

17 August 2017

Victorian Government Forum on LGBTI Inclusion in Faith Communities

Statement of Support

Today over 100 faith and community leaders came together to better support the health and well-being of lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans and gender diverse and intersex (LGBTI) Victorians in our communities. This occasion was planned in April; however the federal government's planned postal survey on marriage equality, and the negative impact this will have on LGBTI communities, has greatly increased the necessity of this day.

As representatives of Victoria's diverse faith and multicultural communities we would like to say the following:

Faith has been a source of both solace and suffering for many LGBTI Victorians; many continue to cherish their faith community but too many have been forced to leave those communities behind due to condemnation of LGBTI people.

We know that many LGBTI Victorians from faith and culturally diverse backgrounds continue to face exclusion and rejection from their families, their communities and their places of worship, and also from parts of the broader LGBTI community.

We also know discrimination and conversion therapy has a devastating impact upon the mental health and well-being of LGBTI people. And we know that LGBTI people from all backgrounds experience significantly higher levels of mental distress, self-harm and suicide than heterosexuals. This will only be exacerbated by the divisive debate if the postal survey on marriage equality goes ahead.

As faith and community leaders, we recognise that supportive communities help to protect and nourish the self-esteem of LGBTI Victorians and provide a sense of belonging and worth. We commit to treating LGBTI Victorians with respect and compassion, seek to continue the development of inclusive faith-based resources, and work towards creating safe and affirmative spaces in our communities for LGBTI people and their families.

All Victorians are entitled to live their lives free from fear, exclusion, discrimination, and violence. We call for all Victoria's communities, including faith communities, to take a strong stand against discrimination in all its forms.