop-in groups as part of our suicide bereavement program which changed the approach to service delivery
- › Recruited our first dedicated First Nations lead in May to facilitate suicide prevention yarns

The first of two co-design sessions was held at the 2023 Lived Experience of Suicide Summit held in Tasmania in March. Switchboard coordinated bursaries for 10 of our lived experience network participants to attend, their first opportunity to meet in person.

Work continued on increasing LGBTIQ+ representation in the lived experience of suicide movement through OUTspoken, a peer support program which supports LGBTIQ+ people in building capacity to share their lived experiences of suicide.

Our focus on reducing stigma around suicide and fostering community resilience saw the program work in partnership with the Victorian Government, Mind Australia, Roses in the Ocean, and Jesuit Social Services (Support After Suicide) on lived experience-led suicide prevention initiatives.

SHARING EXPERIENCE



40+
participants in the
lived experience
network



60+
people supported
through our
bereavement
program



2
eight-week suicide
bereavement
groups

Thank you

Funders:

- › North Western Melbourne Primary Health Network
- › Victorian Government
- › Suicide Prevention and Response Office, Victorian Government
- › Suicide Prevention Australia
- › LGBTIQ+ Health Australia
- › RMIT

Thanks also to:

- › Our Lived Experience of Suicide Network participants
- › Members of the bereavement lived experience advisory group
- › Our co-facilitators at Jesuit Social Services' Support After Suicide program
- › Co-facilitators from Roses in the Ocean

Supporting older people

An increase in referrals and steady volunteer interest enabled older LGBTI+ people across Victoria to stay connected with their community.

Out & About achieved 96 per cent of its targets for visiting in home care, and many volunteers visited significantly more than the minimum required.

Participants reported the free service had a positive impact on their health and wellbeing, including increased confidence, and more engagement with the LGBTI+ community.

The program, coordinated in partnership with the National Aged Care Volunteer Visitors Scheme (formerly Community Visitors Scheme), also secured a three-year extension with the allocation of 55 more places across Victoria.

Advocacy and sector activities included working with Koorie Pride Victoria on ways to engage Aboriginal elders, sharing a stall at Deadly Day Out in Bendigo, Bendigo, and attending LGBTIQA+ community sector yarning.

With the support of the Victorian Pride Centre, Out & About hosted a community lunch and exhibition of participants' art, craft and writing to celebrate the Victorian Seniors Festival during October. In February, participants and volunteers attended a Midsumma brunch and 12 joined the Pride March, where their presence aboard a mini bus was warmly applauded.

Out & About partnered with Dr Louisa Smith from Deakin University and the Dementia Australia Research Foundation to co-design resources to support community visitors to make and maintain connections with LGBTI+ people with dementia.

Through its partnership with arts company All The Queens Men, the program promoted the monthly LGBTI+ Elders Dance Club and supported Out & About participants to attend.

PREVENTING ISOLATION



93
Older people supported



88
Volunteers

"I don't see anyone except staff and my [volunteer] visitor. It is the highlight my week."

- Participant

“It’s the honour of being able to be an active participant in someone’s life, and hopefully, make a difference in their day. The opportunity that Switchboard gives us to do this is a privilege, and it’s an honour to be a part of filling a much-needed gap in our community.”

– Javier, volunteer

Highlights

- › Out & About secured funding for 55 more program participants across Victoria
- › Twelve participants and volunteers had a ball taking part in the Midsumma Pride March
- › Out & About hosted a community lunch and exhibition of participants’ art, craft and writing to mark the 2022 Victorian Seniors Festival, in a joint initiative with the Victorian Pride Centre



Thank you

Funders and in-kind support:

- › Australian Government Department of Health and Aged Care
- › Victorian Government
- › City of Port Phillip
- › Midsumma Festival
- › Australian Nursing and Midwifery Federation (Victorian branch)
- › Commonwealth Volunteer Recognition Program
- › Thorne Harbour Health
- › Officeworks

We worked with:

- › Val’s LGBTI Ageing & Aged Care
- › All The Queens Men
- › Koorie Pride Victoria
- › Bendigo & District Aboriginal Co-operative
- › Commissioner for Senior Victorians, Gerard Mansour (since retired)
- › Commissioner for LGBTIQ+ Communities, Dr Todd Fernando
- › National LGBTI+ CVS Community of Practice
- › Transgender Victoria
- › Victorian Pride Centre
- › Celebrate Ageing
- › Housing for the Aged Action Group
- › Justice Connect
- › Dementia Australia
- › Deakin University
- › Older Persons Advocacy Network
- › Ethnic Communities Council of Victoria (elder abuse advisory group)
- › Australian Association of Gerontology (LGBTI special interest group)
- › Liberty Financial Pride Network
- › Christ Church Community Centre

We particularly want to recognise the ground-breaking work of Heather Birch, Victorian Department of Health, who retired in early 2023 after decades of advocacy for older LGBTI+ people.

Volunteers:

Thanks to our amazing and ever-creative Out & About volunteers, who carried on through the ongoing impacts of COVID-19. Many were matched during lockdowns and only recently met their matched person for the first time.

We love your commitment and passion for connecting with older members of our LGBTI+ communities. We continue to learn more each day about our shared history and our participants through you.

Creating safe spaces

It was a year of firsts for the program, bringing QTIBPoC communities together through new workshops and events.

A series of workshops designed to prevent social isolation among Queer, Trans, and Intersex Bla(c)k People and/or People of Colour (QTIBPoC) during the COVID-19 pandemic proved a resounding success.

The response to the online workshops, made possible by a Victorian Government grant, saw them continued throughout the year.

The workshops went on to win the Preventing Social Isolation category at the 2022 Victorian Pride Awards.

Switchboard's QTIBPoC program runs free workshops to promote resilience, mental health, and wellbeing in QTIBPoC and people of faith communities, as well as professional development, training and consultation on anti-racism and racial literacy for broader communities.

Another first for the program was a networking event, held in collaboration with the (In)visible team from Drummond Street Services, for community members in the LGBTIQ+ mental health sector. It brought together more than 25 people from organisations including Many Coloured Sky, Thorne Harbour Health and the Australian GLBTIQ Multicultural Council.

Several families, along with the Victorian Commissioner for LGBTIQ+ Communities, Dr Todd Fernando, attended our inaugural QTIBPoC Family and Ally Day.

Facebook Live events, including conversation to mark NAIDOC Week with Allison Toby, then Executive Officer of Koorie Pride Victoria, and Dr Judy Tang, a commissioner at the Victorian Multicultural Commission, were among other first-time initiatives.

Skill-sharing workshops on supporting LGBTIQ+ international students, the effects of racism on QTIBPoC bodies, navigating grant writing and gatekeeping, and healing were also held.

Change-making, Activism and Creating Communities of Care, a volunteer event organised by Switchboard's QTIBPoC and Suicide Prevention programs, featured a QTIBPoC panel.

The program also ensures Switchboard is a safe, inclusive, and anti-racist environment for our staff and service users through training and reflexive discussions on topics such as supporting LGBTIQ+ people from asylum seeker and refugee backgrounds and the lived experiences of LGBTIQ+ Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Externally, anti-racism training was provided to RMIT and Moonee Valley Legal Service.



▲ Celebrating Switchboard's win at the 2022 Victorian Pride Awards, from left, Switchboard CEO Joe Ball, Switchboard QTIBPoC programs officer Jackie Sheppard, Victorian Minister for Equality, The Hon Harriet Shing, and Switchboard Racial Equity and Inclusion Manager Gregory Rincon.

“The facilitator was great. I really valued the transparency, the honesty, and the willingness to hold all ranges of emotions.”

– Embodied Resistance workshop participant

Thank you

Thanks to our advisory group members for lending their expertise and living experiences to help shape the QTIBPoC program and for being wonderful facilitators for our community workshops and staff training.

Thanks also to the other QTIBPoC community network members who facilitated workshops and events for the program.

During the year consultations were held for the development of an anti-racism organisational change plan. Thank you to everyone who provided excellent and insightful feedback.

BRINGING PEOPLE TOGETHER



150+

registrations for QTIBPoC workshops and events



25+

people attended our first networking event for QTIBPoC community members in the LGBTIQ+ mental health sector

“I felt the event was inclusive and safe for our family and heard similar comments from other attendees. It was great to meet Uncle Bill Nicholson who performed the Welcome to Country and gave me an opportunity to learn more about the Country we were on.”

– QTIBPoC Family and Ally Day attendee

“Well done to the Switchboard team! It was great to meet all of you and meet so many amazing people who attended the event. I feel these events are important for QTIBPoC families who experienced isolation during COVID lockdowns.”

– QTIBPoC Family and Ally Day attendee

Highlights

- › Winner of the Preventing Social Isolation category at the 2022 Victorian Pride Awards for our QTIBPoC community workshops
- › The program's first QTIBPoC Family and Ally Day in July brought families together for food and activities
- › Switchboard's first QTIBPoC networking event in collaboration with Drummond Street Services was a great success

Growing together

Switchboard teamed up with Rainbow Families Victoria to create a new program with a rich advocacy history.

The Rainbow Families program was established in April after Victorian Government funding enabled Rainbow Families Victoria to formally amalgamate with Switchboard.

This meant Rainbow Families could continue providing much-needed community support while the program contributes to building and improving staff capability and service capacity across the state.

The new program connects LGBTIQ+ parents and co-parents and works to support services to develop and deliver rainbow family-inclusive better practice.

This includes social connection, providing relevant and up-to-date information on every stage of decision making, pre- and post-natal support and parenting, and recognising the needs of trans, gender diverse and non-binary parents, co-parents, and carers.

The vital work of advocating for rainbow families is built on the lived experience of many people who fought to create their families when there was little medical access and no legal protection, let alone social acceptance.

“Thank you so much for this – was so informative and provided some great positive change ideas.”

– Rainbow Families Community of Practice attendee

RESPONDING TO NEED



45

People joined the new Rainbow Families support group within three months



60

Rainbow Community Angels trained



2

wing-making workshops held



3

LGBTIQ+ events protected



^ Rainbow Community Angels pose for a photo while protecting a Drag Storytime event.

Founded in 2006, Rainbow Families Victoria (RFV) successfully campaigned for the Assisted Reproductive Treatment Act (enacted in 2010) which removed obstacles to IVF access and other treatment for single women and LGBTQIA+ couples.

The Act also amended birth certificates to allow registration of two parents for children born into rainbow families and introduced altruistic surrogacy across Victoria.

This was followed by the Adoption Equality Campaign which led to reforms in 2016 that removed barriers to LGBTQIA+ people being able to apply to adopt.

RFV also intervened to stop the proposed plebiscite on marriage equality in 2016 and campaigned again in 2017, first to stop the postal survey, and then for marriage equality.

Switchboard is proud to be the new home of this trailblazing community organisation.

“When I wear the wings, I stand proudly with my community, in direct but peaceful defiance of the haters. It’s so powerful.”

– Susannah, Rainbow Community Angel

Highlights

- › Designing Switchboard’s new Rainbow Families program, building on the significant achievements of Rainbow Families Victoria and aligned with Switchboard’s vision and values
- › The inaugural delivery of the Rainbow Families Community of Practice, attended by representatives from a range of community services including QHub Geelong, Drummond Street Services, Perinatal Anxiety & Depression Australia (PANDA), Women’s Health in the North, City of Melbourne, City of Darebin, City of Banyule, and Yarra Ranges Council
- › Launch of Rainbow Community Angels project in May
- › The first Rainbow Families online seminar with queer doula Zan Meader
- › Formation of the transPARENT online support group
- › The first meeting of the Rainbow Families Advisory Group in June



Angels take flight

Rainbow Community Angels, a grassroots initiative to empower LGBTQIA+ people to stand up for our right to safety, visibility, and equality, burst into being in May.

Co-founded by Switchboard staff and community advocates, the Angels are proudly supported by Switchboard alongside LGBTQIA+ services and community organisations in Victoria and New South Wales.

Rainbow Community Angels (RCA) is a non-violent civil disobedience response to the recent increase in hate directed at LGBTQIA+ communities.

Volunteers trained as angels wear large wings to shield LGBTQIA+ events from physical harm and verbal vilification by protesters.

RCA also provides security advice and referrals to city councils, regional and rural shires, and services, and LGBTQIA+ groups where insufficient support is offered by the police or other agencies.

The Angels educate LGBTQIA+ community members about their digital safety and how to avoid being doxxed or targeted online or in person.

They aim to change the public narrative by actively supporting organisations with events being targeted, and challenging negative stereotypes by ensuring media coverage of hate activities includes LGBTQIA+ voices.

Sharing our expertise

After more than three decades, an important training milestone was reached this year.

In March, Switchboard delivered its 50th training course, preparing volunteers to support people who call our QLife helpline.

Switchboard has been delivering peer-driven training for our programs and services for more than 30 years.

As well as training our volunteers, Switchboard provides a specialist training service to third parties which draws on our depth of experience both as trainers and in issues impacting the LGBTIQ+ community.

This service is designed for the LGBTIQ+ community sector, workplaces, and the broader community.

It offers specialist training in suicide prevention, anti-racism, family and intimate partner violence, and peer support.

The certified courses, delivered by Switchboard staff, draw on our own lived expertise and the organisation's extensive experience as a training organisation.

Training services include:

- › Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training (ASIST)
- › safeTALK
- › Everyday racism and micro-aggression
- › Peer support
- › LGBTIQ+ family and intimate partner violence
- › LGBTIQ+ 101

NEED TRAINING?

Switchboard's specialist training program in suicide prevention, anti-racism, family and intimate partner violence and peer support are available to the LGBTIQ+ community sector, workplaces, and the wider community.

To find out more about our services, email training@switchboard.org.au or visit our website



In memory

We honour the lives of five Out & About program participants who have died.

At Switchboard, we recognise people, cultures, religions, and communities each have their own ways of grieving and of living with loss.

We acknowledge and respect such differences, while honouring our own belief as an organisation in publicly recognising those who have died.

Our intention is to help create a culture of openness which enables anyone who needs care and support to receive it.

We recognise that while we can name some people specifically, others are or need to remain anonymous.

Switchboard would like to honour the lives of five Out & About participants who died this year and acknowledge the impact of grief and bereavement for all those who loved them.

We were saddened, too, by the losses of those who sought our support and to connect with our community. We acknowledge and remember their lives.

Darryl (1942-2023)

Darryl worked in retail and had an extensive antique and book collection. He travelled widely and enjoyed reading and talking about ideas. He was friends with Adam for three years.

Alexios (1942-2023)

Alexios was the much-loved partner of Out & About participant, Leon. Born in Slovenia, Alexios was a kind man who loved motorcycles, cars, nature, and dogs.

Nigel (1954-2023)

Nigel worked at the airport and lived with his partner, Danny, in Melbourne's west for many years. He died peacefully on his own terms after living with cancer.

Ron (1931-2023)

Ron lived with his partner Stan for more than 40 years. He enjoyed tapestry and lunch at the local RSL.

Tony (-2022)

Tony worked as a steward in the navy for many years and was passionate about maritime memorabilia.



A living memorial

Switchboard's Remembering Rainbow is a living memorial to honour members of our communities who have died by suicide.

Colourful ribbons attached to the rainbow are embroidered with the names of people in the LGBTQIA+ community who we have lost.

Rituals and memorials can be a meaningful and helpful way to deal with loss and grief.

They allow us to take a moment to remember the person we have lost and keep their spirit and memory alive.

We hope this rainbow helps to create a place of memory and coming together in ritual for our community.

If you and/or others would like to embroider a ribbon for a loved one you have lost to suicide, we can facilitate this with you.

We hope to create a permanent home for the Remembering Rainbow at the Victorian Pride Centre.

For more information, call or text 0437 918 239 or email bereavement@switchboard.org.au.

Our Board



/ MICHELLE O'SULLIVAN
(she/her)

Chair from November 2022



/ RASHMI KUMAR
(she/her)

Acting Chair June–November 2022
Deputy Chairperson from November 2022
Chair of QTIBPoC Committee



/ ALICE DRURY
(she/her)

General member from November 2022
Secretary until November 2022
Co-chair of Governance Committee



/ RANI PRAMESTI
(she/they)

Secretary November 2022–June 2023
Co-chair of Governance Committee
Member of Strategic Planning Committee



/ AMELIA ARNOLD
(she/her)

Member of Strategic Planning Committee



/ JAMES SEOW
(he/him)

General member
Member of QTIBPoC Committee



/ ELLE SLADE
(they/them)

General member
Member of Governance Committee
Member of Strategy Committee



/ JENNA TUKE
(she/her)

General member



/ MITCHELL AJDUK
(he/him)

General member
Member of Governance Committee
Member of Finance Committee

Our leadership team

Joe Ball (he/him)
Chief Executive Officer

Meaghan Holden (she/they)
Director of Services

Blake Leschen (he/him)
Director of Finance and Operations

Libby Jamieson (she/her)
QLife Training and Development Manager

Anna Bernasochi (she/her)
Suicide Prevention Manager

Gregory Rincon (he/him)
Racial Equity and Inclusion Manager

Meredith Butler (she/her)
Out & About Manager

Flis Marlowe (they)
Rainbow Families Manager

Jake Peterson (he/him)
Rainbow Door Manager

Lara Hedberg (she/they)
Senior Policy Lead

Claire Flynn (she/her)
Stakeholder Engagement Co-ordinator

Secretaries' reports

Alice Drury

This year was about supporting Switchboard and our community to recover following the worst of the COVID-19 pandemic. The previous two years had taken a toll on staff and our community and put services under significant pressure.

The Board focused on supporting the CEO and senior staff through these challenges, both substantively, and through making important changes to the organisation's structure. Filling key roles alleviated major burdens on senior staff, which allowed them to better support Switchboard's frontline staff and volunteers in providing crucial services to our community.

It was also a period of deep reflection and transition for the Board. We engaged in a thorough mapping process of the skills we possessed and still needed, which informed our recruitment for the next term of the Board.

In November the board farewelled, with heartfelt thanks, Beck Hunt, Milla Galea, Mama Alto and Sara Timms. We also farewelled former Chair Sarah Marlowe, who we recognised as a Switchboard Life Member at the last AGM, for her incredible commitment and leadership.

With Sarah's departure as Chair, Rashmi Kumar stepped up as Acting Chair and did an incredible job of providing stable, strong leadership to the Board. We are hugely grateful to Rashmi for her expertise and dedication.

In November, Rashmi moved into the Deputy Chair role when we welcomed Michelle O'Sullivan as our new Chair. Rani Pramesti was appointed Secretary, and Elle Cartmill and Mitch Ajduk joined the Board.

Alice Drury served as Secretary until November 2022

Rani Pramesti

In November, the Governance Committee got to work on further consolidating good governance practices and frameworks to support Switchboard's work.

We reviewed and updated key policies covering conflicts of interest, grievances, and recruitment. Importantly, the committee reviewed these policies through an intersectional and trauma-informed lens.

There were robust discussions as a committee and as a Board about how organisational policies can either assist or further harm already marginalised groups of people, including within LGBTIQ+ communities.

We took a 'positive duty' approach by proactively considering how to best support QTIBPoC communities, disabled communities, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities in how we design and implement key organisational policies.

The Governance Committee also consolidated Switchboard's risk management frameworks and key clinical governance frameworks.

This is crucial in ensuring Switchboard's services are delivered in as safe a way as possible for staff, volunteers, service users and community members.

Rani Pramesti served as Secretary from November 2022 to June 2023



Treasurer's report

Blake Leschen

Switchboard achieved substantial growth this year, despite high inflation, record low unemployment, and increased regulation and reporting requirements.

As well as maintaining existing funding sources, Switchboard secured additional funds to bolster our activities and deliver new services, providing essential support to the LGBTIQ+ community during a period of significant need.

Due to thorough financial supervision and prudent policies and decisions, Switchboard successfully expanded service delivery to cater to growing demand. At the same time, we mitigated the risks that come with rapid growth in an unpredictable operational environment.

Ninety per cent of Switchboard's total revenue continued to be grant income from the Victorian Government and, to a lesser extent, the Federal Government.

There was a significant increase of 23 per cent in total revenue from the previous financial year, amounting to more than \$4.3 million (up from \$3.4m). The primary source of this increase was funding from the LGBTIQ+ Health Alliance for our Suicide Prevention program.

QLife also received further funding to increase shift coverage and additional recurrent funding was obtained to increase service capacity in the Rainbow Door and Out & About programs.

Revenue from donations, training, consultancy, and workshop fees remained relatively stable compared to the previous year, constituting only a minor part of the total revenue.

In response to an increase in available funding, Switchboard was able to expand its operations and services responsibly and sustainably across all programs.

Total expenditure saw a 20 per cent increase from the previous financial year, largely aligned to the increase in income, amounting to more than \$3.7m (up from \$2.9m).

As a service-based organisation, around 80 per cent of this expenditure was allocated to personnel costs. Switchboard employed more than 40 people in full-time, part-time, and casual roles. As the number of staff increased to meet growing demand, substantial investments were made in fixed assets, IT systems and infrastructure.

Additional funding was also directed towards marketing activities, event hosting and participation to amplify the organisation's voice and enhance its visibility, in alignment with the strategic plan.

Through thorough budgeting and reporting and agile adjustments to program budgets as more funding became available, total actual expenditure was largely in line with expectations.

Switchboard recorded a net surplus of \$585,175. The organisation maintained robust cash flow, staying above a reasonable level of cash reserves, and ending the year with a cash balance exceeding \$3.1m.

Each year, Switchboard consistently demonstrates its financial resilience and growth. We have shown our ability to rise to the most formidable challenges and deliver essential support services to our community.

I am grateful to all our funders and contributors for their generous support and trust in our purpose. Your donations and financial contributions have enabled us to provide vital services and programs to the LGBTIQ+ community.

We are committed to utilising your funds wisely and transparently, and to delivering our services with excellence and compassion. We value your support and look forward to our continued collaboration.

Thank you for making a difference in the lives of LGBTIQ+ people and their families.

Blake Leschen served as Treasurer until April 2023

Financial statements

INCOME STATEMENT FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30 JUNE 2023

	2023 \$	2022 \$
GRANT INCOME		
Department of Fairness, Family & Housing (Victorian Government)	623,429	640,068
Department of Health (Commonwealth Government)	118,112	95,892
Department of Health (Victorian Government)	2,485,310	2,315,790
Department of Premier & Cabinet (Victorian Government)	-	68,400
Mindout Media and Communication grant (LGBTIQ+ Health Australia)	204,607	-
Other grants	55,374	51,500
QLife subcontractor agreement (LGBTIQ+ Health Alliance)	466,472	254,692
TOTAL GRANT INCOME	3,953,304	3,426,342
INCOME		
Bequests	-	35,558
Consultancy fees	-	(8,175)
Donations received	133,208	61,334
Membership fees	95	-
Rainbow families	75,000	-
Training and workshop fees	27,865	13,674
TOTAL INCOME	273,478	102,391
OTHER INCOME		
Interest income	17,561	152
Lease incentive payment	112,733	-
Other income	2,950	778
TOTAL OTHER INCOME	133,244	930
TOTAL INCOME	4,360,026	3,529,663

FINANCIALS

INCOME STATEMENT FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30 JUNE 2023 CONT.

	2023 \$	2022 \$
OPERATING EXPENSES		
Accounting, audit and consultancy fees	39,768	32,442
Advertising, promotions and marketing	12,559	17,820
Bank fees	646	519
Brokerage costs	141,026	139,260
Clinical supervision	38,630	21,374
Contractor costs	-	11,253
Donations and sponsorships	1,000	1,000
Events and functions hosted and attended	53,786	31,579
Food and catering	13,572	7,993
Human resources support	10,621	9,644
Insurance	5,426	1,619
IT software and hardware	115,683	120,815
Leave entitlements	37,746	74,921
Memberships	2,516	-
Other expenses	11,382	6,710
Portable long service leave	37,930	60,069
Postage, printing and stationery	14,061	9,925
Rent	7,219	20,019
Salaries and wages	2,615,016	2,092,887
Superannuation	273,012	208,591
Phone and internet	13,626	15,722
Training	18,671	9,517
Travel	27,721	10,617
Utilities and other outgoings	20,471	9,244
Workers compensation	63,575	52,903
TOTAL OPERATING EXPENSES	3,575,663	2,966,443
NON-OPERATING EXPENSES		
Amortisation of right of use assets	76,084	40,804
Depreciation	116,514	128,716
Finance charges on lease liabilities	6,590	4,486
TOTAL NON-OPERATING EXPENSES	199,188	174,006
TOTAL EXPENDITURE	3,774,851	3,140,449
NET SURPLUS/(DEFICIT) FOR THE YEAR	585,175	389,214

STATEMENT OF COMPREHENSIVE INCOME FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30 JUNE 2023

Net surplus/(deficit) for the year	585,175	389,214
Other comprehensive income for the year	-	-
Net surplus/(deficit) attributable to the Association	585,175	389,214

FINANCIALS

BALANCE SHEET AS AT 30 JUNE 2023

	2023 \$	2022 \$
CURRENT ASSETS		
Cash and cash equivalents	3,192,703	1,782,878
Accounts and other receivables	139,972	433,552
Prepayments	19,377	14,286
TOTAL CURRENT ASSETS	2,220,401	2,230,716
NON CURRENT ASSETS		
Security deposit/rental bond	27,484	27,484
Property, plant and equipment	-	-
Intangible assets	203,639	279,724
TOTAL NON-CURRENT ASSETS	-	36,103
TOTAL ASSETS	2,220,401	1,407,647
CURRENT LIABILITIES		
Trade and other payables	346,758	392,065
Amounts received in advance	1,452,745	914,431
Provisions	202,408	169,727
Lease liabilities	75,694	70,677
TOTAL CURRENT LIABILITIES	2,077,605	1,546,900
NON-CURRENT LIABILITIES		
Provisions	20,447	15,382
Lease liabilities	138,177	213,871
TOTAL NON-CURRENT LIABILITIES	158,624	229,253
TOTAL LIABILITIES	1,346,946	761,771
NET ASSETS	766,595	372,557
EQUITY		
Accumulated funds	1,346,946	761,771
TOTAL EQUITY	1,346,946	761,771

FINANCIALS

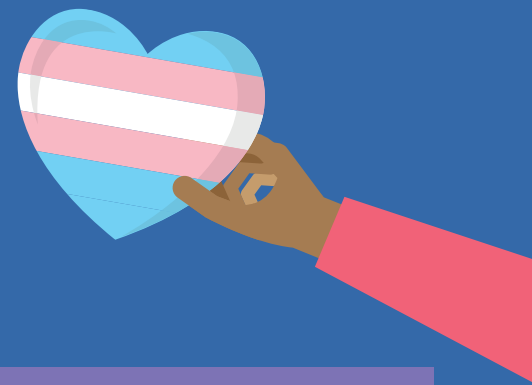
STATEMENT OF CHANGES IN EQUITY FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30 JUNE 2023

	Accumulated funds \$	Total \$
Balance as at 1 July 2021	372557	372557
Surplus/(deficit) attributable to the Association	389,214	389,214
Balance as at 30 June 2022	761,771	761,771
Surplus/(deficit) attributable to the Association	585,175	585,175
Balance as at 30 June 2023	1,346,946	1,346,946

STATEMENT OF CASH FLOWS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30 JUNE 2023

	2023 \$	2022 \$
CASH FLOWS FROM OPERATING ACTIVITIES		
Receipts from funding agencies and grants	4,785,198	3,218,220
Receipts from other sources	389,161	103,169
Payments to employees and suppliers	(3,581,849)	(2,686,494)
Interest received	17,561	152
Finance charges on lease liabilities	(6,590)	(4,486)
Net cash generated from/(used in) operating activities	1,603,481	630,561
CASH FLOWS FROM INVESTING ACTIVITIES		
Payment for property, plant and equipment	(122,979)	(121,102)
Net cash (used in)/provided by investing activities	(122,979)	(121,102)
CASH FLOWS FROM FINANCING ACTIVITIES		
Repayment of lease liability - leased premises	(70,677)	(35,980)
Net cash (used in)/provided by financing activities	(70,677)	(35,980)
Net increase/(decrease) in cash held	1,409,825	473,479
Cash and cash equivalents at beginning of financial year	1,782,878	1,309,399
Cash and cash equivalents at end of financial year	3,192,703	1,782,878

Help us support our community



Make a donation

By choosing to make a tax-deductible donation to Switchboard, you are supporting a service that connects and supports LGBTIQ+ communities in Victoria. Your contribution helps us to continue and improve the services and activities we provide, which include:

- › Ongoing training, peer support and learning opportunities for volunteers in our QLife and Out & About programs.
- › Counselling supervision for our counsellors.
- › Rainbow Door, a free specialist helpline for referral and support to enable LGBTIQ+ people to navigate the system and access the support they need.
- › Skills-sharing workshops to promote resilience, positive mental health and wellbeing within QTIBPoC communities.
- › Peer-led suicide prevention, intervention and postvention programs for LGBTIQ+ people.
- › Social inclusion and connections for older LGBTI people who are isolated and/or live in aged care.

If you would like to make a one-off donation or become a regular donor you can do so through the [Give Now](#) account on our website.

Show support

You can help Switchboard by getting behind us on social media. Follow us, share our stories, help spread the word. The more we encourage others to support us, the better the outcomes are for our community.

Leave a bequest

By leaving a gift for Switchboard in your will, you can make a profound change to the lives of LGBTIQ+ people. If you would like to write or amend your will to include Switchboard, we strongly recommend you seek independent legal advice. Where possible we encourage you to discuss your decision with your family, chosen family and loved ones. This will ensure they understand and support your reasons for choosing to help Switchboard in such a powerful way.

Give through your workplace

Donating through your workplace or payroll giving is a tax-effective way to support our work. You can donate regularly and sometimes your employer even matches your donations, so be sure to check. If your workplace or pride network wants to make a one-off donation or create a fundraiser, this can be done through our [Give Now](#) account.

Raise funds

There are countless ways to get your community involved in supporting Switchboard. Organise a one-off or regular event, celebrate a day of significance, get your workplace, sporting group, friends and family on board. If you would like to get in touch about a specific fundraising idea, please email finance@switchboard.org.au.



MAKE A DONATION

ONE-OFF OR REGULAR DONATION

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

