

LGBTIQA+ Inclusion Plan 2027–2031

Engagement Summary

Proudly working
with and for
our community



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The City of Ballarat acknowledges the Traditional Owners of the land we live and work on, the Wadawurrung and Dja Dja Wurrung Peoples, and recognises their continuing connection to the land and waterways.

We pay our respects to their Elders past and present and extend this to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples.

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Executive Summary

During Pride Month (June) 2026, the City of Ballarat undertook a comprehensive community consultation to inform the development of the 2027-2031 LGBTIQA+ Inclusion Action Plan, engaging 322 people in total.

The consultation sought feedback on the effectiveness of the current Action Plan, the experiences of LGBTIQA+ people in Ballarat, and priorities for future action. Input was gathered from community members, Council staff, partner organisations and key stakeholders through surveys, workshops and targeted engagement activities.

Overall, the consultation demonstrates strong support for the City of Ballarat’s ongoing commitment to LGBTIQA+ inclusion and recognises the significant progress made over the life of the current Action Plan. Participants acknowledged Council’s leadership, increased visibility of LGBTIQA+ communities, improvements to organisational capability, and the important role Council has played in advocating for inclusion.

At the same time, respondents identified opportunities to strengthen the next Action Plan by shifting the focus from building organisational capability to delivering measurable community outcomes. While many participants described Ballarat as becoming a more inclusive place to live, discrimination, social isolation and concerns about safety continue to affect many LGBTIQA+ people, particularly trans and gender diverse people and those with intersecting identities.

The consultation also highlighted the importance of maintaining visible leadership, continuing to engage with the community, and ensuring the next Action Plan remains responsive to changing community needs and the broader social and political environment.

The responses provide substantial support for the development of the 2027-2031 LGBTIQA+ Inclusion Action Plan, with the current priority areas remaining relevant. They suggest that the next phase of Council’s work should build on the strong foundations established over recent years while placing greater emphasis on community impact, partnership and accountability to create a Ballarat where LGBTIQA+ people feel safe, welcome, valued and able to participate fully in community life.



Emerging key themes

Six key themes emerged from the LGBTIQA+ Action Plan consultation:



Create safe, welcoming and genuinely inclusive environments

Respondents want Ballarat to be a place where LGBTIQA+ people feel safe, respected and able to be themselves. While visible signs of inclusion remain important, participants emphasised that genuine inclusion requires knowledgeable staff, inclusive practices, zero tolerance for discrimination, and everyday actions that build trust.

“Signage is very important to signal that a place MIGHT be safe, but staff inclusion training is vital to make the place ACTUALLY be safe.”

Community member



Strengthen community connection and capacity

The strongest call was for more opportunities and spaces for LGBTIQA+ people to connect, particularly beyond youth services. Respondents also encouraged Council to build community capacity by supporting leaders, community groups and volunteers to develop sustainable, community-led activities rather than relying solely on Council delivery.

“Continue to provide community support and engagement to help community members develop and run an event (this process was supported via a workshop in 2025). Similar workshops/programs etc help interested community members navigate the potentially daunting prospect of running a first-time event and assist with capacity building within the LGBTIQA+ community.”

Community member

Emerging key themes



Increase visibility, communication and celebration

Participants wanted stronger promotion of events, services and supports throughout the year using multiple communication channels. They also encouraged Council to celebrate LGBTIQA+ communities through public events, arts, tourism and positive storytelling while ensuring visibility is meaningful rather than tokenistic.

“Ensure that City of Ballarat publications, annual reports, and marketing materials actively feature diverse families and individuals, normalising LGBTIQA+ presence in everyday civic life.”

Community member



Recognise diversity within the community

Feedback highlighted the importance of adopting an intersectional approach that reflects the diversity of LGBTIQA+ experiences. Greater attention and support was requested for trans and gender diverse people, older adults, culturally diverse communities, First Nations people, people with disability, families and other underrepresented groups.

“People from migrant, refugee and multicultural backgrounds are underrepresented in LGBTIQA+ spaces in Ballarat. CoB is in a good position to change this by engaging with those communities through its various advisory groups and community partnerships
Business submission”

Community member

Emerging key themes

Six key themes emerged from the LGBTQIA+ Action Plan consultation:



Embed inclusion through leadership, partnerships and accountability

Respondents want inclusion to be embedded across Council’s services, policies and decision-making, rather than existing as a standalone initiative. This includes visible leadership, collaboration with community organisations, meaningful consultation, measurable outcomes and accountability for implementation.

“Using inclusive language, publicly and visibly supporting the LGBTQIA+ community, supporting inclusive, meaningful and targeted LGBTQIA+ programs and services through authentic co-creation and community consultation.”

Community member



Drive cultural change through education

Education was consistently identified as essential to reducing discrimination and improving inclusion. Respondents supported ongoing training for Council staff, councillors, schools, businesses and the wider community to improve understanding, challenge prejudice and create lasting cultural change.

“Staff definitely need training to support queer communities. There’s a lot of mental load to explaining to public servants, health professionals etc how we are different. Eg: five doctors & nurses in my wife’s hospital room post birth asking her about her contraceptive plans when one look on her file could have identified she’[s] married to a woman. ”

Community member

Engagement Summary

Across Pride Month (June 2026) the City of Ballarat used various strategies to gather thoughts and ideas from the community to inform development of its next LGBTQIA+ Inclusion Plan.

This included community feedback surveys on the City of Ballarat's MySay web page, and various targeted community engagements.



In total, 366 people engaged and shared their thoughts.



MySay Page – 143 people responded to these questions

There were three options for engaging via the MySay Page:

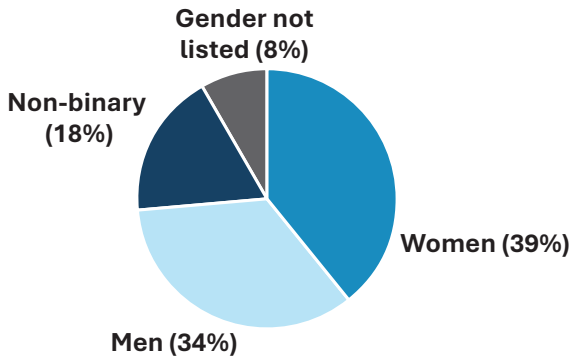
- A community survey – **61 responses received**
- A 'one quick question' option – **79 responses received**, including 42 collected at the Youth Pride Month Ball
- A business/organisation submission option – **3 responses received**



Who we heard from

The MySay survey was completed by a diverse audience:

Gender

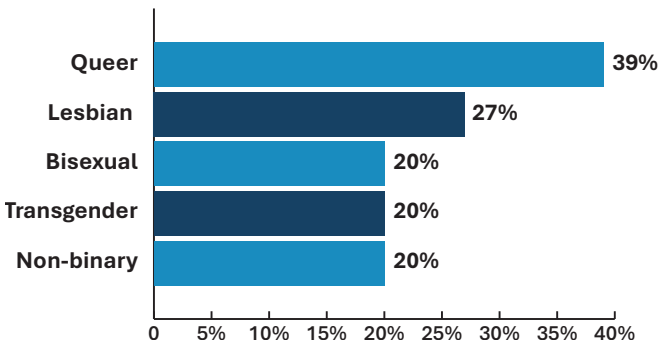


39% of respondents identified as women, 34% identified as men, 18% as non-binary and 8% identified as a gender that wasn't listed. Their self-described genders included gender fluid, agender and transgender man.

Identities

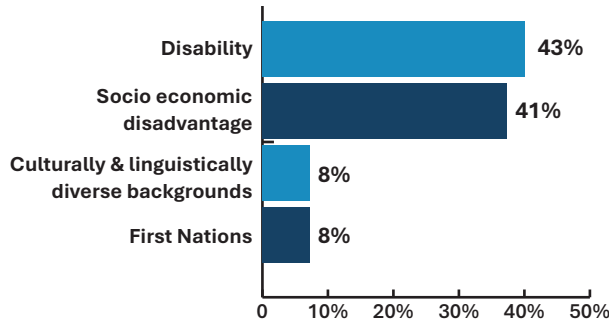
Most respondents (80%) identified as part of the LGBTIQA+ community.

The 49 survey respondents who identified as part of the LGBTIQA+ community were asked to provide more information about their identity. Respondents identified with at least 10 different identities, the largest group identifying as queer (39%), followed by lesbian (27%) and bisexual, transgender and non-binary (20% each). Some respondents chose more than one identity from the list provided.



When respondents were asked whether they had a link to the LGBTIQA+ community, 82% said they did. Links included being part of the community and having partners, family, friends or colleagues who were. 10% had no direct link to the LGBTIQA+ community and 8% chose not to answer.

There was a reasonable age spread across respondents from 12-85, the largest group of respondents (26%) were aged 36-45 years.



Many respondents also reported intersecting experiences of marginalisation, including having a disability (43%), socio economic disadvantage (41%), culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds (8%) or First Nations (8%).

Finally, all respondents reported being local, with 90% living in various Ballarat suburbs, 8% living in nearby towns (Ararat, Bacchus Marsh, Ballan, Buninyong, Ross Creek) and 1% experiencing homelessness in Ballarat.

Engagement methods

City of Ballarat staff facilitated community conversations about the LGBTIQA+ Action Plan through committee/group meetings, workshops, community drop-in sessions and stalls at community events. These included:



Targeted Engagement

- Council Briefing – **9 Councillors**
- LGBTIQA+ Advisory Committee – **9 Committee members and 2 Councillors**
- City of Ballarat Staff Pride Group – **10 staff members attended, 6 more responded in writing**
- Internal staff workshop – **10 staff members**
- Pride Month Market Stall – **40 conversations with community members**
- Youth Pride Month Ball – **70 conversations with young people**
- Rainbow Ballarat Facebook Group Post – **15 comments received**
- Awareness raising session run by Latrobe University – **12 young members of the LGBTIQA+ community**
- LGBTIQA+ Inclusion Workshop (evening session) – **2 community members**
- Rainbow Coffee drop-in event – **16 conversations with community members**
- Queer Neurodiverse Hangout- Ballarat North Neighbourhood House – **12 conversations with community members**
- QHub High School Drop-in sessions – **13 conversations with community members**

A total of 230 people engaged in these community conversations with over 317 comments recorded.

Detailed demographic information was not collected during in-person consultations due to the informal nature of some engagement activities, to protect participant anonymity and to accommodate time constraints.

Engagement methods



Additional Engagement Methods

- Information and links to survey sent to LGBTIQA+ services and organisations in Ballarat and the Ballarat Pride mailing list.
- Image, information and links to survey were also shared on social media (Facebook and Instagram) across several City of Ballarat accounts including
 - Ballarat Pride
 - City of Ballarat
 - Ageing Well
 - Ballarat Youth Services.
- Image, information and links to survey were also posted to various Facebook groups such as
 - Australian GLBTIQ Multicultural Council Inc (AGMC)
 - GLOBE Victoria Networking
 - BYSN - Ballarat Youth Services Network
 - Rural and Regional Rainbow Network and
 - Rainbow Ballarat and was re-shared via stories by accounts such as the
 - ChillOut Festival
 - Midsumma Festival and
 - QNews.
- Image and information displayed on the City of Ballarat Customer service screens at the Phoenix building at the Ballarat Aquatic and Lifestyle Centre.
- Media release on the external City of Ballarat website.
- Featured banner on the Ballarat Pride website.
- Workshop event listings on Ballarat In The Know though-out the month of June
- Radio interviews with CEO Evan King (3BA) and Councillor Morrison (3BA) and council staff (RAT FM).
- Featured in the Public Noticeboard in the Ballarat Times on Friday 5 June and 12 June.
- Mentioned in newspaper articles focused on Pride Month in The Courier and Ballarat Times.
- Hard copies of the survey and reply-paid envelopes were available from
 - City of Ballarat's Phoenix building
 - Central, Sebastopol and Wendouree libraries
 - Lucas, Djila-tjarriu and Vickers Street Community Hubs and handed out at the Ballarat Pride Market.
- Posters and flyers, including a QR that linked to MySay survey, available across community hubs, neighbourhood centres, various local businesses and engagement sessions.
- A segment in the internal CEO Update email sent to all City of Ballarat staff at the start of June.

What we heard

Impact of the previous LGBTIQA+ Inclusion Plan

There was broad support for the existing Action Plan which has laid a strong foundation for the work. It was seen as having been successful in establishing Council as an inclusive organisation and in showing leadership in this area. Comments suggested that Council is now recognised as an ally and has increased its visibility and public commitment to inclusion. Feedback shows that 70% of respondents agreed that City of Ballarat information is accessible and inclusive, 70% agreed that LGBTIQA+ people are welcomed and invited to attend Council-run activities and events, and 61% agreed that Council services are inclusive.

Pride Month has also had a positive impact, with 80% of LGBTIQA+ respondents aware of Ballarat Pride Month and 71% having attended one or more Pride Month events. Of those who attended, 83% reported enjoying or really enjoying the experience.

However, confidence in the overall impact of the Inclusion Plan was more mixed, with only 49% agreeing that the City of Ballarat is doing a good job supporting LGBTIQA+ people as a result of the last three years of the plan. Many respondents also continue to report discrimination, limited feelings of safety, and gaps in social connection.

What's working well

Respondents recognised Council's commitment to LGBTIQA+ inclusion, with the strongest positive responses relating to inclusive information, welcoming events and inclusive services. 70% of respondents agreed that Council information is accessible and inclusive, while 70% also agreed that LGBTIQA+ people are welcomed and invited to attend Council-run activities and events. 61% agreed that Council services are inclusive.

Respondents also reported generally positive perceptions of Ballarat as a community, with 63% agreeing that Ballarat is an inclusive city and 61% agreeing that they feel accepted and valued. Pride Month, visible public support, arts and cultural activities, and Council's role in public leadership were all seen as valuable.

The survey also identified strong interest in Pride festivals and events (57%), arts and cultural activities (53%), small group gatherings (41%) and workshops (41%), suggesting that existing community and cultural programming provides a strong foundation to build from.

What we heard

Areas for improvement

The clearest areas for improvement are safety, discrimination, community connection and access to inclusive spaces and services. While 63% of respondents agreed that Ballarat is an inclusive city, only 51% agreed that they feel safe in Ballarat, and 66% reported having experienced discrimination.

Social connection emerged as the most significant area for improvement, with just 28% agreeing that there are adequate opportunities for LGBTIQA+ people to connect socially and build community.

Fewer than half of respondents (43%) agreed that the community has access to adequate, appropriate and safe community services and facilities, while only 30% agreed that Council sport and recreation facilities are inclusive.

Respondents consistently called for more opportunities to meet and build community, including dedicated and accessible LGBTIQA+ spaces, informal social groups, and activities that reach different ages, identities and life stages.

Other priorities included stronger promotion through multiple communication channels, more inclusive sport and recreation facilities, all-gender amenities, staff training, visible but genuine allyship, improved access to health, housing and support services, and stronger action to address discrimination and hate.

Business and organisational submission themes

Across the three submissions there was broad support for the City of Ballarat's commitment to LGBTIQA+ inclusion and recognition that meaningful progress has been made.

At the same time, these submissions emphasised the need to move beyond symbolic inclusion towards sustained, practical action that improves safety, visibility, accountability, and community participation.

There was also a strong call to strengthen partnerships with the community, ensure diverse voices are represented, and maintain a clear public commitment to inclusion despite changing social and political contexts.

In Conclusion

The consultation demonstrates strong support for the City of Ballarat’s continued commitment to the LGBTIQA+ community and to promoting inclusion, and recognises the important foundations established through the current Action Plan.

Participants acknowledged Council’s leadership, increased visibility of LGBTIQA+ communities, and progress towards creating a more inclusive organisation and city.

At the same time, the consultation highlights clear opportunities for the next Action Plan to build on this foundation. Feedback consistently called for a stronger focus on community outcomes, including improving safety and belonging, expanding opportunities for social connection, strengthening community capacity, embedding inclusion across all areas of Council, and ensuring the diverse experiences of LGBTIQA+ communities are reflected in planning, service delivery and engagement.

Overall, the findings provide a strong evidence base for the development of the 2027-2031 LGBTIQA+ Inclusion Action Plan. They suggest a shift from establishing organisational capability towards delivering measurable community impact through strong leadership, meaningful partnerships, and sustained investment in creating a Ballarat where LGBTIQA+ people feel safe, welcome, valued and able to participate fully in community life.

Closing the loop and what’s next

This summary of the engagement findings will be emailed to participating individuals and organisations, shared to the City of Ballarat and Ballarat Pride social media accounts and uploaded to the MySay page.

The findings of this engagement report will guide the development of the 2027–2031 LGBTIQA+ Inclusion Plan, ensuring it reflects the voices, experiences and aspirations of the community. By building on existing strengths and continuing to work collaboratively with community members, organisations and stakeholders, the City of Ballarat can help create a city where all LGBTIQA+ people feel safe, connected and valued.



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All information correct at time of publication.
August 2026