

Item 3.1

Support for an LGBTIQ+ Services Hub

File No: S051491

Minute by the Lord Mayor

To Council:

The Inner City Legal Centre ('the Centre') is seeking the City's support to establish an LGBTIQ+ Services Hub in the City of Sydney.

Demand for the Centre's LGBTQIA+ and Sex Worker Legal Services has significantly increased in recent years. This has resulted in staffing levels expanding and the organisation has now outgrown its current space in Kings Cross at 50-52 Darlinghurst Road.

This also presents an opportunity for the Centre to explore co-location with some of their partner organisations and creation of a services hub that would enhance existing collaborations between those organisations.

The Inner City Legal Centre

The Centre provides free legal assistance to many within the Sydney community, including marginalised sex workers, people experiencing homelessness and members of the LGBTIQ+ community. It also presents community legal education workshops (39 in the 2024-2025 financial year), advocates for law reform (26 such contributions in the 2024-2025 financial year) and provides outreach services.

The passing of the Equality Legislation Amendment (LGBTIQ+) Act 2024 (NSW), commonly known as the Equality Bill and introduced by Alex Greenwich MP, has increased the demand for legal and other services. For example, the Legal Centre's 2024-2025 annual report notes the increased pressure on its Trans Legal Service, including demand for community education and assistance for people updating the gender on their birth certificates.

The services provided by the Centre include its participation the Newtown-based Pride Centre's Queer Youth Access Zone (QYAZ). A weekly initiative led by Twenty10, the QYAZ provides a support space for young LGBTQIA+ people seeking help with Centrelink, housing, food, employment and other essential services. The Inner City Legal Centre's partnership with QYAZ enables them to reach young people who may otherwise face significant barriers to accessing legal support.

City of Sydney support

The Inner City Legal Centre has leased Council-owned properties since 1997, initially at 94 Oxford Street, under the then South Sydney Council, and then at 66 Oxford Street before moving to their current premises at 50-52 Darlinghurst Road, Kings Cross.

Since 2006, under the Accommodation Grants Program, the City has provided \$947,360 in rent subsidy to Inner City Legal Centre for their tenancies and currently receive a 100% rental subsidy valued at \$85,539 per annum. The Centre's current lease is due to expire on 30 June 2026.

In addition, since 2020, Council has approved five grants totalling \$372,309, awarded under the City's Covid-19 Recovery Grant, Matching Grant, Community Services Grant, Festival and Events Sponsorship and Creative Grant programs to support the Centre's free legal assistance for marginalised sex workers, people experiencing homelessness, and members of the LGBTIQ+ community.

These grants enable the Centre to operate the Trans and Gender Diverse Legal Service, Sex Worker specific Legal Service and LGBTQIA+ specific domestic violence legal service in NSW. In 2024-2025, the Centre helped 137 clients and provided information or referrals for an additional 1200 plus people. It also had significant wins in cases taken to courts and tribunals.

The Centre is seeking a premises of at least 300 sqm in size, preferably located within the Sydney CBD or the inner eastern suburbs of Darlinghurst, Kings Cross and Surry Hills.

Establishing a services hub that provides a single home for the Centre and potentially some of its partner organisations would be consistent with my [Lord Mayoral Minute](#) unanimously adopted by Council following the LGBTIQ+ Safety Summit that I hosted in February 2024. That resolution asked the Chief Executive Officer to investigate how the City can support:

“... the provision of community based legal, social and emotional support for individuals who seek redress for acts of violence, discrimination, vilification, harassment or abuse against them - including funding for local community legal centres that support members of the LGBTIQ+ communities seeking redress for acts of violence, discrimination, vilification, harassment or abuse against them.”

I also acted on Council's request and wrote to the NSW Treasurer and NSW Attorney-General asking them to provide increased funding for Community Legal Centres to enable them to better respond to and assist with complaints of anti-LGBTIQ+ violence, discrimination, vilification, harassment and abuse.

The City's support for a LGBTIQ+ Services Hub is also consistent with my Lord Mayoral Minute unanimously adopted by Council in May 2024 about [Support for Community Legal Centres](#). At Council's request I wrote to the Federal and NSW Governments requesting urgent additional and ongoing funding and support for community legal centres like the Inner City Legal Centre.

I understand that the NSW Government is considering providing funding for a statewide LGBTIQ+ service. Such a service would be significant anchor for an LGBTIQ+ Service Hub. I hope the City can play an active role in making such a hub a reality.

Recommendation

It is resolved that:

- (A) the Chief Executive Officer be requested to:
 - (i) investigate options for providing suitable premises to enable the Inner City Legal Centre to establish an LGBTIQ+ Services Hub with partner organisations as set out in the subject Minute;
 - (ii) consult with Inner City Legal Centre about their accommodation needs to achieve this goal, including accessibility requirements and potential co-location approaches; and
 - (iii) report back to Council on options as soon as practicable via the CEO Update; and
- (B) the Lord Mayor be requested to write to:
 - (i) the Inner City Legal Centre providing them with a copy of the subject Minute; and
 - (ii) relevant NSW Ministers with a copy of the subject Minute, calling on them to provide funding towards establishment of a statewide LGBTIQ+ Legal Service.

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Lord Mayor of Sydney