

Queering Cities in Australia

Making public spaces more inclusive
through urban policy and practice



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How could we make
public spaces more
inclusive for LGBTIQ+
individuals, families and
communities through better
accommodation in policy
and practice for local areas?

ARUP





Queering Cities in Australia

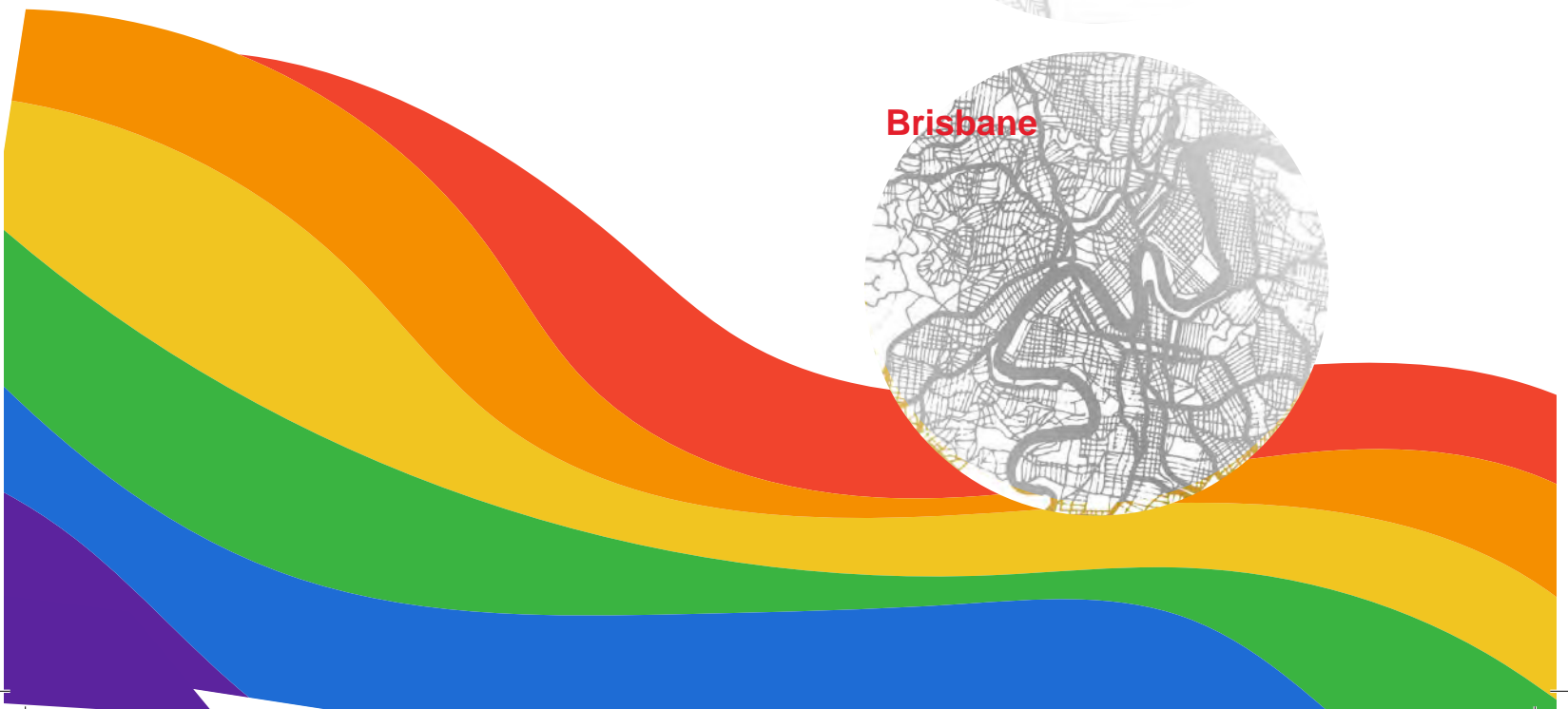
Making public spaces more
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policy and practice

Executive Summary

Queering cities is a collaborative research project between Arup, Maridulu Budyari Gumal Healthy Urban Environments Collaboratory, Western Sydney University, the University of Technology Sydney and the University of New South Wales.

It examines how public spaces can be more inclusive for LGBTIQ+ individuals, families and communities through better accommodation in policy and practice for local areas.

This work aims to provide recommendations for creating more inclusive public spaces in the local government areas of metropolitan Sydney, Melbourne and Brisbane.

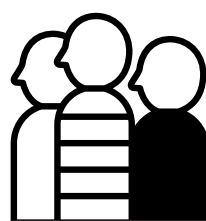


Building on the success of a UK-based project, *Queering Public Space* (Catterall & Azzouz 2021), this report refocuses the lens on Australian cities. This is necessary because the histories, legacies and contemporary forms of cities differ across the world, requiring nuanced local insight to ‘usualise’ queerness in public spaces.

The report comprises the results of a desk-top research project. **First**, a thematic literature review (Braun & Clarke 2021) on the experiences of LGBTIQ+ individuals, families and communities in Australian cities was conducted, identifying best practices in inclusive local area policy and design globally. Building upon the findings of the literature review, a set of assessment criteria was developed:

- Stakeholder engagement;
- Formation of a LGBTIQ+ advisory committee;
- Affirming and usualising LGBTIQ+ communities;
- Staff training and awareness; and
- Inclusive public space design guidelines.

Second, a review of local government strategies and policies was conducted against the assessment criteria developed out of the thematic literature review. The review assessed local councils within Australia’s major eastern seaboard cities – Greater Sydney, Greater Melbourne and Greater Brisbane – regarding their strategies and activities for accommodating LGBTIQ+ individuals, families and communities.



Key findings

- Few councils have stakeholder engagement activities with LGBTIQ+ individuals, community groups, organisations and businesses;
- Among the three cities, Melbourne is more proactive in establishing LGBTIQ+ advisory committees;
- Inner-city councils are more proactive in initiatives for affirming and usualising LGBTIQ+ communities. Related actions include holding LGBTIQ+ events, and visual cues such as rainbow flags and creating rainbow crossings;
- Councils are least engaged with staff training and awareness; and
- While many councils have identified the need for inclusive and accessible public spaces and council facilities, strategies and actions do not address specific accommodations for LGBTIQ+ individuals, families and communities.

This report concludes with a recommendations framework. In Phase 2 of this research, the themes identified will be taken to a series of workshops with LGBTIQ+ communities, policymakers and public space planners to develop solutions that might be implemented by local councils to improve the inclusivity of local areas and public spaces.





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Introduction

Queering cities

Research from a range of disciplines across various countries has identified how public spaces can be dangerous and exclusionary for LGBTIQ+ individuals, families and communities.¹

Less work has focused on how to make public spaces safe, welcoming and inclusive for LGBTIQ+ people, families and communities, or to ‘usualise’ queerness in the use and design of public spaces. This is important for secure access to public spaces, which underpins diverse aspects of health and wellbeing, including:

- A sense of self-security when out and about in public spaces;
- Safe access of social networks and interaction;
- Safe access to employment and education opportunities; and
- The use of open spaces (e.g. parks) for therapeutic and recreational purposes.

With ever-increasing moves towards LGBTIQ+ equality in more and more countries, such as legalisation of same-sex marriage and anti-discrimination laws in each state of Australia, it is timely to consider how queerness can be usualised in public spaces.

Introduction

Queering and usualising public space

We use the practice of ‘queering’ to acknowledge that LGBTIQ+ individuals, families and communities should be considered and incorporated in the use and design of public space at the local level and beyond. A history of social and legal exclusions shows that LGBTIQ+ individuals, families and communities have specific spatial concerns, as demonstrated in previous research (see Thematic literature review of this report for further findings).

We need to be mindful that our population in Australia is diverse, which includes the spectra of sexual orientation, gender identity and intersex status.

While there is greater public social and legal recognition of LGBTIQ+ people, including recognition of rights in Australian federal and state legislation, this could be better acknowledged and reflected in local government policy and planning, and local public space design.

This assertion is not about continuously highlighting LGBTIQ+ individuals, families and communities as needing more assistance than other demographic groups. Rather, we suggest that those responsible for local planning and public space design should be mindful *from the start* that our local populations are diverse – race, socioeconomic status (SES), age and ability, for instance, and LGBTIQ+ identification.

This is where we move from the practice of queering to the practice of ‘usualising’ queerness in public space, a term introduced by Catterall & Azzouz (2021). We argue that usualising is a practice where we – including local authorities, industries and the wider public – need to consider accommodation and access for all people regardless of gender and sexuality.

Here, drawing on Catterall & Azzouz (2021), we define usualising within planning and designing as being accommodating of all genders and sexualities from the start, not always by highlighting differences, but by making spaces and implementing policies that foundationally accommodate all.

Scope of work

The scope of this project is to examine LGBTIQ+ experiences of public space in Greater Sydney (Figure 1.1), Greater Melbourne (Figure 1.2) and Greater Brisbane (Figure 1.3), and identify Australian and relevant international best practices. The aims of this report are to:

- Explore if and how LGBTIQ+ individuals, families and communities have been accommodated in Australian cities; and
- Understand how LGBTIQ+ individuals, families and communities can be better accommodated in local council strategies and activities.

¹ LGBTIQ+ is an acronym that summarises the diverse people who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans and gender diverse, intersex and queer. The plus-symbol acknowledges that this summary is not exhaustive, and more people identify in further ways that sit outside heterosexual norms. Our use of ‘trans and gender diverse’ follows the example of TransHub (<https://www.transhub.org.au/>), as an umbrella term for those whose gender is different to what was presumed for them at birth. While this report uses the acronym LGBTIQ+, where specific local governments areas have used other acronyms, those will also be used for accurate representation of strategies and planning conducted in those areas.



Figure 1.1: LGAs in Greater Sydney

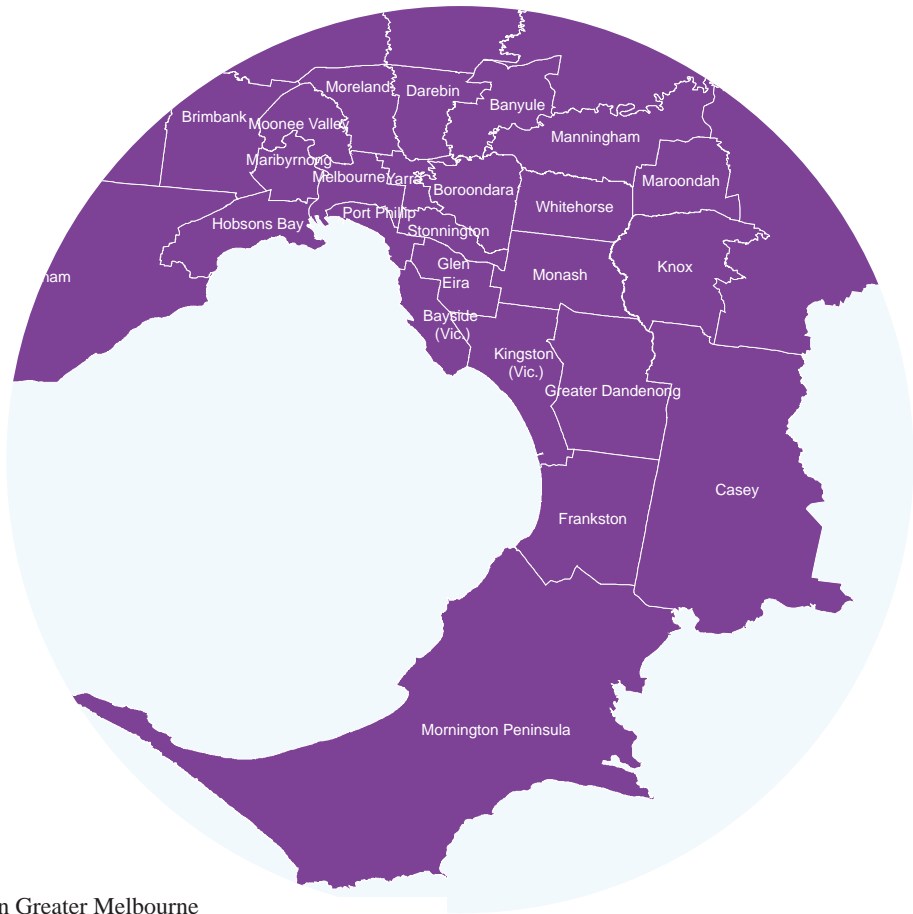


Figure 1.2: LGAs in Greater Melbourne

Introduction



Figure 1.3: LGAs in Greater Brisbane

This report adopts a desk-based research approach with two parts:

1. **A thematic review of existing literature** on the experiences of LGBTIQ+ people in Australian cities, and the queering of public spaces, with a focus on Australian-based literature; and
2. **Building on the insights** drawn from this literature, a review of current policies, strategies and plans operational in the local government areas (LGAs) that comprise the metropolitan areas of Sydney, Melbourne and Brisbane. This review examines the actions that local councils are taking to ensure the accommodation of LGBTIQ+ individuals, families and communities within their jurisdictions.

Much LGBTIQ+ urban research has focused on ‘gay villages’: geographical areas, often within the inner city, distinguishable by the presence of LGBTIQ+ businesses, including bars, clubs, restaurants and shops (Bitterman & Hess 2021). Recent social and legal changes, such as the legalisation of same-sex marriage and family formation, re-affirm the importance of focusing research and policy input not only on visible inner-city groups, but also less conspicuous individuals and groups across cities and suburbs.

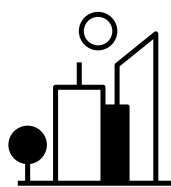
This means attending to suburbia as well as inner urban areas. Australia is a highly suburban nation, with 71% of the population living in major cities (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2018). Johnson (2006) underscores how Australian suburbia is also conventionally identified with ‘traditional’ nuclear families and a gendered division of labour (female homemakers and male breadwinners within heterosexual marriages). These realities are changing alongside the increasing diversity of Australia’s suburban populations, including diversity of genders and sexualities.

Sydney, Melbourne and Brisbane are selected as study areas as they are the three most populous cities in Australia (c. 61% of the national population), with a diversity of inner urban and suburban geographies. As of June 2020 (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2021) Sydney had a population of 5.37 million (20.9% of all Australians), Melbourne 5.12 million (19.9%) and Brisbane 2.56 million (10%).

In 2017, of the eligible Australians who voted in the postal survey asking Should the law be changed to allow same-sex couples to marry?, 61.6% voted yes (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2017). However, Figures 1.4 –1.7 indicate that some suburban electorates voted ‘no’, or had a lower percentage of ‘yes’² votes than other parts of the country – especially in Sydney, but also in Melbourne and Brisbane.



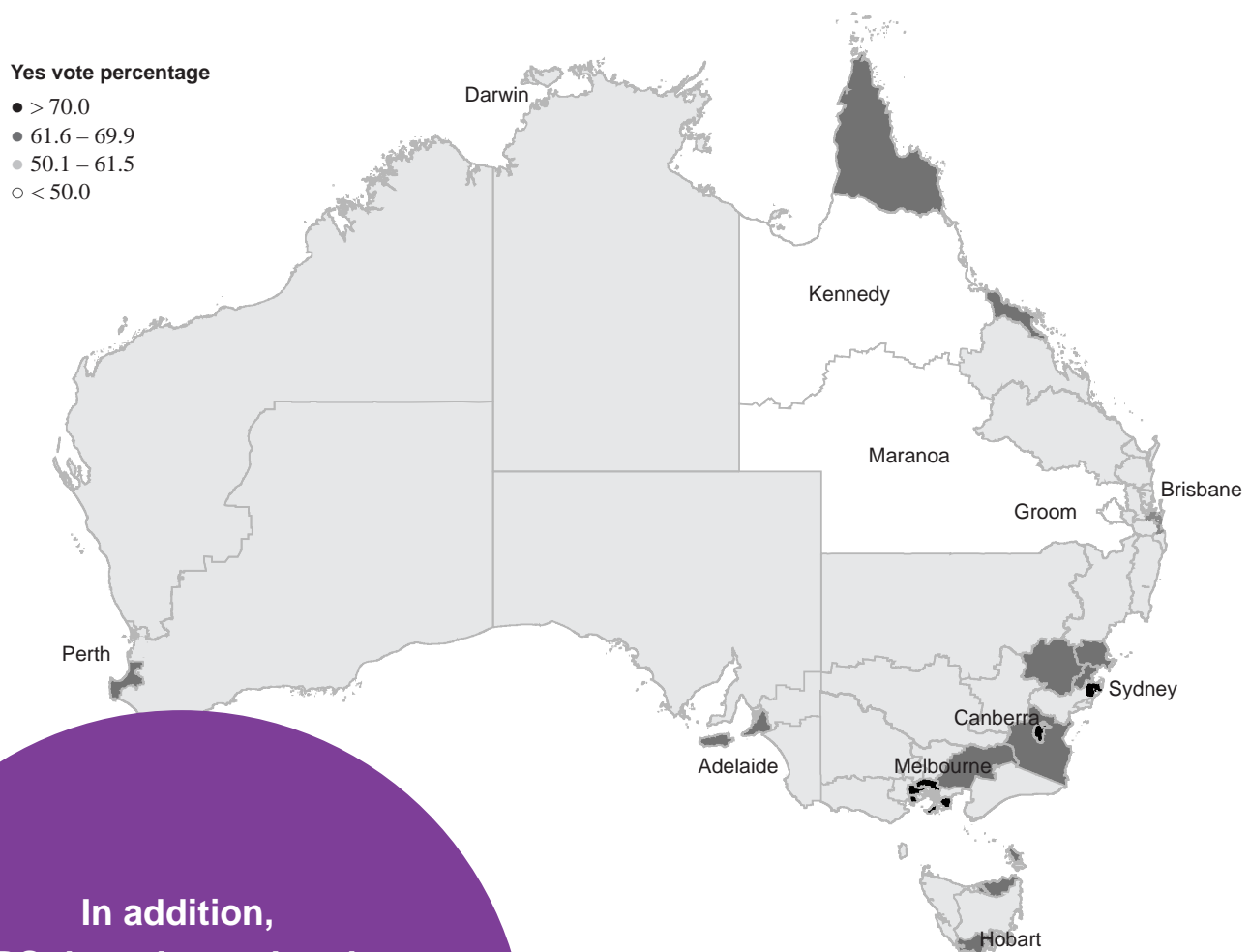
As a consequence, we might surmise that some suburban areas are possibly less accepting of equality for LGBTIQ+ individuals, families and communities than elsewhere, especially their inner-city counterparts, where the ‘yes’ vote was highest.



71%
of the population
living in major cities

² The ‘Yes’ votes in each of the states included in this report were: NSW 57%, VIC 64.9% and QLD 60.7% (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2017).

Introduction



**In addition,
ABS data shows that the
greatest numbers and highest
concentration of same-sex
couple families in Australia
are in these three cities
(Australian Bureau of
Statistics 2016).**

Figure 1.4: Map of Australia showing the results of the Australian Marriage Law Postal Survey by Commonwealth electorate. (Source: Andrew Gorman-Murray)

However, the ABS data doesn't identify other LGBTIQ+ demographics, such as single LGBTIQ+ individuals, or trans and gender diverse, bisexual, intersex or other identifications, making it difficult to identify where these groups are concentrated.

Wilson et al (2020) used data from the General Social Survey and the Household, Income and Labour Dynamics in Australia Survey to determine that 4.11% of the national population identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual or another sexuality (but not gender) minority.

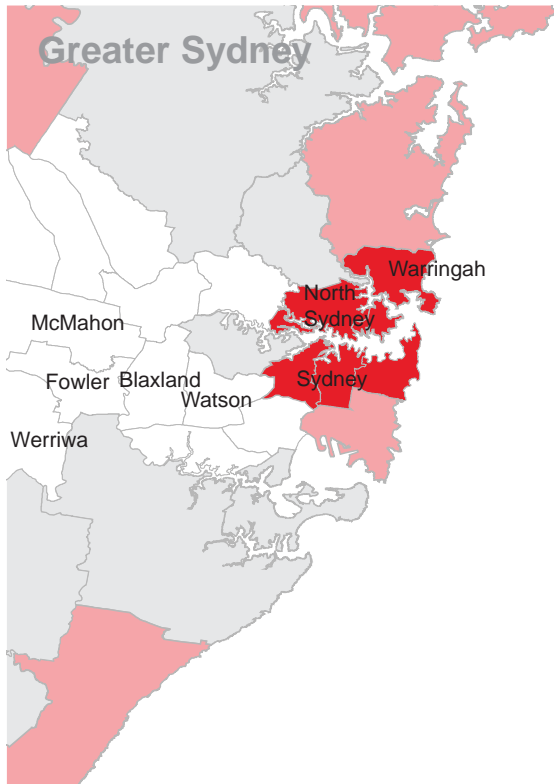


Figure 1.5: Map of Sydney showing the results of the Australian Marriage Law Postal Survey by Commonwealth electorate. (Source: Andrew Gorman-Murray)

Examining three cities also allows for comparison of experiences of LGBTIQ+ individuals, families and communities, particularly the strategies and activities LGAs in each city are engaging to utilise LGBTIQ+ people in local planning and the use and design of public space.

Yes vote percentage

- > 70.0
- 61.6 – 69.9
- 50.1 – 61.5
- < 50.0

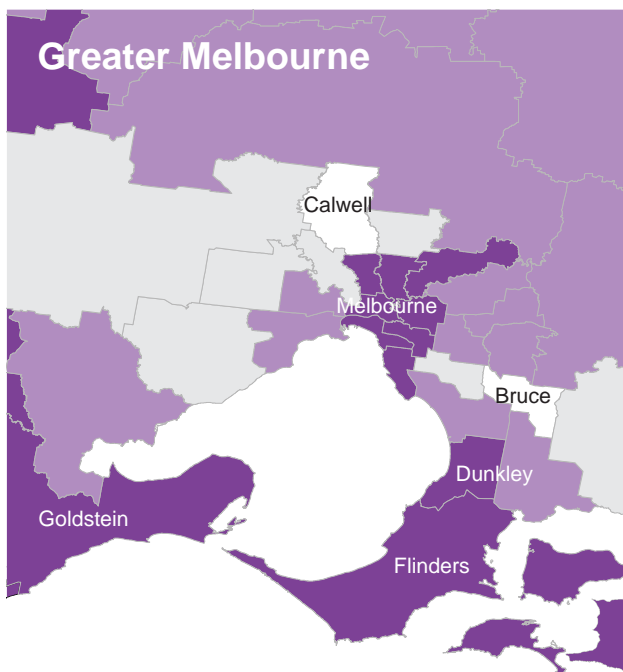


Figure 1.6: Map of Melbourne showing the results of the Australian Marriage Law Postal Survey by Commonwealth electorate. (Source: Andrew Gorman-Murray)

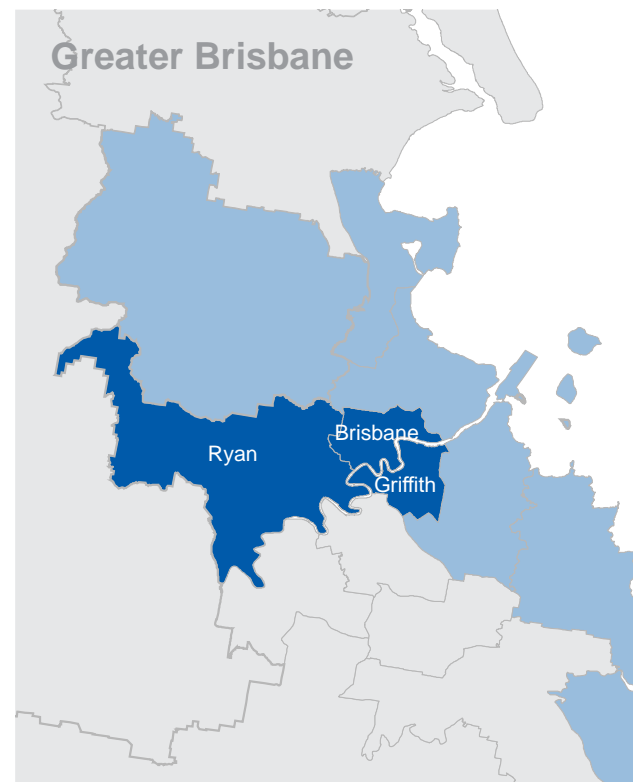
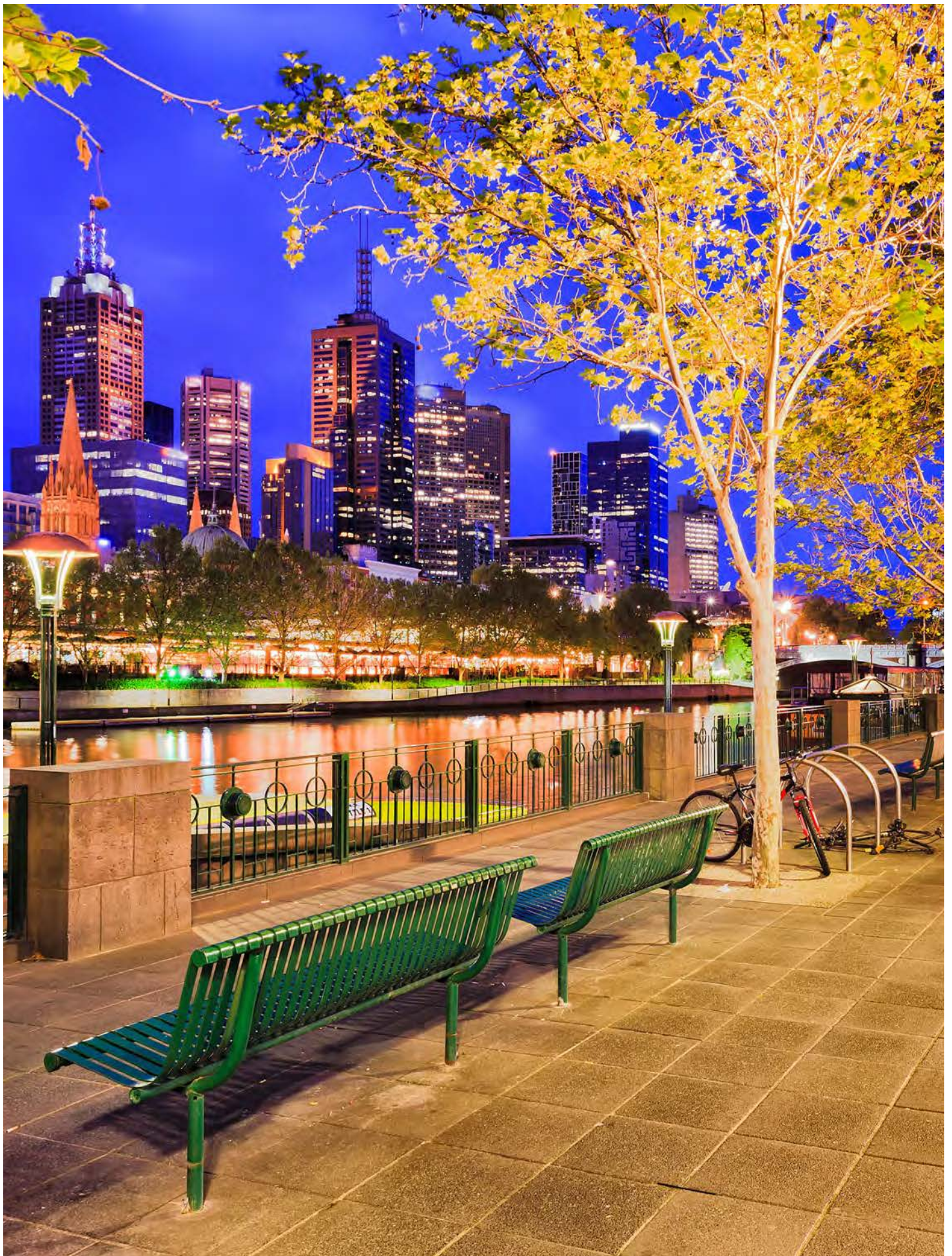


Figure 1.7: Map of Brisbane showing the results of the Australian Marriage Law Postal Survey by Commonwealth electorate. (Source: Andrew Gorman-Murray)





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Methodology

Thematic literature review

The thematic literature review (Braun & Clarke 2012) examines and summarises existing academic literature on LGBTIQ+ experiences of public space in Australia's major eastern seaboard cities.

Accordingly, this review focuses on Australian-based literature within the disciplines of geography and planning that reported on research on LGBTIQ+ experiences in Sydney, Melbourne and Brisbane. Additionally, some international publications are incorporated into this review where they highlight best practices that might be adopted in Australian cities.

Methodology

Questions that guide the review are:

- What are the experiences of LGBTIQ+ individuals, families and communities in Australian inner cities and suburbs?
- How do LGBTIQ+ individuals, families and communities encounter and use public space in Australian cities?
- What is inclusive planning? Are there any case studies of inclusive planning?
- What are the criteria for inclusive planning and how can these be embedded into the use and design of local areas and public space for LGBTIQ+ people?
- What are Australian best practices for the use and design of public space for LGBTIQ+ people? In what ways are LGBTIQ+ individuals, families and communities considered? What fractions of the LGBTIQ+ demographic are considered?

This review includes 30 academic publications and 3 government documents. The academic publication dates range from 1995 to 2021, with 20 articles published since 2010. A thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke 2012) was applied to identify themes in the academic literature as well as research gaps.

From these findings, assessment criteria were developed and applied to the second stage of this research – the local government strategies and policies review.

Local government strategies and policies review

The review assesses local councils' awareness of LGBTIQ+ individuals, families and communities in their local areas, and how well they are incorporating and operationalising LGBTIQ+ accommodations. In doing so, we review and evaluate the strategic plans, policies and community engagement of 31 LGAs in Sydney, 28 LGAs in Melbourne and five LGAs in Brisbane.

The assessment is based on five criteria. These are:

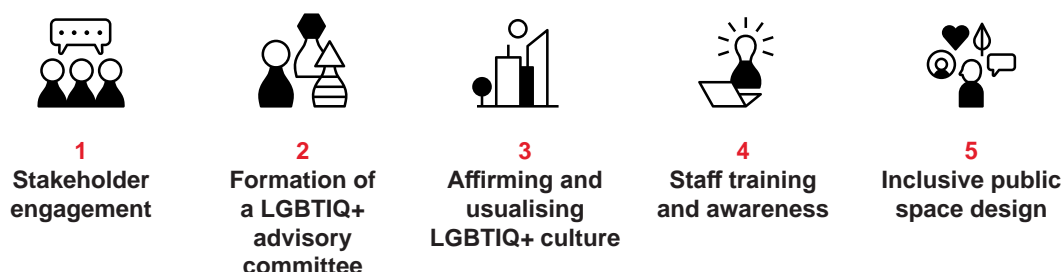


Table 1 provides further details on the strategies and activities that comprise each of these criteria.

These criteria are based on the insights of the thematic literature review, best practice recommendations from international literature, and the NSW Social Justice Principles (NSW Division of Local Government 2013; NSW Office of Local Government 2021). Through accessing local councils' websites, the research team located information on community engagement, events, policies, strategic plans and urban planning and open space developments, as well as news items on local LGBTIQ+ communities.

In order to meet any of the criteria, a local council needs evidence to show they are actively engaging with, or planning for, LGBTIQ+ individuals, families and communities.

In order to evaluate a council's performance, the research team identified actions or strategies in place that completely, partially or inadequately meet the criteria:

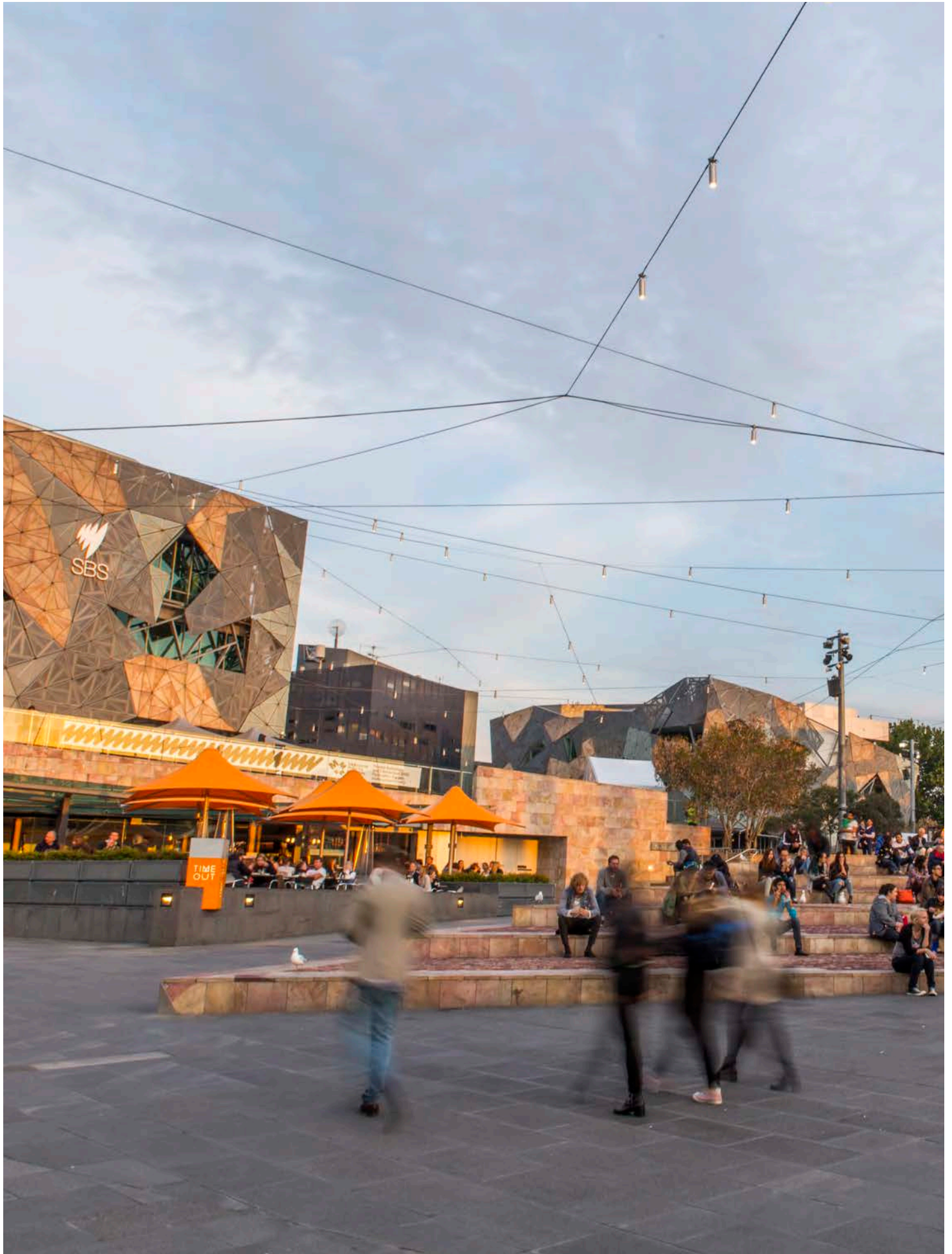
Completely – strategies or plans in place that specifically accommodated LGBTIQ+ individuals, families and communities;

Partially – strategies and plans that highlighted the need for inclusivity and accessibility for all members of the community, but did not identify LGBTIQ+ people specifically; and

Inadequately – no strategies and plans for either LGBTIQ+ people or inclusive planning.

The results of the local government strategies and policies review are detailed on page 27 of this report.







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Thematic literature review

Public spaces are designed in a way that assumes heterosexuality and the conventional nuclear family are the norm (Frisch 2002).

As a result, alternative expressions of sexuality, gender identity and family formation have been omitted from the design and use of public spaces. In response, ‘gay villages’ emerged and consolidated in the inner-city areas of a number of large cities around the world, including Australian cities, notably Sydney, from the 1950s forward (Bitterman & Hess 2021; Costa & Pires 2016; Gorman-Murray & Nash 2021).

However, while these became public spaces in which non-heterosexual identities could be expressed, they have been largely associated with white, middle-class gay men, and have often excluded other LGBTIQ+ individuals based on gender, class and race (Gorman-Murray & Nash 2019). Today there are still significant concentrations of LGBTIQ+ individuals and families living in the inner city, but we now recognise that many live beyond these gay villages, particularly in Australia’s suburban areas (Gorman-Murray 2007; Gorman-Murray et al. 2010; Forrest, Gorman-Murray & Siciliano 2019).

Thematic literature review

However, these suburban LGBTIQ+ individuals, families and communities are often overlooked in public discourse and local planning.

Much of the literature has focused on the rise and demise of traditional gay villages, typically located in the inner city. Some researchers have contended that in recent decades we have seen the ‘de-gaying’ of some inner-city gay villages, such as Oxford Street in Sydney (Gorman-Murray 2006; Gorman-Murray & Nash 2014, 2017; Ruting 2008), due to:

- Gentrification pricing out LGBTIQ+ residents and businesses;
- Online communities and mobile apps providing easier connectivity for LGBTIQ+ individuals, reducing the requirement for physical gathering spaces;
- Younger generations no longer connecting with a fixed ‘gay’ identity or finding utility in these recognisable ‘gay’ spaces and venues; and
- Increased societal acceptance of LGBTIQ+ people, mitigating the need for territorial protection.

Beyond the village

This shift has seen a rise in alternative queer-friendly locations elsewhere in the inner city, such as Newtown and the surrounding areas of Sydney’s inner west (Gorman-Murray & Waitt 2009; Gorman-Murray & Nash 2014, 2017; Nash & Gorman-Murray 2015), as well as an increasing recognition of LGBTIQ+ people living in the suburbs (Gorman-Murray 2007; Gorman-Murray & Brennan-Horley 2010; Gorman-Murray et al. 2010; Forrest, Gorman-Murray & Siciliano 2019). Despite this growing awareness, those living beyond gay villages and in suburbia are often invisible or overlooked.

This is sometimes due to LGBTIQ+ individuals and families self-closeting or flying under the radar to avoid harassment and potential violence (Hodge 1995; Gorman-Murray & Nash 2019).

The literature on LGBTIQ+ individuals and families living in Australian suburbia remains limited.

Current research has focused on the experiences of gay men (Gorman-Murray 2012; Hodge 1995) and lesbians (Gorman-Murray & Nash 2019; Luzia 2010; Nash & Gorman-Murray 2015). Hodge (1995) identifies the different experiences of gay men living in the inner city compared to gay men living in suburbia (cf. Costello & Hodge 1999). While gay men in the inner city, or gay villages, were free to express their sexuality, those in the suburbs experienced a far narrower degree of acceptance.

Despite this, daily interactions with neighbours and community groups ensured that the presence of these gay men became somewhat usualised over time (cf. Gorman-Murray 2007, 2012). Gorman-Murray and Nash (2019) point out in their review of sexuality and suburbia that while inner-city gay villages have been largely created by and for gay men, lesbians are more likely to reside in the suburbs (cf. Gorman-Murray & Brennan-Horley 2010; Jay 1997; Nash & Gorman-Murray 2015).

Luzia (2010) examines the everyday suburban experiences of lesbian parents. She identifies how lesbian couples change the way they use public space after becoming parents. Places that they would once frequent, such as bars and clubs, are substituted for places that are child-friendly. She found that while the couples once utilised ‘queer spaces’, they felt these spaces were not always appropriate once they had children. Yet, there is a tension, because child-friendly spaces are conventionally designed with a heteronormative lens. Luzia (2010) also found that many lesbian parents opt to take public transport or walk over using a car, as this is more convenient while using a stroller for their children.

This demonstrates that how LGBTIQ+ people use space is also determined by other intersectional aspects of their identities, meaning there is no one size fits all approach.

While the literature demonstrates some consideration of suburban lesbians and gay men, there has been no research to date that we can identify on the place-based experiences of bisexual, trans and gender diverse, and intersex individuals in Australian suburbia.

The limited research to date nevertheless shows that the experiences of lesbians and gay men may differ, and that we lack insight into the experiences of other fractions of LGBTIQ+ communities. We must recognise that LGBTIQ+ individuals, families and communities are not uniform. There is diversity within this demographic.

These differences are further crosscut by other social intersections, including gender, race, ethnicity, ancestry, age, ability, household type, socioeconomic status and religion. These differences affect access to and inclusion in public spaces (Luzia 2010; Gorman-Murray & Nash 2014; Gorman-Murray & Nash 2019).

It is therefore vital for local councils to be cognisant – if possible and if they have access to relevant information – of the specific LGBTIQ+ demographics within their jurisdictions to better accommodate local groups within strategies and activities.

Broto (2021) identifies some of the obstacles local councils may face in usualising LGBTIQ+ people in local planning and the use and design of public space:

- LGBTIQ+ issues are often approached as being distinct and isolated;
- Participatory planning practices have been informed and shaped by assumptions that all people are heterosexual, and associated norms; and
- Concrete, practical problems, such as safety, make it difficult to raise questions of identity and sexuality in public engagement.

Waitt (2006) also identified that creating deliberately intentional LGBTIQ+-friendly spaces can be less successful than those queer spaces that

emerge organically. During the Sydney 2002 Gay Games, LGBTIQ+-friendly spaces created for the event were not successful in attracting LGBTIQ+ individuals, as they were still perceived as heterosexual spaces, and as less inclusive. This points to the need for LGBTIQ+ consultation and engagement at the early stages of planning to ensure issues of perceived inclusion or exclusion are addressed early, including attempts to reach both visible and less visible groups.

Inclusive planning

These are important obstacles to be aware of and to work against. At the same time, we identify the following principles in international and Australian literature that can assist local councils to provide accommodation to LGBTIQ+ individuals, families and communities (Frisch 2015; Nusser & Anacker 2013; Willett et al. 2021; Catterall & Azzouz 2021; Victorian Local Governance Association 2020; Gorman-Murray 2011; Nash, Maguire & Gorman-Murray 2018; Gorman-Murray & Waitt 2009; Gorman-Murray & Nash 2017; Nash & Gorman-Murray 2014):

- Ensure a more holistic approach to LGBTIQ+ inclusive planning;
- Ensure LGBTIQ+ inclusion and collaboration at every stage of planning;
- Engage with a variety of LGBTIQ+ individuals, groups and organisations;
- Provide education on anti-homophobia, anti-biphobia, intersexism and anti-transphobia;
- Provide training and education on the importance of inclusive spaces and practices;
- Provide safe spaces;
- Consider safety aspects regarding how people travel between spaces;
- Support and celebrate LGBTIQ+ individuals, families and communities;
- Preserve existing LGBTIQ+ spaces, monuments and infrastructure; and
- Develop stricter policies for new developments to ensure exclusionary practices are addressed.

Thematic literature review



Based on this thematic literature review, Table 1 outlines the assessment criteria developed to determine the success of LGAs in usualising LGBTIQ+ people in strategies and activities. These assessment criteria also align with and respond to the NSW Social Justice Principles, which underpin local government planning in that state, and are apt for local planning considerations elsewhere.

The principles are (NSW Division of Local Government 2013, p. 26; cf. NSW Office of Local Government 2021):

Equity – there should be fairness in decision making, and prioritising and allocation of resources, particularly for those in need. Everyone should have a fair opportunity to participate in the future of the community. The planning process should take particular care to involve and protect the interests of people in vulnerable circumstances;






Access – all people should have fair access to services, resources and opportunities to improve their quality of life;

Participation – everyone should have the maximum opportunity to genuinely participate in decisions which affect their lives; and

Rights – equal rights should be established and promoted, with opportunities provided for people from diverse linguistic, cultural and religious backgrounds to participate in community life.

Our assessment criteria have each been matched with these Social Justice Principles in Table 1.

Table 1: Strategies and policies review criteria for LGAs in Sydney, Melbourne and Brisbane.

Criteria	Content	Social justice principles
Stakeholder Engagement 	Engagement events about local planning and public space tailored to usualise LGBTIQ+ communities	Participation
LGBTIQ+ Advisory Committee 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – To assist council’s decision making in LGBTIQ+ matters – Inform the development of LGBTIQ+ Action Plan and other strategies – Identify systemic discrimination – Provide an effective channel of (two-way) communication to reach LGBTIQ+ communities 	Participation
Affirming and usualising LGBTIQ+ Communities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Preserve LGBTIQ+ history (to make space visibly inclusive) – Provide venues for events/festivals/months of significance – Support micro interventions and visual cues, such as rainbow crossings – Seek opportunities to visualise LGBTIQ+ history and culture through landscape symbolism – e.g. Murals, plaques, art acknowledging role of LGBTIQ+ people in local communities – Recognise and address the different needs within LGBTIQ+ communities wrought by gender, ethnicity, age, disability, etc 	Equity
Staff Training and Awareness 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Providing training to council staff in relation to LGBTIQ+ matters e.g.: Inclusive language and practice of supporting inclusive spaces to prevent discrimination – Organising educational events/programs for the community in public spaces – Understanding the demographics of diverse LGBTIQ+ communities to identify the needs 	Access
Inclusive Public Space Design 	<p>Guidelines should include elements such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Privacy – to reduce self-policing – e.g. Avoiding eye-contact or other behaviours for fear they might draw aggressive reactions – Gender-friendly places – for multiple genders – Design for all kinds of people and families – Design for ageing LGBTIQ+ population (focus on community services) – Supporting LGBTIQ+ Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Communities 	Rights

Thematic literature review

Planning considerations

There are some recent debates in the media and politics about the safety of rainbow crossings (Stopera 2013; Crofts & Kirchengast 2016). In Australia, Crofts & Kirchengast (2016) recognise that there are some safety concerns about pedestrians sitting and laying on rainbow crossings to take photos. This can potentially cause injuries or fatalities when rainbow crossings are located on roads.

In 2013, a rainbow crossing on Sydney's Oxford Street was removed for these safety reasons, despite public calls for it to be made a permanent feature (Crofts & Kirchengast 2016). However, later that year, a new rainbow crossing was installed on the footpath in Summer Hill Square, in Sydney's inner west suburbs, to promote the LGBTIQ+ community while addressing these safety concerns ('Rainbow crossing' returns to Sydney 2013).

However, rainbow crossings are generally supported by LGBTIQ+ communities and allies around the world as a landscape cue for acceptance and celebration (Stopera 2013; Crofts & Kirkengast 2016). While it is noted that there are some safety concerns regarding rainbow crossings, they will be discussed later in this report as they are a popular way for councils to visually represent LGBTIQ+ support.

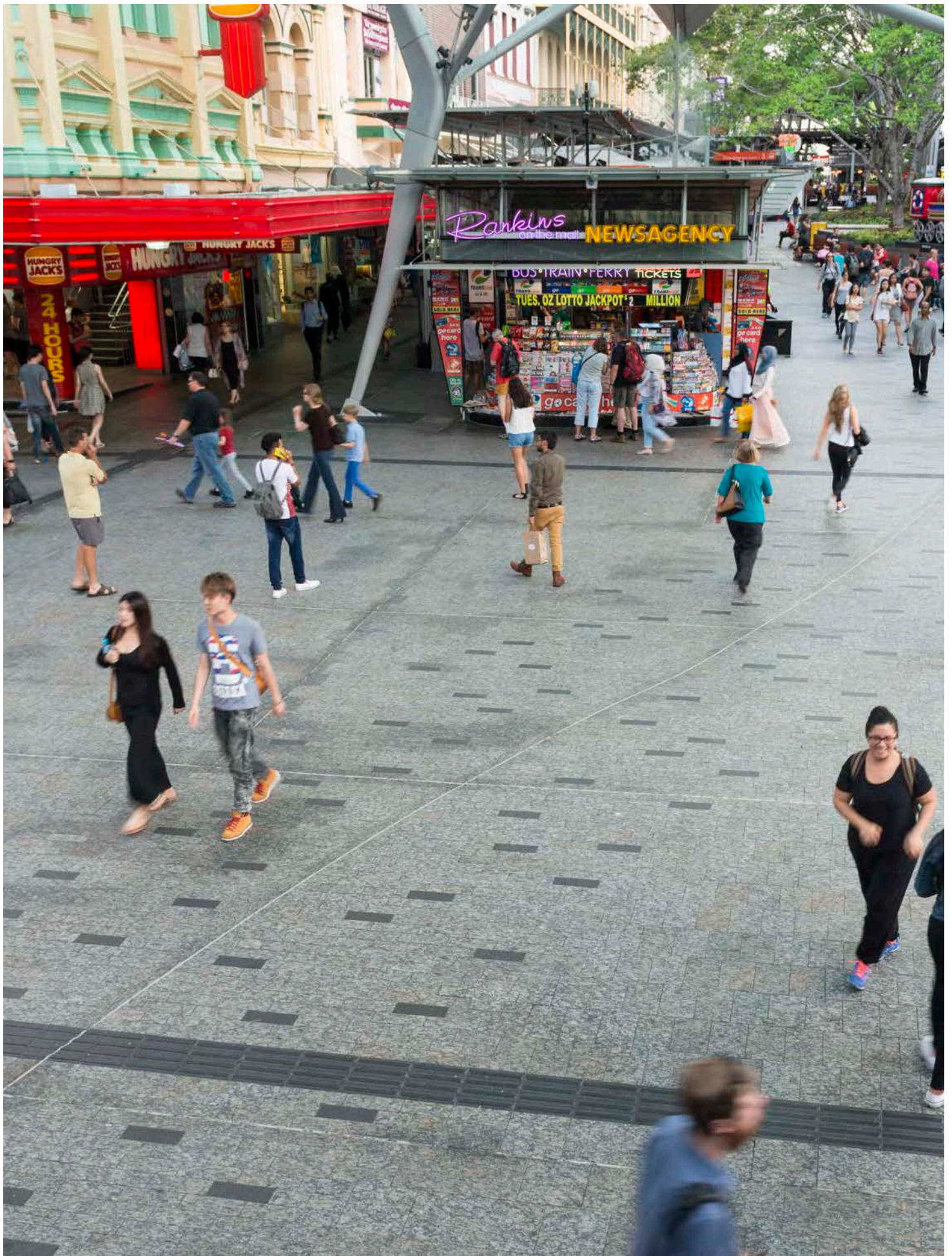
There is also some concern over 'rainbow washing', where the rainbow flag is appropriated for the financial gain of businesses and corporations; they may demonstrate LGBTIQ+ support in a superficial way by using the flag, while at the same time not taking necessary steps to support LGBTIQ+ equality in a meaningful way (Bitterman 2021; Czepanski 2022).

While this term is often used in relation to fashion and consumer goods, it can also be applied to public space design. Many councils may show public support to LGBTIQ+ individuals, families and communities with symbolic activities such as raising a rainbow flag. However, without taking active steps to ensure to inclusion, safety and usualisation of LGBTIQ+ people in the everyday use of public space, these public gestures may be seen as 'rainbow washing'.





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Local government strategies and policies review

The strategies and policies review aims to evaluate councils' accommodation of LGBTIQ+ individuals, families and communities in local planning activities.

Policies from all LGAs in metropolitan Sydney (31 LGAs), Melbourne (28 LGAs) and Brisbane (five LGAs) are evaluated against the following criteria set out in Table 1 and reiterated here:

- Stakeholder engagement;
- Formation of a LGBTIQ+ advisory committee;
- Affirming and usualising LGBTIQ+ communities;
- Staff training and awareness; and
- Inclusive public space design.

This section presents the key findings and gaps identified by the local government strategies and policies review. These findings feed into the report's recommendations.

Local government strategies and policies review

Geographical trends

The review found that most of the LGAs that are more proactive in engaging with LGBTIQ+ individuals, families and communities are more likely to be in the inner city:

- **Sydney's** most active LGAs are the Inner West, Randwick, Waverley and City of Sydney. These LGA are in the inner-city, inner-west and inner-east of the Sydney metropolitan area;
- **Melbourne's** most active LGAs are Yarra, Stonnington, Darebin and Banyule. These LGAs are in the inner north-east and inner-city; and
- **Brisbane's** most active LGA is City of Brisbane. It is in the inner-city.

Well-known gay villages are traditionally located in inner cities, helping explain the higher level of utilisation of LGBTIQ+ individuals, families and communities in these LGAs. In Australia, 71% of people live in major cities (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2018), which thus arguably includes significant numbers of LGBTIQ+ individuals and families across metropolitan areas, not only in the inner cities (Gorman-Murray et al. 2010).

However, many of these LGBTIQ+ individuals and families remain invisible in suburbia and associated local planning. In the following, we review LGA accommodations under each criterion identified in our assessment framework.

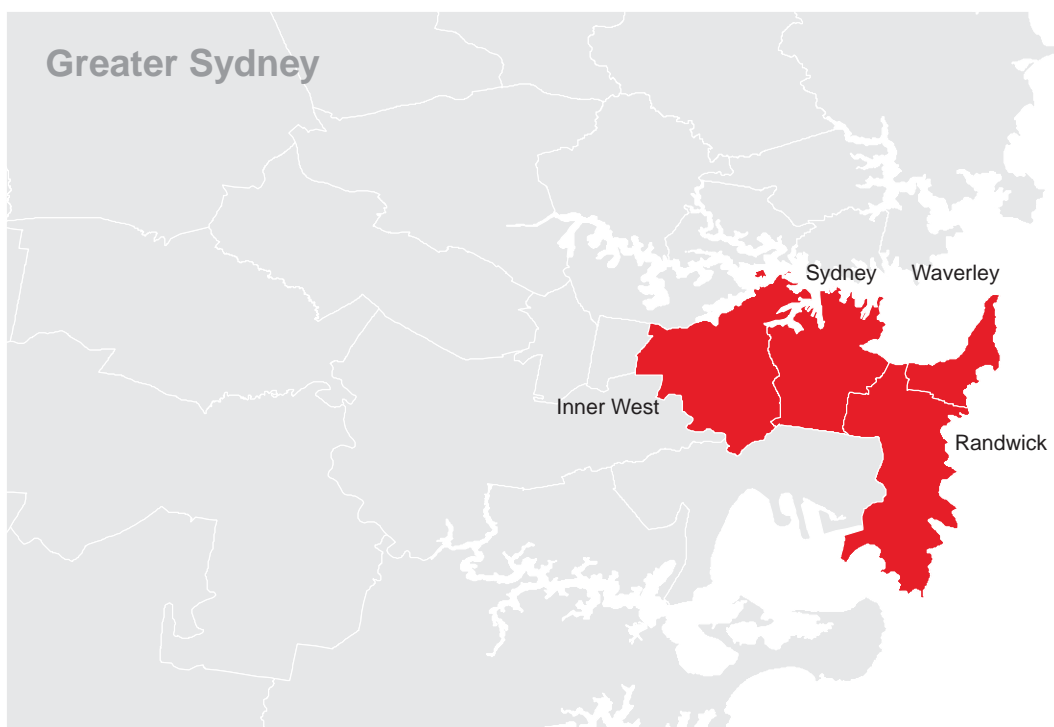


Figure 4.1: Local councils' performance in Sydney (overall)

● Active ● Some activity ● Not active

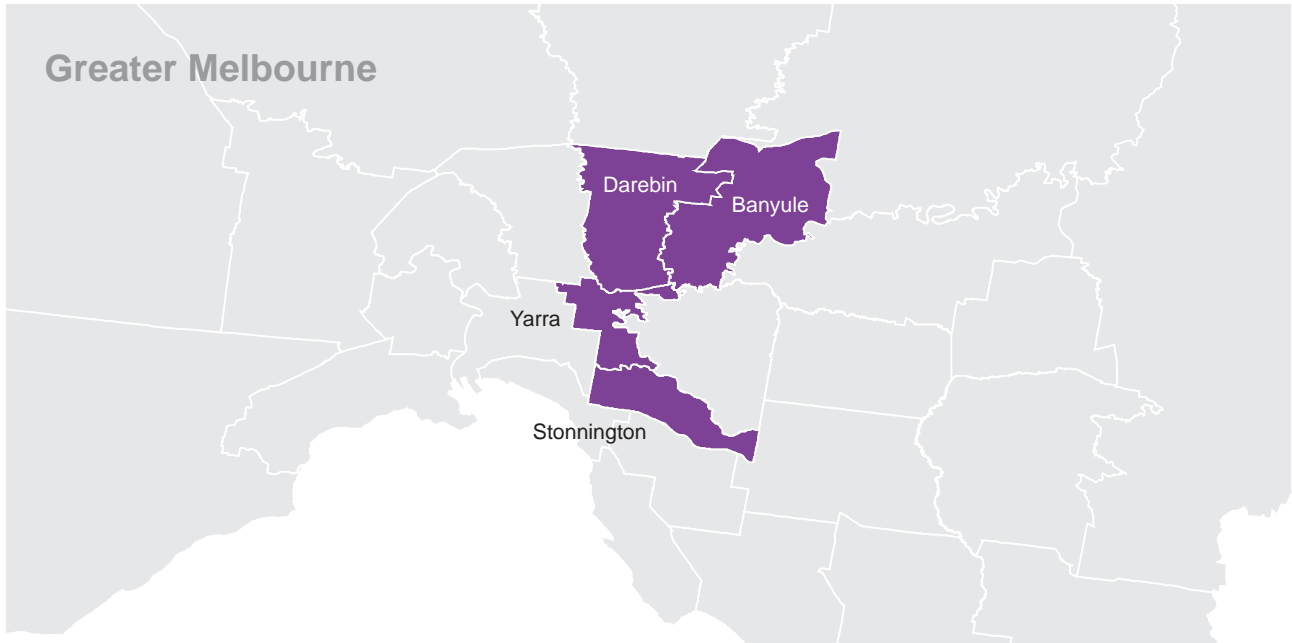


Figure 4.2: Local councils' performance in Melbourne (overall)

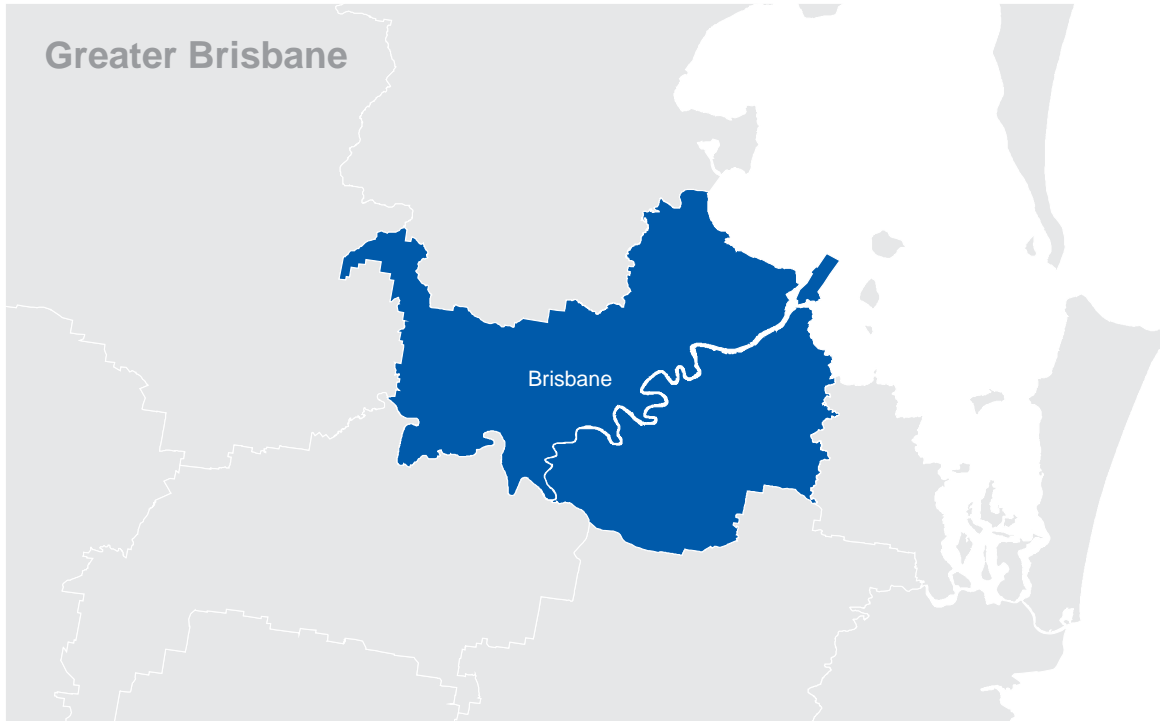
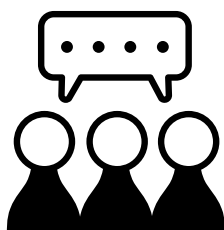


Figure 4.3: Local councils' performance in Brisbane (overall)

● Active ● Some activity ● Not active



Stakeholder engagement

Stakeholder engagement with LGBTIQ+ individuals, families and communities is a vital step in ensuring the recognition and usualisation of LGBTIQ+ people. This allows LGBTIQ+ accommodation to be folded into local planning regarding the use and design of public space. Stakeholders involved can include LGBTIQ+ individuals, organisations, support groups and businesses. Types of engagement may include focus groups, interviews, surveys or public forums.

Sydney

Of the 31 LGAs in Sydney, nine have stakeholder engagement activities that targeted LGBTIQ+ individuals, families, community groups, businesses and organisations.

Some of these councils hold roundtable (a formal conversation with a moderator, where multiple perspectives are presented on a topic) discussions or public forums with LGBTIQ+ representatives.

These include:

- City of Parramatta;
- Waverley;
- Inner West;
- City of Sydney; and
- Blue Mountains.

Roundtable discussions and public forums are designed to discuss inclusion initiatives, strategies and activities, so that local councils can provide better accommodation for LGBTIQ+ people within the local community in future planning.

Councils such as Mosman and Fairfield City Councils conduct surveys and interviews with the participation of LGBTIQ+ individuals to identify local issues within the community.

For example, Mosman Council conducted surveys and interviews with young people living in or accessing the Mosman LGA, focusing on the use of spaces and their satisfaction with spaces available to young people. In the survey, 22.6% of the participants identified as LGBTIQ+, ensuring some representation of this demographic.

Some councils plan a series of stakeholder engagement activities in their Community Engagement Plan but do not state if the activities are inclusive of LGBTIQ+ individuals, families and communities. For example, Blacktown City Council and Bayside Council raise the need to have inclusive, open and accessible engagement in their strategies (e.g. Community Engagement Strategy and Community Strategic Plan). However, their strategies do not identify and target LGBTIQ+ communities or any other community groups.

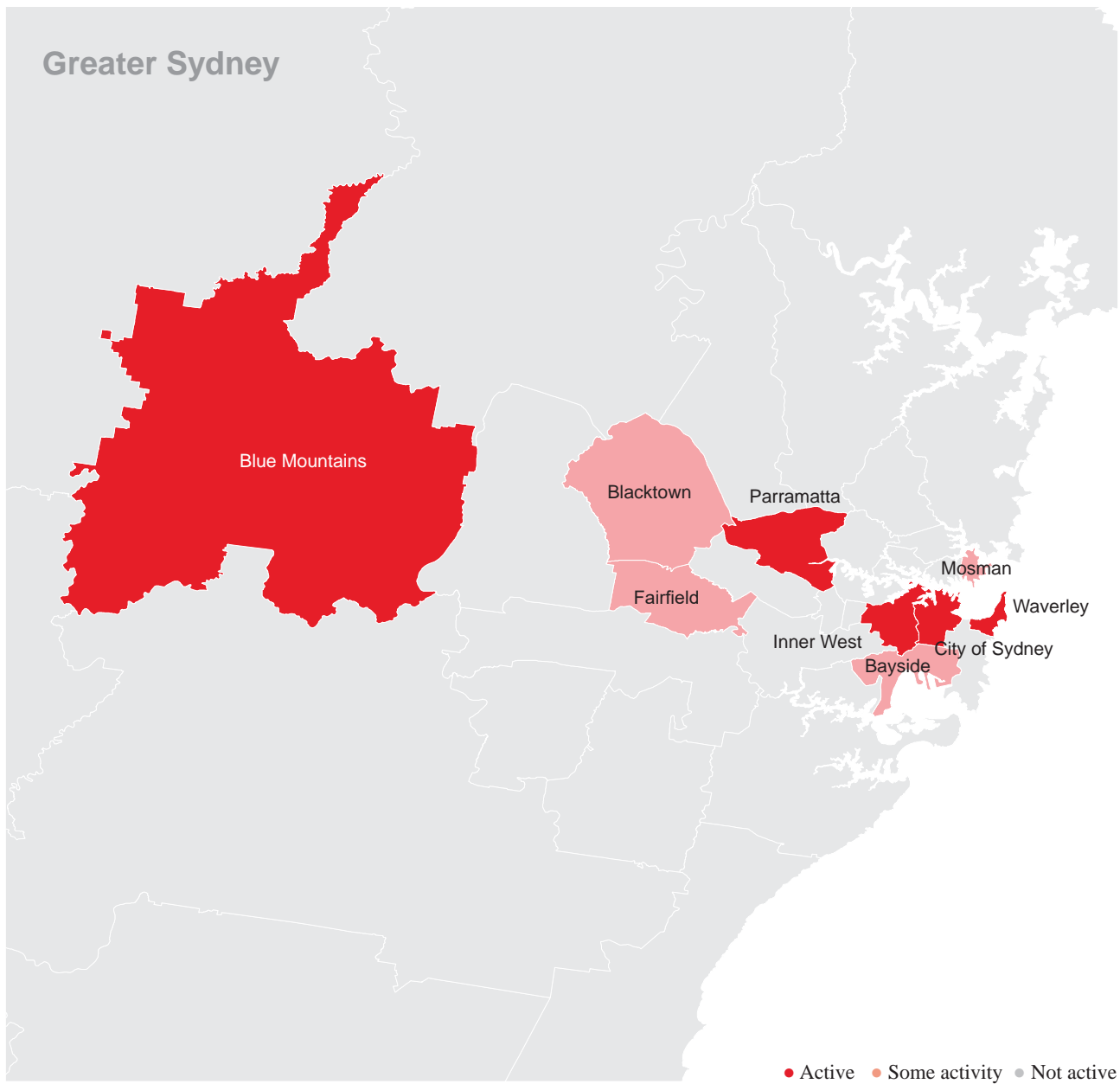


Figure 4.4: Local councils' performance in Sydney (stakeholder engagement)

Local government strategies and policies review

Melbourne

Of the 28 LGAs in Melbourne, five have stakeholder engagement activities that target LGBTIQ+ individuals, families, community groups, businesses and organisations. Of these, City of Port Phillip, Moreland and Yarra City Councils identify LGBTIQ+ people as a targeted group within the Community Engagement Policy to ensure their needs are accommodated. Examples of actions are offered in Table 2.



Table 2: Stakeholder engagement activities in local councils in Melbourne

Council	Actions
Moreland City Council	LGBTIQ+ input in the upgrade of Fawkner Leisure Centre to ensure the centre would meet their needs
Yarra City Council	<p>Consulted with LGBTIQ+ individuals and community groups to provide feedback and input into multiple local plans, including, but not limited to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – The Gender Equity Action Plan 2019-2021; – Strategy Advocacy Framework 2018-2021; – Yarra City Council Plan 2017-2021; and – Access and Inclusion Plan 2018-2024.
Maribyrnong City Council	Held multiple focus groups with LGBTIQ+ individuals to develop the LGBTIQ+ Strategic Action Plan 2021-2025.
Knox City Council	<p>Held community engagement activities with LGBTIQ+ youth to help inform:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Community Plan 2021-2031; and – Council Plan 2021-2025.

As in Sydney, other Melbourne councils organise community engagement activities, but do not specify if LGBTIQ+ individuals, families and communities are specifically included.

Greater Melbourne

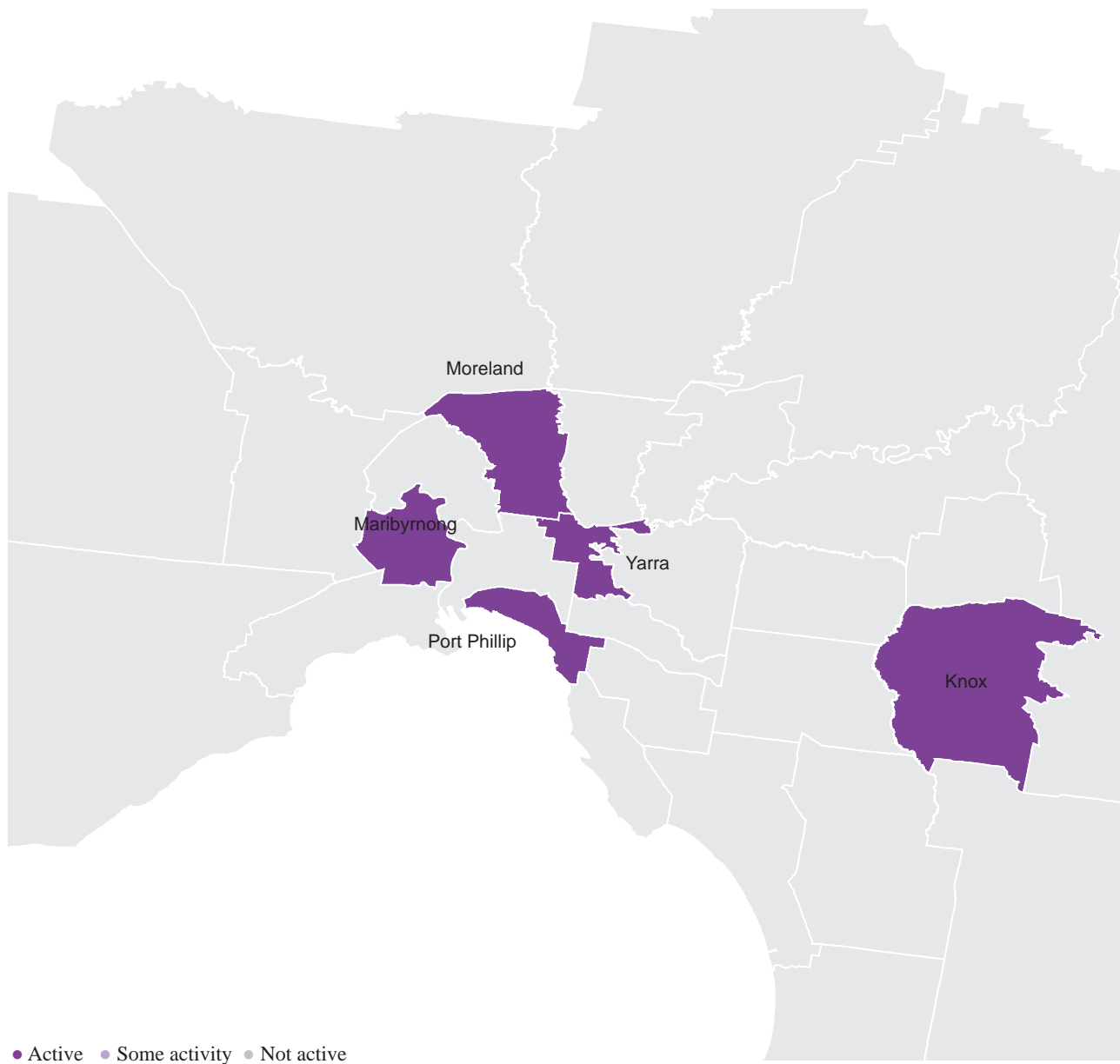


Figure 4.5: Local councils' performance in Melbourne (stakeholder engagement)

Local government strategies and policies review

Brisbane

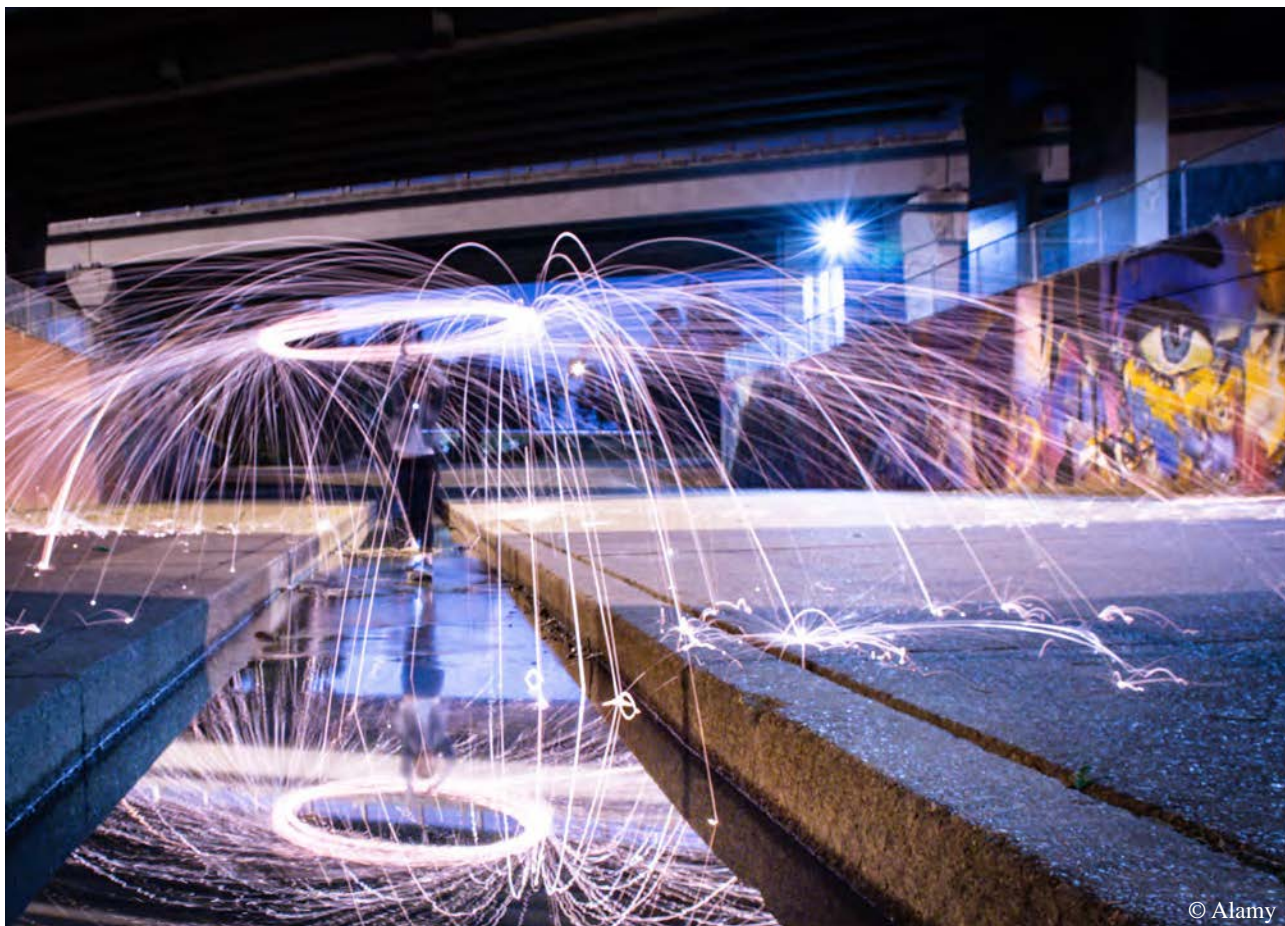
Of the five LGAs in Brisbane, only City of Brisbane has developed community partnerships with LGBTIQ+ community groups. It aims to provide funding and sponsorship for community events, festivals, projects and library resources to celebrate LGBTIQ+ individuals, families and communities.

Overall

Overall, only a small number of LGAs across all cities are actively engaging with LGBTIQ+ individuals, families and communities. Active engagement can ensure councils accommodate LGBTIQ+ people in policies, plans, developments and council processes.

Representatives include individual community members as well as LGBTIQ+-focused service providers, organisations, businesses and community groups. Engagement activities primarily consisted of roundtable meetings, workshops, focus groups and forums, with some councils also utilising interviews and surveys.

To ensure recognition of this demographic, more councils need to actively engage with LGBTIQ+ individuals, families and communities to ensure their accommodation in council policies and strategic plans, and that LGBTIQ+ people are usualised within an inclusive local community.



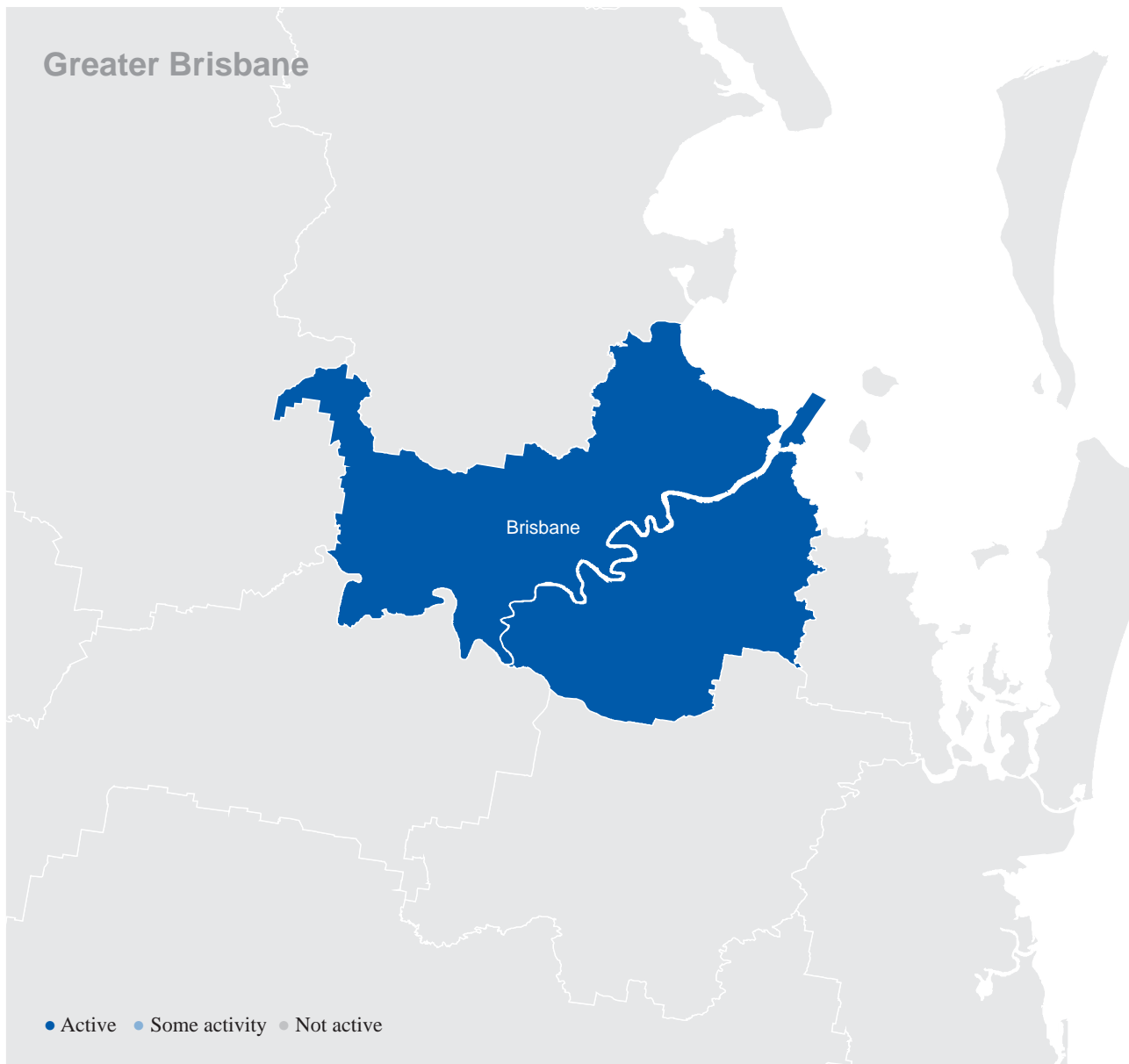
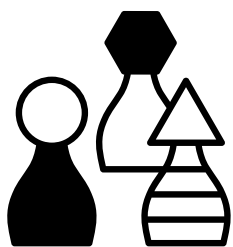


Figure 4.6: Local councils' performance in Brisbane (stakeholder engagement)

Local government strategies and policies review



LGBTIQ+ advisory committee

The LGBTIQ+ advisory committee sits within a formal council structure and can include both staff members and LGBTIQ+ individuals nominated to represent the community at large. The committee provides feedback and advice to the council on a variety of issues, including addressing systemic discrimination, development of strategic plans and action plans, events and general decision making. The committee also provides an effective communication channel between the local council and LGBTIQ+ individuals, families and communities.

Sydney

Of the 31 LGAs in Sydney, only one council has an advisory committee. The Inner West Council names the committee as the LGBTIQ+ Working Group. As part of the council's community engagement framework, the committee provides advice to council on its decision-making process.

In addition, Waverley Council has a Multicultural Advisory Committee that provides feedback and advice to council on social cohesion, community partnerships, strategies and plans. However, it does not state that this advisory council is inclusive of LGBTIQ+ individuals, families and communities.



Figure 4.7: Local councils' performance in Sydney (LGBTIQ+ advisory committee)

Melbourne

Of the 28 LGAs in Melbourne, six councils currently have a LGBTIQ+ advisory committee, and two councils are in the process of establishing one.

These advisory committees provide feedback and advice to council on strategic plans, policies, LGBTIQ+ services and support, community engagement and LGBTIQ+ needs and issues within the community.

In Melbourne, LGAs are at different stages of developing LGBTIQ+ advisory committees, for example:

- The LGBTIQ+ committee in the City of Stonnington is well established and has been an integral part in developing the local LGBTIQ+ Action Plan;
- Monash Council established their LGBTIQ+ advisory committee recently, in 2021; and
- Glen Eira and Maribyrnong City Councils are still in the process of establishing LGBTIQ+ advisory committees.

Councils with a LGBTIQ+ advisory committee tend to meet more of the criteria developed for this local government strategies and policies review, such as ‘affirming and usualising LGBTIQ+ culture’ and ‘training and awareness’.

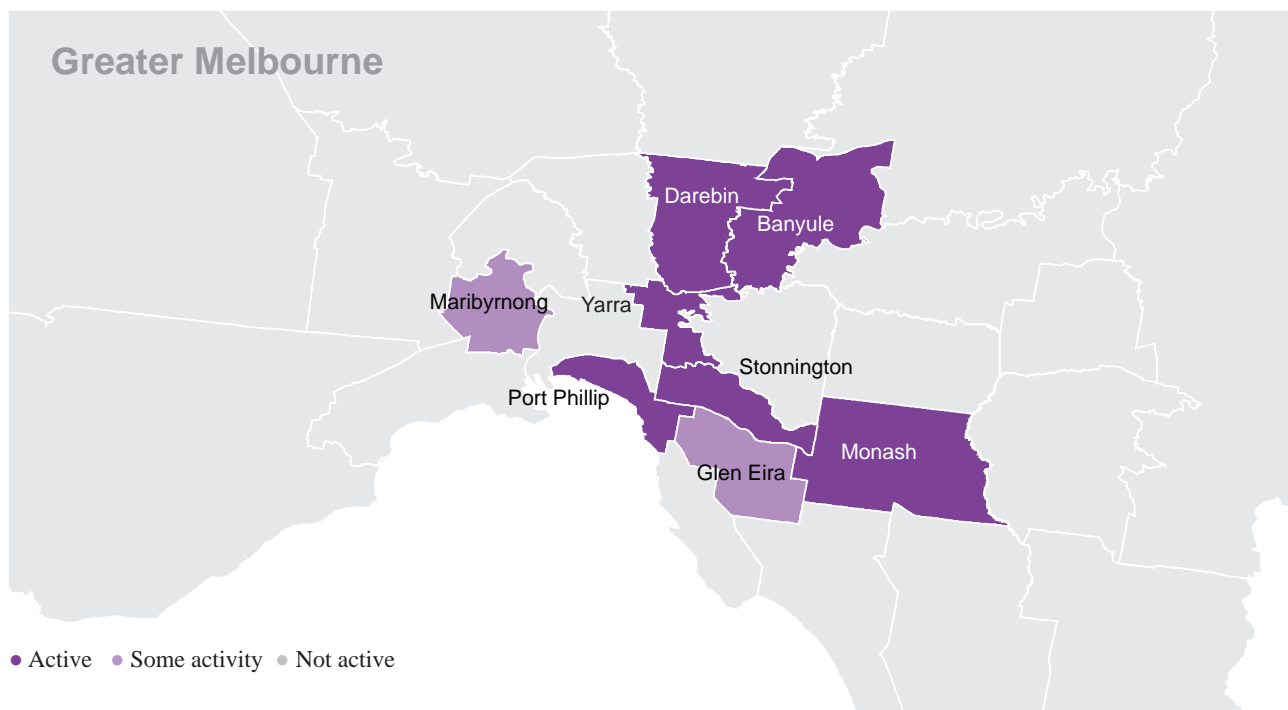


Figure 4.8: Local councils’ performance in Melbourne (LGBTIQ+ advisory committee)

Local government strategies and policies review

Brisbane

No council in Brisbane has a specific LGBTIQ+ advisory committee. However, Ipswich City Council has the Ipswich Youth Advisory Council, which includes members who have an interest in LGBTQIA+ rights. While it is recognised that there is inadequate support for LGBTIQ+ individuals, families, and communities within the LGA, there is no plan or strategy that actively addresses the issue.

Overall

A LGBTIQ+ advisory committee is an internal council group that provides feedback and input to the council on their decision-making and the impact on LGBTIQ+ individuals, families and communities. The review shows that councils with LGBTIQ+ advisory committees (excluding those established recently) tend to meet more criteria for our local government strategies and policies

review. In other words, they are more proactive in organising various forms of activities to usualise LGBTIQ+ people in the local community and the use and design of public space.

Melbourne is the most active in establishing LGBTIQ+ advisory committees among the three cities. This could be explained by strong Victorian state government support. The Victorian government issued 'Pride in our future: Victoria's LGBTIQ+ strategic plan 2022-32' (Victorian State Government 2022) in February 2022. This is a whole-of-government strategy to plan for equity and inclusion of LGBTIQ+ individuals, families and communities within all aspects of government. It also sets a vision and priorities to guide councils to make their LGAs more inclusive and become better places to live for all people. Hence, the state government has a vital role in encouraging the local government to embrace and usualise LGBTIQ+ accommodations.

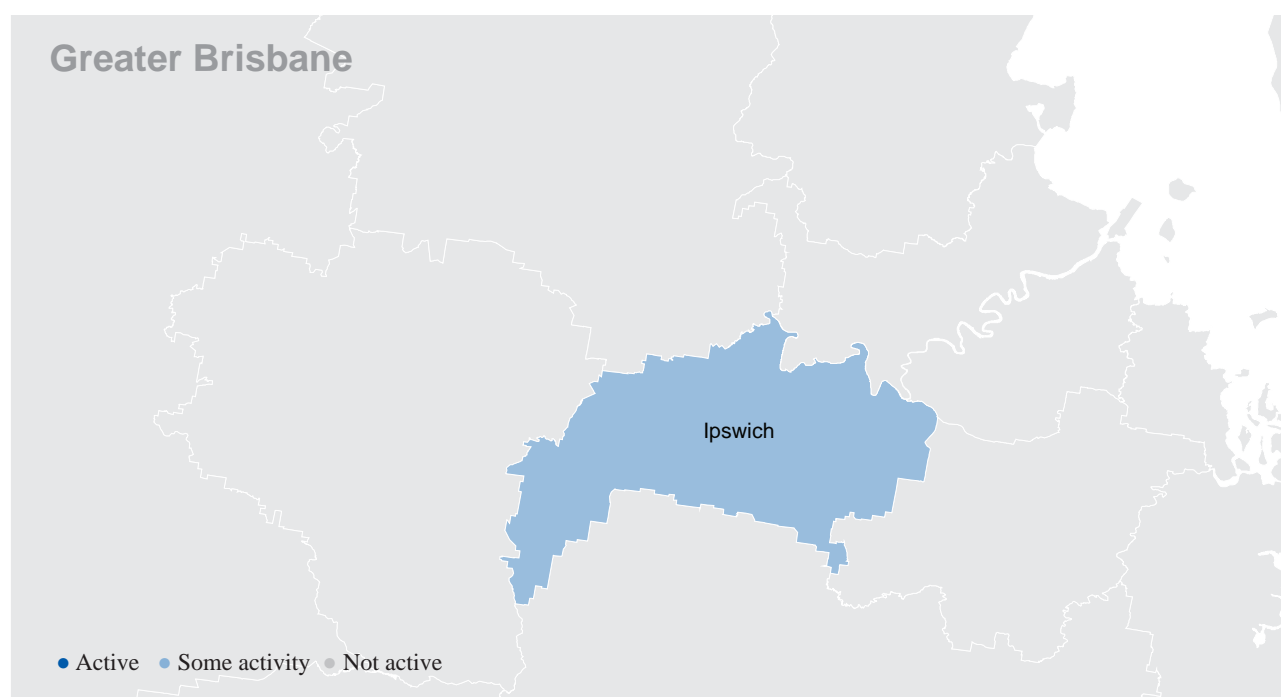
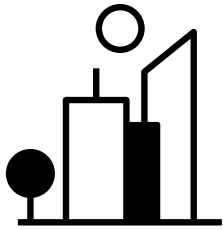


Figure 4.9: Local councils' performance in Brisbane (LGBTIQ+ advisory committee)



Affirming and usualising LGBTIQ+ culture

Affirming and usualising LGBTIQ+ culture is about creating safe spaces and visibility for LGBTIQ+ individuals, families and communities. This can be done by council providing venues and/or funding for events or festivals, and taking part in significant LGBTIQ+ dates such as the International Day Against Homophobia, Biphobia, Intersexism and Transphobia (IDAHOBIT) or Pride month. Councils can also protect, promote and visualise LGBTIQ+ history and culture through tangible cues such as raising a rainbow flag to celebrate specific events, rainbow crossings, public art and preserving historical sites.

Sydney

Of the 31 councils in Sydney, 16 councils meet this criterion. The research team found that the most popular activities that councils organise are LGBTIQ+ events and programs for LGBTIQ+ youth. For example:

- Ku-ring-gai, City of Parramatta, Inner West, Waverley, Blacktown City and Georges River Councils hold public events to celebrate LGBTIQ+ individuals, families and communities. This includes the Parramatta Pride Picnic, and Waverley's WorldPride event, the first in the Southern Hemisphere;
- Ku-ring-gai, Mosman and Willoughby Councils collaborate to hold Block Party for LGBTIQ+ youth as part of a wider program of events for all of the community's youth; and
- Blue Mountains and Randwick City Councils raise the rainbow flag on significant LGBTIQ+ dates, and Randwick, Inner West and City of Sydney Councils have permanent rainbow crossings.

Due to safety concerns regarding the rainbow crossing at Oxford Street, it was removed in 2013. While it was initially installed on a trial basis, its popularity resulted in many calling for it to be made permanent, including the Lord Mayor of Sydney, Clover Moore, and the Independent State

MP, Alex Greenwich (Crofts & Kirchengast 2016). Despite this, it was removed for safety concerns as pedestrians would sit or lay on the crossing to take photos. Later in 2013, a permanent rainbow crossing was installed along the footpath, rather than across the street, to address these safety concerns (Anon 2013).

Some councils are actively protecting LGBTIQ+ heritage and memorialising historic events. Inner West Council added a plaque in Summer Hill to commemorate the world's first permanent rainbow crossing and dedicated seven Pride Seats to recognise organisations that have been instrumental in fighting for LGBTIQ+ human rights. Meanwhile, Waverley Council installed a permanent memorial in Marks Park in remembrance of the homophobic attacks against gay men in the 1970s and 1980s.

Many councils take organising events as their only approach to support their local LGBTIQ+ communities. Eight of the 16 councils hold events, but do not actively work in any of the other criteria outlined in our review.

While these councils visually show their support for LGBTIQ+ individuals, families and communities, there is little engagement with the community to address everyday issues and challenges, or work to create safe and inclusive public spaces for them.

Local government strategies and policies review

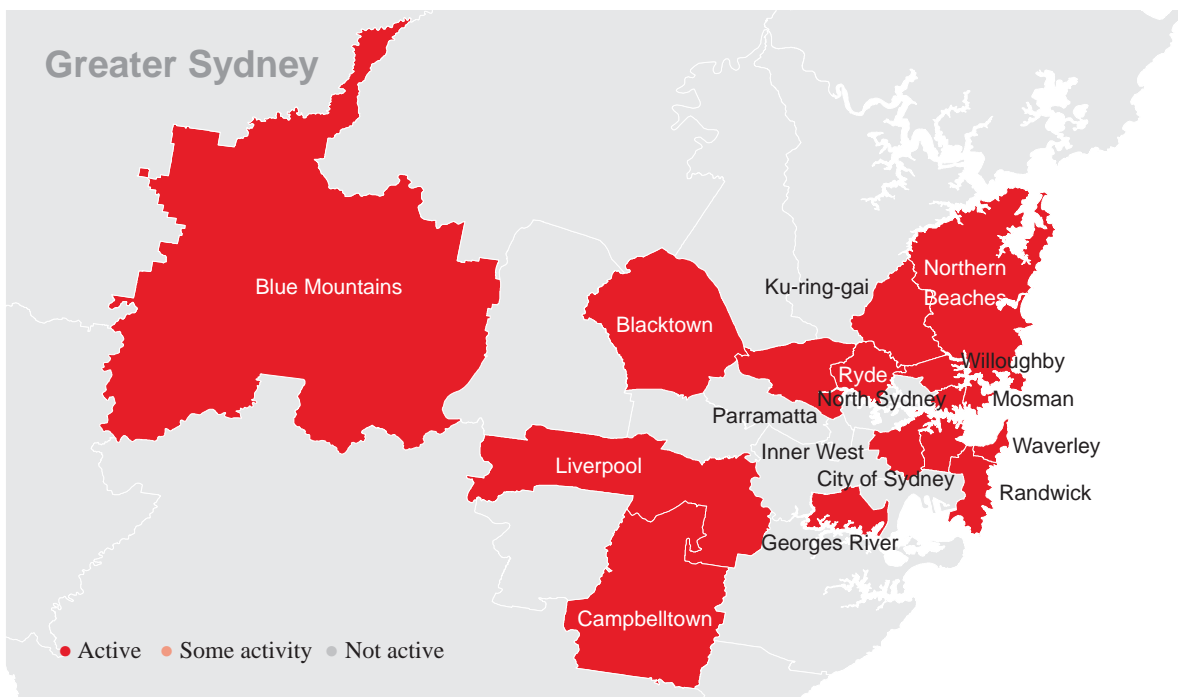


Figure 4.10: Local councils' performance in Sydney (Affirming and usualising LGBTIQ+)

Melbourne

Of the 28 councils in Melbourne, 16 councils meet this criterion. The most common approaches are community events, LGBTIQ+ programs for youth or elders, and raising the rainbow flag on significant LGBTIQ+ dates. For example:

- Port Phillip, Greater Dandenong, Hobsons Bay, Yarra, Knox, Banyule, Monash City, City of Melbourne, Wyndham, and Casey City Councils organise community events or provide venues to celebrate LGBTIQ+ individuals, families and communities. Events include Midsumma Festival, IDAHOBIT day and Pride March;
- Hobsons Bay, Yarra, Moreland, Banyule, and Darebin City Councils raise the rainbow flag on significant LGBTIQ+ dates;
- Knox City Council installed a permanent rainbow crossing in the city as a permanent visual cue; and
- Knox, Moreland, Banyule, Darebin, Hume, City of Melbourne, Wyndham, Whittlesea and

Melton Shire Councils developed a range of programs that target LGBTIQ+ youth and elders. These programs are designed to ensure these vulnerable LGBTIQ+ demographic groups can access the support and services they need, while also providing a social support network.

At the same time, the provision of community infrastructure can create a physically safe and supportive environment for LGBTIQ+ communities. In July 2021, the Victorian Pride Centre (Anon 2022) opened in St Kilda within City of Port Phillips LGA. The development was supported by the City of Port Phillip, which donated the site for the centre. Meanwhile, the Victorian State government has provided more than \$25 million in funding. The Pride Centre provides spaces that can be rented by LGBTIQ+ businesses, organisations and services, holds events, showcases art works and provides a safe and inclusive space for all LGBTIQ+ individuals, families and communities.

Greater Melbourne

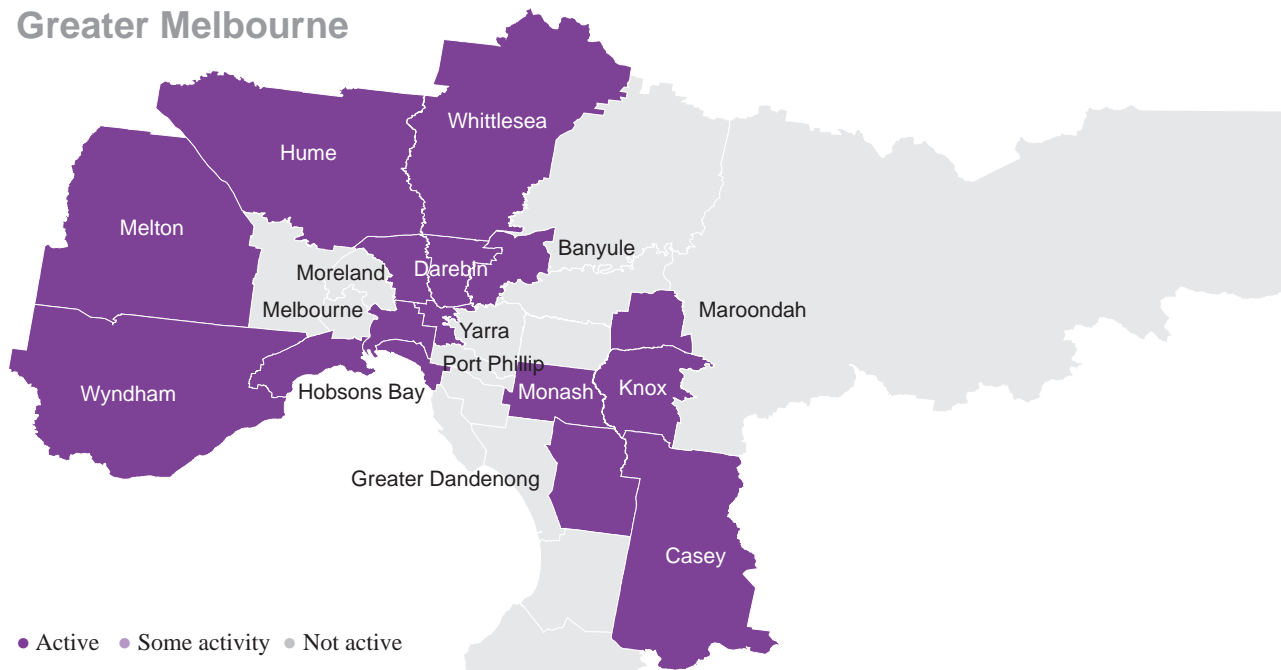


Figure 4.11: Local councils' performance in Melbourne (Affirming and usualising LGBTIQ+)

Local government strategies and policies review

Brisbane

The City of Brisbane is the only LGA in Greater Brisbane that meets the criterion, including:

- Organising LGBTIQ+ events (such as the Brisbane Pride Festival);
- Using visual cues like raising the rainbow flag; and
- Illuminating the Story Bridge on specific LGBTIQ+ dates.

City of Brisbane also provides grants for local non-for-profit groups that provide services and support the LGBTIQ+ individuals, families and communities. For example, City of Brisbane is a sponsor of Brisbane Pride and of LGBTIQ+ organisations who organise events and work towards amplifying the voices of LGBTIQ+ people in the community.



Overall

Melbourne and Sydney are more proactive in affirming and usualising LGBTIQ+ communities. However, Melbourne has greater assistance from the Victorian State Government in larger projects such as funding for the Victorian Pride Centre. It is also noted that some councils collaborate to hold events to better share resources and address a broader public audience.

For many councils, organising LGBTIQ+ events, or using visual cues, is the first approach they prefer, suggesting this is an easy way to show support to LGBTIQ+ individuals, families and communities. However, without being active in other areas, LGBTIQ+ individuals, families and communities are not as well recognised in other aspects of everyday life, such as using public spaces.

This rainbow washing in public spaces can provide limited accommodation to LGBTIQ+ individuals, families and communities if councils do not actively engage with LGBTIQ+ inclusion and usualisation in other aspects of community engagement and public planning.

It is important to understand the LGBTIQ+ demographic profile of an LGA so that the local council can better prepare for inclusive planning. However, only a very small number of councils have records of LGBTIQ+ demographics. They tend to be the councils with larger, more visible populations, but not always. Here are two examples:

- City of Yarra: 10% of the population identify as LGBTIQ+, which is well above the Victorian average of 5.7%; while
- Banyule City Council: 1.4% of the population identify as LGBTIQ+. Despite the relatively small LGBTIQ+ population, this council is proactive in four out of five criteria, underscoring that LGAs do not need to have an above average LGBTIQ+ population to create visibility and inclusion for LGBTIQ+ individuals, families and communities.

It is noted that the LGBTIQ+ demographic profile is usually reported as one broad group, rather than specific fragments of the LGBTIQ+ population, such as lesbian, gay, trans and gender diverse, bisexual, intersex, and others. Additionally, the LGAs do not recognise the different intersectional identities that can further marginalise LGBTIQ+ individuals; for example, LGBTIQ+ immigrants, refugees, those with disabilities, etc.

It is important to identify and understand these intersectional identities as LGBTIQ+ individuals can experience further marginalisation within their communities.

Admittedly, these figures are difficult to discern as they are not captured in census data. Nonetheless, as each individual group faces some different challenges, it is useful to consider how inclusive planning can meet their specific accommodations.

Recently, there has been a growing use of digital media platforms to increase the visibility of LGBTIQ+ individuals, families and communities through mapping and storytelling. In Melbourne, *Queer-ways: Retracing Melbourne's Queer Footprint* (Anon 2021) records and permanently memorialises the stories and voices of LGBTIQ+ individuals, both past and present. This data is used to generate an interactive queer map of Melbourne, with individuals able to add their own stories. On a larger scale, *Queering the Map* (Anon n.d.) captures similar LGBTIQ+ storytelling, but on an international scale. These individual stories share experiences of love, trauma, realisation and reflection, providing an online space for visibility and belonging that connects them to a physical and public space. This type of digital storytelling can be utilised by local councils to capture, record and preserve their local LGBTIQ+ histories for current and future generations.

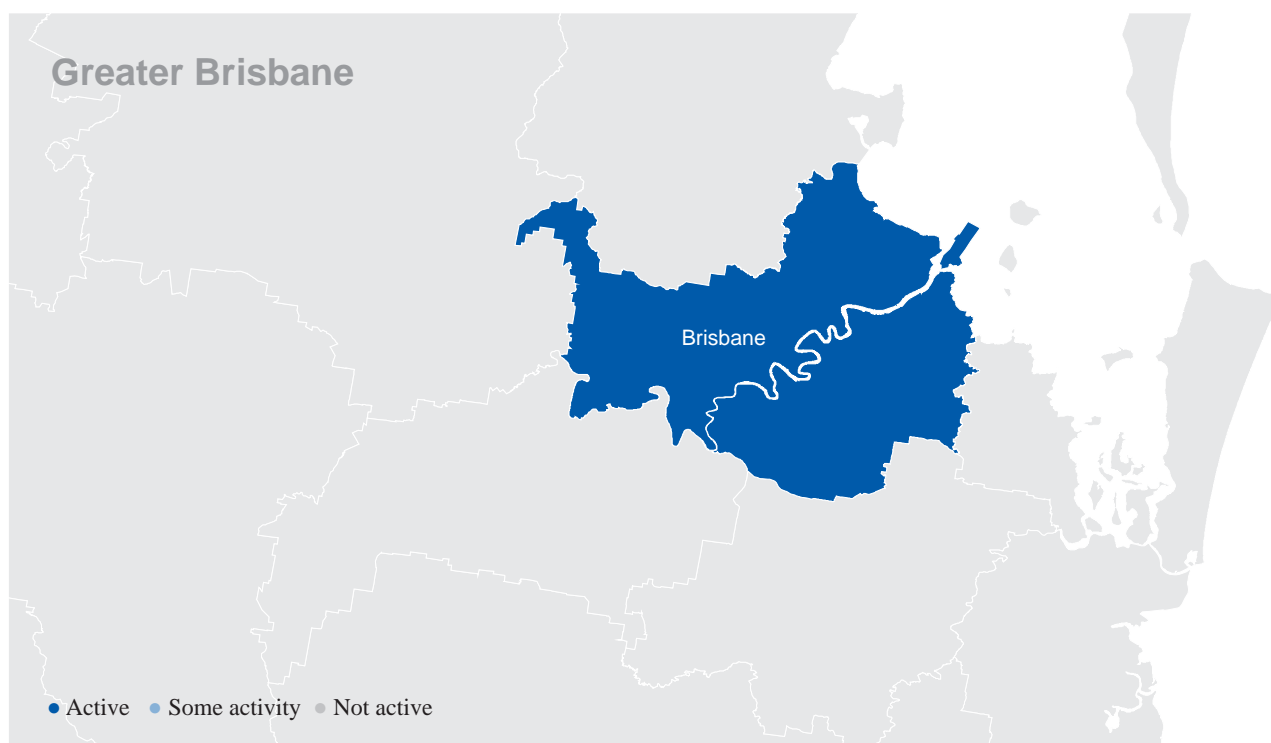


Figure 4.12: Local councils' performance in Brisbane (Affirming and usualising LGBTIQ+)

Local government strategies and policies review



Staff training and awareness

Councils can provide training and raise their own staff members' awareness of LGBTIQ+ matters, such as the importance of inclusive language and inclusive design of public spaces.

Sydney

Of the 31 councils in Sydney, only two councils indicate the use of inclusive language for LGBTIQ+ individuals, families and communities. Fairfield and Campbelltown City Councils provide guidelines to explain inclusive language and terminology and why it is important.

However, no councils in Sydney provide formal training to staff on LGBTIQ+ issues and the importance of inclusive practices.

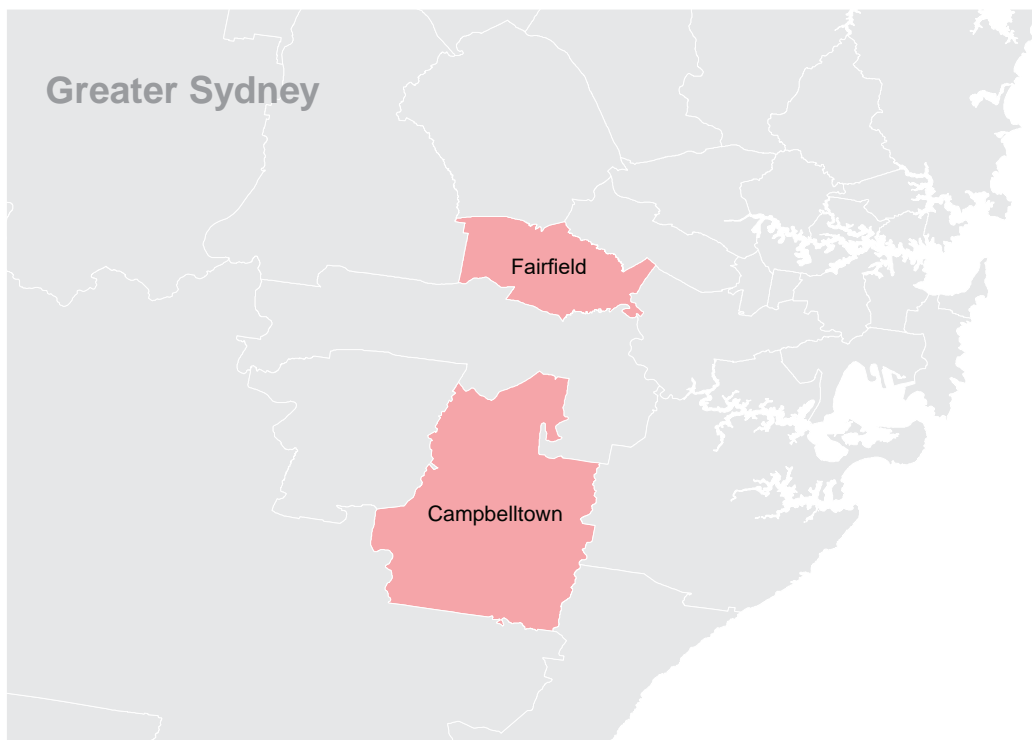


Figure 4.13: Local councils' performance in Sydney (staff training and awareness)

Melbourne

Of the 28 councils in Melbourne, six councils provide training and demonstrate their awareness on LGBTIQ+ issues and inclusive practices.

- Yarra and Moreland City Councils show awareness of the importance of inclusive and accessible language and communications;
- Banyule and Darebin City Councils provide training to staff on creating an inclusive and welcoming environment to all, including LGBTIQ+ individuals, families and communities;
- City of Whittlesea Council provides training to staff who work with LGBTIQ+ individuals and families to gain an understanding of language, research and evidence-based inclusive practice (City of Whittlesea, 2022); and
- City of Stonnington Council provides education to community groups, social organisations and sporting/leisure clubs on the importance of inclusive practices for marginalised groups, including LGBTIQ+ people, to encourage them to provide a welcoming environment to all.



Figure 4.14: Local councils' performance in Melbourne (staff training and awareness)

Local government strategies and policies review



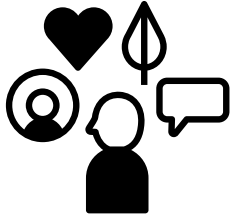
Brisbane

No council in Brisbane provides training or awareness on LGBTIQ+ issues and inclusive accommodations. However, Logan City Council shows its support to the Open Door Youth Services, which provides a Trauma-Informed Care program for organisations and individual practitioners who work closely with LGBTIQ+ youth and their families.

Overall

All cities do not perform well in this criterion as a limited number of councils take action to raise staff awareness of inclusive practices for LGBTIQ+ people. Melbourne is comparatively proactive in providing formal training to council staff and those who have close contact with LGBTIQ+ individuals, families and communities.

This review thus identifies limited training and suggests councils might consider up-skilling staff since their own staff play a vital role in policymaking and implementation. As a result, councils can ensure policies, strategies and activities are LGBTIQ+ inclusive.



Inclusive public space design

This criterion focuses on how public spaces are designed, and how inclusive they are to the LGBTIQ+ individuals, families and communities who use them. These strategies or actions can include a variety of measures, including:

- Address issues around privacy;
- Gender-friendly spaces that are inclusive to multiple genders
- Designs that are friendly for a diverse range of people and families.

Sydney

Most LGAs in Sydney address the importance of having safe, inclusive and accessible public spaces. However, only three councils specifically identify LGBTIQ+ individuals, families and communities within their strategic plans.

- City of Sydney Council is considering controls to protect heritage on Oxford Street (Sydney's traditional gay village) and support both the daytime and night-time economy for the area. The Council also provides public space for the annual Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras;
- In May 2021, Inner West Council undertook an investigation, including opportunities for potential partnerships for the operation of a Pride Centre at Newtown Town Hall. The purpose of establishing a Pride Centre is to (Inner West Council, 2021):
 - provide a safe and inclusive public space;
 - address social isolation of all risk groups within the LGTBQ community by providing a safe, accessible space to connect, gather, and support;
 - provide access to services and programs responsive to the LGBTQ community, and
 - support capacity building within the community.

Although no operator was identified in the Expression of Interest process, Council restated its commitment to the plan for a Pride Centre; and

- Fairfield Council recognised the need for and created a safe room for LGBTIQ+ individuals and their families at their courthouse.

Melbourne

While many LGAs in Melbourne identify the need for public spaces to be inclusive and accessible, only six councils commit to ensuring that public spaces are safe, accessible and inclusive to all LGBTIQ+ individuals, families and communities in their strategic plans. These LGAs are: Yarra, Stonnington, Darebin, Banyule, City of Melbourne; and Port Phillip.

However, their strategic plans do not provide specific actions in place to address the needs of LGBTIQ+ people while using public spaces.

In Victoria, a collaborative project between CrowdSpot, Monash University YXX Lab, the Victorian government and 23 Victorian LGAs (YXX Lab & CrowdSpot 2021) was conducted in 2021.

Local government strategies and policies review

While this project was aimed at identifying public spaces that were deemed 'safe' or 'unsafe' by women and gender diverse individuals, it also identified issues faced by LGBTIQ+ individuals and families while using public space. This includes (XYX Lab & CrowdSpot 2021, p. 12):

- Recorded a higher incidence of spaces that were entrapping;
- Highly concerned about the behaviour of others in public spaces. This suggests a possible higher level of discrimination and harassment experienced in public spaces; and
- Sensitive to bad stories circulating about a location.

The data collected from this research can assist local councils in creating safe and inclusive public spaces for all.

Brisbane

While some councils identify the need for safe and inclusive public spaces, no councils address the needs of LGBTIQ+ individuals, families and communities.

Overall

Although Melbourne is the most proactive in this criterion, many councils identify the need for inclusive, accessible and safe spaces in general, but do not focus on the needs of LGBTIQ+ people while using public spaces.

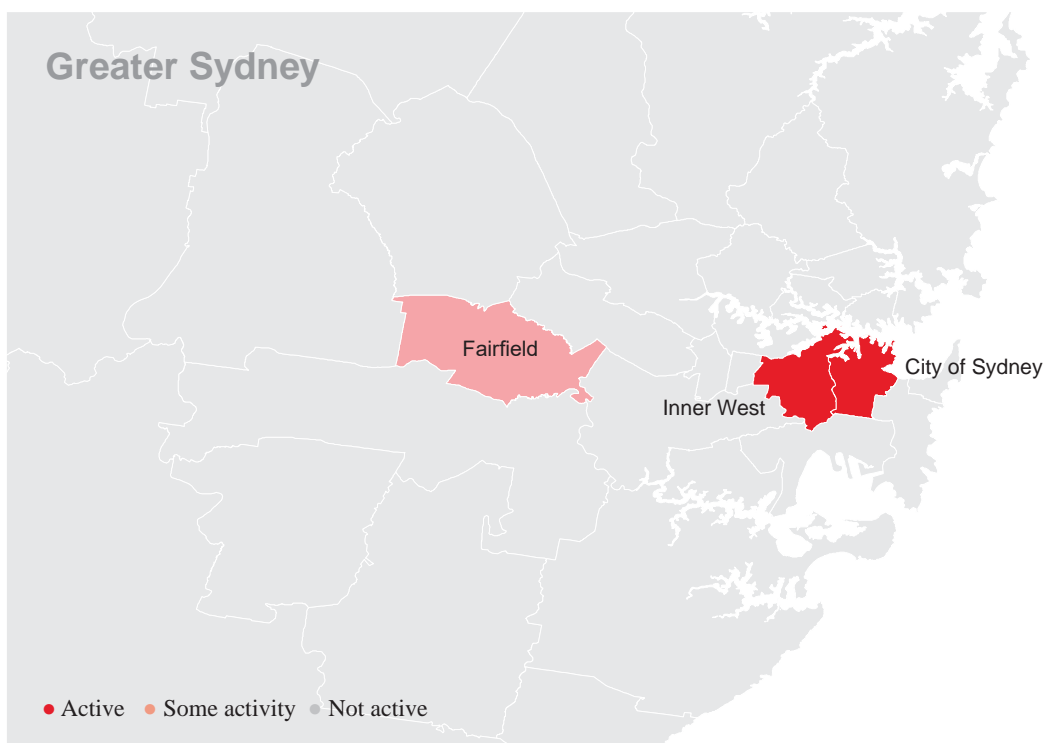


Figure 4.15: Local councils' performance in Sydney (Inclusive public space design)

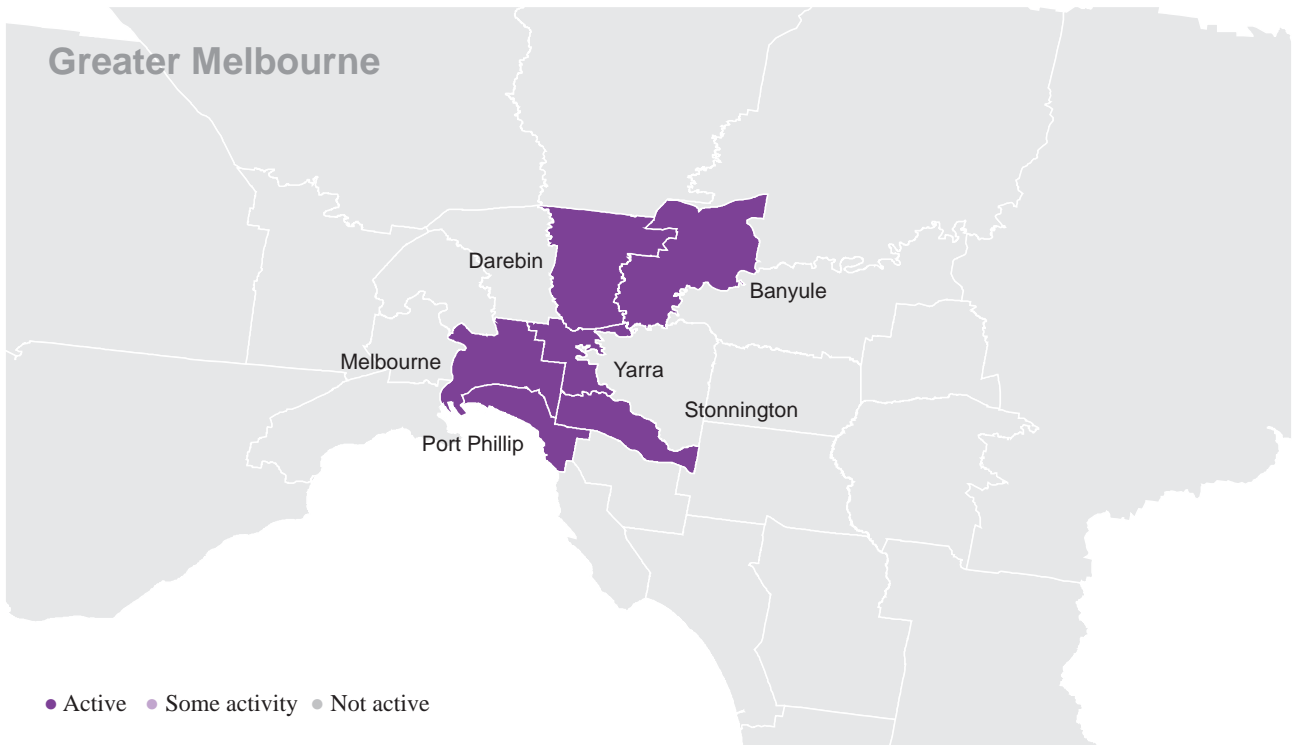


Figure 4.16: Local councils' performance in Melbourne (inclusive public space design)





Conclusion

The research team conducted a thematic literature review and a review of local government strategies and policies to examine and evaluate LGBTIQ+ experiences of public space in Australia's major eastern seaboard cities. The goal was to provide recommendations for usualising LGBTIQ+ accommodations in local planning and the use and design of public spaces.

Conclusion

Thematic literature review

The thematic literature review found that most research publications have attended to the experiences of LGBTIQ+ people in the inner city, and that there is less work on LGBTIQ+ experiences in the suburbs. The literature reviewed shows diverse experiences of lesbians and gay men, while those of bisexual, trans and gender diverse, and intersex people are yet to be examined. Despite a considerable number of LGBTIQ+ individuals, families and communities living in suburbia, they are still largely invisible compared to inner-city populations, and less integrated into local planning. While there are some barriers to queering public spaces and usualising LGBTIQ+ people in planning practices, the review provided criteria for the implementation of LGBTIQ+ inclusive planning. These criteria also parallel the four NSW Social Justice Principles, which aim to reduce inequities. The principles and criteria are summarised below:

Table 3: Evaluation criteria for local government strategies and policies review and Social Justice Principles:

Criteria	Social Justice Principles
Stakeholder Engagement	Participation
Formation of LGBTIQ+ Advisory Committees	Participation
Affirming and usualising LGBTIQ+ communities	Equity
Staff Training and Awareness	Access
Inclusive Public Space Design Guidelines	Rights

Local government strategies and policies review

The review evaluated local councils' awareness and accommodation of LGBTIQ+ communities in local planning and the use and design of public spaces. The thematic literature review also

considered existing publications that identify best practices in inclusive planning and public space design, as well as gaps in the literature. Focusing on Sydney, Melbourne and Brisbane, the research team examined policies and practices on the accommodation of LGBTIQ+ individuals, families and communities within each LGA. This included 31 LGAs in Sydney, 28 LGAs in Melbourne and five LGAs in Brisbane.

The study found that Melbourne is the most proactive city in promoting LGBTIQ+ individuals, families and communities, followed closely by Sydney. The Victorian State Government developed a state-wide LGBTIQ+ Strategy in February 2022, *Pride in our future: Victoria's LGBTIQ+ Strategy 2022-32*, which outlines a plan to drive equity for LGBTIQ+ individuals, families and communities over the next 10 years. The strategy identifies four priorities to guide councils in becoming more LGBTIQ+ inclusive and becoming better places for all to live. As evident in the review, Victorian LGAs with LGBTIQ+ inclusive practices show more consistency in the language used and the types of actions taken, for example, establishing a LGBTIQ+ advisory committee and developing a LGBTIQ+ action plan.

This report found that LGAs in closer proximity to the inner city generally take a more proactive approach to usualising LGBTIQ+ accommodation in their strategies and activities. These areas are more likely to house traditional gay villages, or other areas noted for sexuality and gender diverse populations, with an above-average proportions of LGBTIQ+ people living in the area. The most active area for each city includes:

- Sydney's inner city, inner east and inner west;
- Melbourne's north east and inner city; and
- Brisbane's inner city.

However, LGBTIQ+ individuals, families and communities remain invisible in local planning in many suburban areas. Limited recognition means their needs are not being met within the councils' strategies and plans.

While several councils have committed to creating an inclusive LGA for diverse communities in their Community Engagement Plan, many do not specify the need to engage with LGBTIQ+ individuals, families and communities. Those councils that engage with LGBTIQ+ stakeholders do so through: Workshops; Public forums; Meetings; Interviews and surveys.

Melbourne is the most proactive of the three cities in councils establishing a LGBTIQ+ advisory committee. Those councils that have established LGBTIQ+ advisory committees tend to have more strategies and activities in the other criteria. These LGBTIQ+ advisory committees provide feedback and input to council on a variety of strategies and activities. This ensures the voices of LGBTIQ+ individuals, families and communities are heard, and their needs accommodated. In Melbourne, most of these LGBTIQ+ advisory committees are also tasked with developing a LGBTIQ+ action plan.

In terms of our five criteria, the one most councils engage in is affirming and usualising LGBTIQ+ communities. The most common activity in all cities is holding community events that celebrate LGBTIQ+ individuals, families and communities. In addition, the use of visual cues, such as raising rainbow flags on important LGBTIQ+ dates, and creating rainbow crossings, are very popular. In Sydney and Melbourne, multiple councils are proactive in celebrating LGBTIQ+ communities and events, yet do not actively engage in the other four criteria.

The finding suggests that while organising events and using visual cues are important acts of recognition and usualisation, they are also perhaps the most expedient means for councils to show their support for LGBTIQ+ communities. However, without meaningful action in other aspects of community engagement and use of public space, these visual cues can be critiqued as rainbow washing. This may occlude careful consideration of other aspects of everyday life and how to usualise LGBTIQ+ people in broader local planning and council practices to accommodate all communities within their jurisdiction.

A small number of LGAs have included LGBTIQ+ individuals in their demographic profile. However, this is usually limited to ‘identifying as LGBTIQ+’ and does not disaggregate further into specific identities (i.e. L, G, B, T, I, Q, etc) within this population. It is also essential to include information about LGBTIQ+ couples and families. Knowing this information about the community is important as their experiences regarding public space may be different, and they may have diverse needs. Unfortunately, most LGAs do not include LGBTIQ+ demographic information at all, leaving LGBTIQ+ individuals, families and communities invisible.

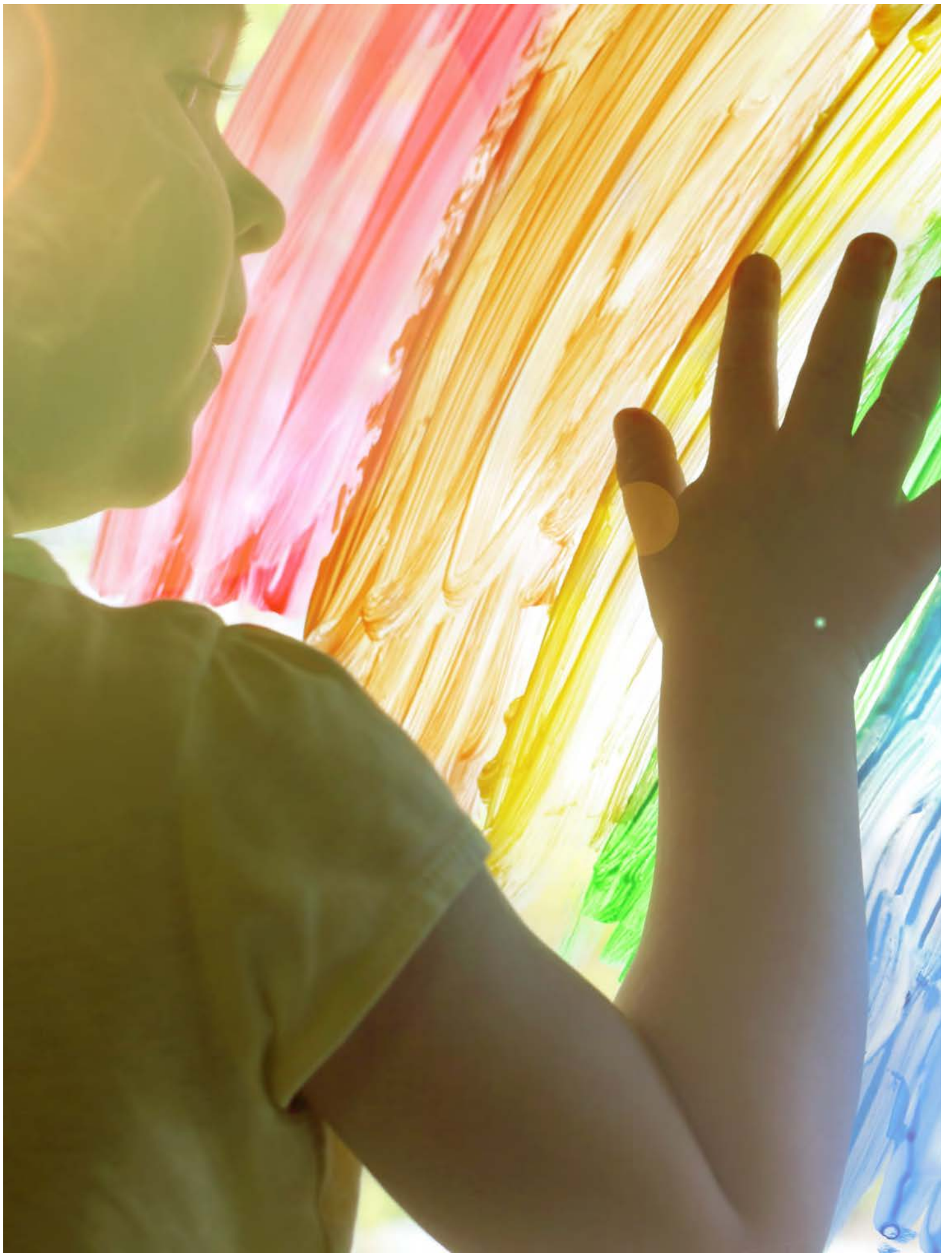
While Melbourne councils more proactively engage in training and awareness activities, councils could give more effort across the board. Training activities include efforts to raise awareness of the importance of inclusive practices and inclusive language. Some training might target staff that work with LGBTIQ+ individuals, families and communities. Some councils also provide staff and the community with information on inclusive language and explanations of LGBTIQ+ terminology.³

Very few councils have strategies or design guidelines that specifically address the issues and needs of LGBTIQ+ individuals, families and communities when using public spaces or facilities. Instead, inclusive and accessible strategic planning is provided in a more generic capacity.

While some councils are proactively engaging in ways to accommodate and usualise LGBTIQ+ individuals, families and communities, more actions needs to be taken. Several suburban LGAs have no recognition or representation of LGBTIQ+ individuals, families and communities within their jurisdiction.

³ LGBTIQ+ Inclusive Language Guide is prepared for Victorian public sector employees. It guides the use of language in a respectful and inclusive manner when working with and referring to lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans and gender diverse, intersex, and queer and questioning people.

URL: <https://www.vic.gov.au/inclusive-language-guide>





Recommendations framework

On the next page is an initial recommendations framework for creating more inclusive local areas and public spaces. These recommendation ‘themes’ are based only on the thematic literature review and the local government strategies and policies review contained in this report.

The next step for this research is to take the recommendations framework to a series of workshops conducted with LGBTIQ+ communities, individuals and stakeholders, policymakers and public space planners, to investigate and validate these initial themes and develop a detailed set of consultative recommendations.

Recommendation themes are in bold, with examples in bullet points below each theme to be further developed in a workshop setting.

Recommendations framework

Demographics data capture

- Councils could include questions pertaining to LGBTIQ+ people in community surveys.
- The demographic breakdown could include those who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans and gender diverse, intersex, etc, to better identify the needs of local LGBTIQ+ people.
- LGBTIQ+ couples and families should also be identified so their needs can be addressed more proactively – councils could utilise existing ABS data on same-sex couple families.

Research

- Alongside ongoing research on the experiences of lesbians and gay men in public space, more sustained research is needed to better understand the experiences of bisexual, trans and gender diverse, and intersex people, as well as other LGBTIQ+ identities.
- Research should explore the intersection of gender and sexuality with other cross-cutting social identifications to better understand the complexities of LGBTIQ+ individuals, families and communities – for example, age, race, ethnicity, migrant and displaced communities, disability, socioeconomic status, religion, etc.
- Research into LGBTIQ+ people's experiences of public spaces after dark, and the different design considerations at play both in urban centres and suburbia to create welcoming and inclusive night-time spaces.

Engagement

- Councils could create LGBTIQ+ advisory committees, which would provide advice and support on council decision-making in relation to LGBTIQ+ individuals, families and communities.
- Councils could ensure LGBTIQ+ inclusion (community members, organisations, businesses) in stakeholder engagement strategies and activities, including attempts to reach both visible and less visible groups.

Language and training

- Councils could identify and use more inclusive language in all council communications and at state level.
- Councils could implement training activities for staff to educate them on inclusive practices and the importance of using inclusive language.

Usualising queerness at policy level

- Councils could encourage more visible and proactive stances, and initiate collaborations with and between institutions (industry, community, government).
- State governments could develop state-driven policies to support and enhance the efforts of LGAs in local level strategies.

Public space design and consultation

- Councils could make it standard consultative practice to canvas LGBTIQ+ opinion on design decisions by adding this as a process requirement in their community engagement strategy.
- Councils could create an intersectional design assessment for all public space design. For example, rainbow crossings would ensure that the design considers people with disabilities by checking the location/ accessibility of crossing, as well as scales and colour contrast for people with low vision.
- Councils could consider the installation of LGBTIQ+-themed public art in public spaces (inner city as well as suburbia).
- Councils could incorporate inclusive design elements in the public space, such as:
 - **Privacy** i.e., sometimes wide-open spaces are not as welcoming as we might intuitively think. Instead, break up larger spaces with areas to sit and feel less watched and exposed.
 - **Gender-friendly** consider how different kinds of people and family use and move through a space and consultatively design for these different needs and interests.



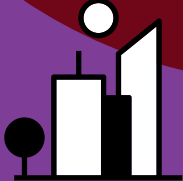
Demographics data capture



Research

Engagement

Usualising queerness at policy level

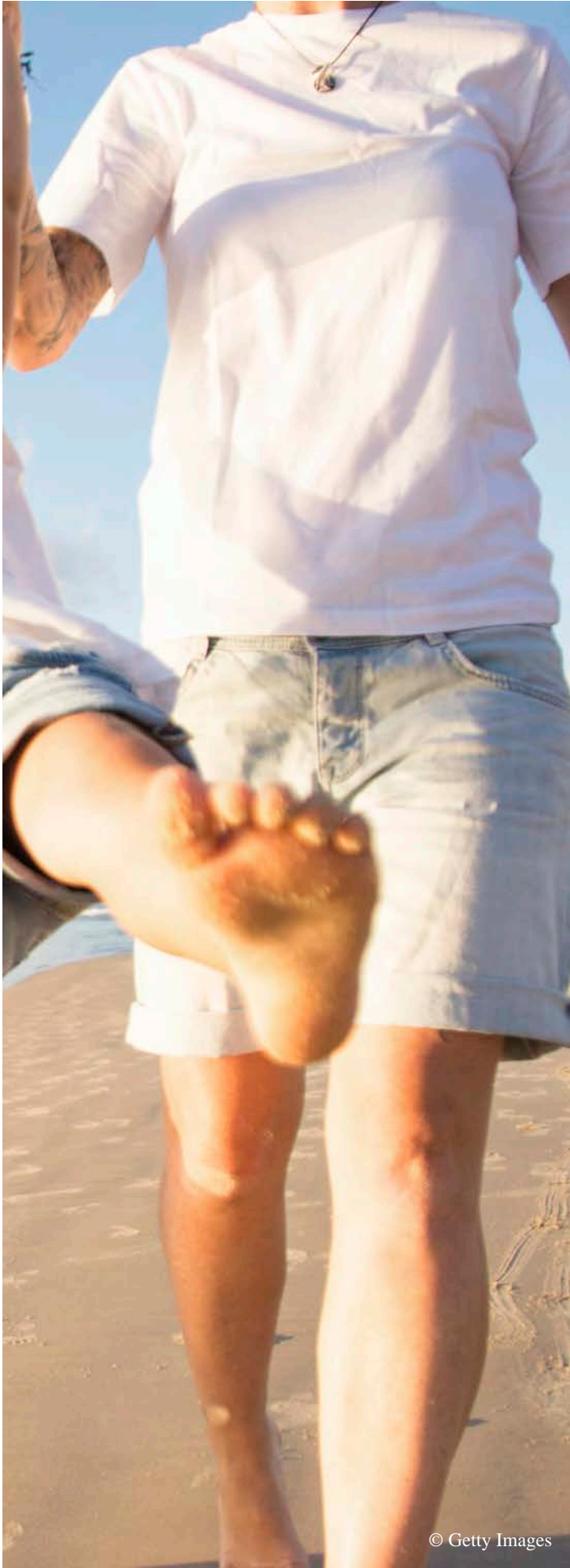


Language and training

Public space design and consultation







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