

Strengthening Seniors Inclusion and Participation: Communities of Interest and Identity Lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans/gender diverse and intersex (LGBT&I) project

The SSIP LGBTI project seeks to reduce social isolation and loneliness among older lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans/gender diverse and intersex (LGBTI) Victorians and build new, culturally safe opportunities to engage with mainstream organisations within an environment of trust.

We invite you to join us to make this happen

This is a rare opportunity for services and community groups across Victoria to build expertise and confidence in engaging older LGBTI people within their local community. Guidance and mentoring is available from LGBTI organisations and inclusive practice experts to assist you.

All activities will be developed in dialogue with local LGBTI seniors, based around their needs and interests. This may include a monthly lunch/morning tea, social support groups, LGBTI seniors social activity programs, LGBTI-specific “Be Connected” groups, book groups or a range of other activities.

Why we think this is important

Loneliness and social isolation threaten everyone as we age, but they're more likely to be problems for LGBT older people, who are twice as likely to grow old single and living alone and four times less likely to have children to support them. We have the power to change the impact of these statistics through the power of connection. (SAGE CEO, Michael Adams)

Australian and international evidence documents significant barriers to “belonging” for older LGBTI people compared to the general population. These may include living through criminalisation of sexuality and gender, involuntary psychiatric incarceration, conversation therapy, unwanted medical interventions, human rights abuses, stigma, denial of services and ostracisation from family and community of place/origin. Despite LGBTI seniors’ enormous strength and resilience, for many these experiences can result in lifelong trauma, loss of social networks and deep-seated distrust of mainstream services.

A key outcome of this project will be the development, evaluation and dissemination of one or more sustainable, translatable models of community engagement and social inclusion for isolated older LGBTI people that can be adapted for local conditions and needs across Victoria.

Benefits for LGBTI seniors and local communities

This project aims to:

- increase social participation by older LGBTI people in planned activities to reduce social isolation and loneliness and provide referral pathways to services, future participation and social connections
- build inclusive and culturally safe local government and community-based organisations
- develop stronger working relationships between community organisations focussing on improving LGBTI seniors’ participation within their communities
- increase community awareness and capacity to respond to issues of social isolation for older LGBTI people within LGBTI and mainstream communities
- make recommendations for future projects/funding informed by project consultation and findings.

Our approach

This project prioritises the cultural safety and wellbeing of LGBTI seniors at all stages of engagement, respect for the rights of LGBTI seniors, and recognition of the wide diversity of identities, experiences and aspirations that comprise L-G-B-T&I ageing.

Activities will be delivered in partnership with local Activity Partners. These might be existing community organisations, LGBTI services, aged care service providers and/or Local Government. The SSIP LGBTI Project will support and mentor Activity Partners in metropolitan and rural/regional Victoria to build relationships, share information, generate ideas, promote a partnership-building and co-design approach to project activity planning and implementation, and ensure LGBTI seniors' interests are represented.

Our “community dialogue” approach aims to engage LGBTI seniors and local communities in an ongoing discussion about what’s needed. LGBTI seniors will be involved at all stages of the project (planning, design, governance, delivery and evaluation) to ensure their needs, interests and experiences are heard and activities are culturally safe, inclusive and supportive.

Need more information?

For further information contact:

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PLEASE NOTE: This is not a funding grants program and there is no funding available for running proposed activities. However, the SSIP – LGBTI partnership project will provide your organisation with an agreed amount of training, project lead mentoring and secondary consultation to build your capacity and confidence in engaging older LGBTI people.

Strengthening Seniors Inclusion and Participation initiative aims to improve community-based support for older people by increasing opportunities to connect with their communities of identity.

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