

Item 3.4

Proposal for a Statewide LGBTIQ+ Local Government Safety Summit

File No: S051491

Minute by the Lord Mayor

To Council:

I am shocked by the alarming increase in attacks targeting LGBTIQ+ events by far-right hate groups in NSW and Victoria. Many have occurred in local government venues, putting attendees and Council staff at risk.

In Victoria, over 10 LGBTIQ+ events have been cancelled, postponed, or shifted online due to violent threats from far-right groups. They include a drag storytime event planned to mark the International Day Against Homophobia, Biphobia and Transphobia in Melbourne's southeast. The City of Monash cancelled the event after anti-LGBTIQ+ protesters disrupted a Council meeting in April 2023, and it received violent threats presenting risks to the safety of staff, attendees and Council facilities.

There have been reports of similar violent disruptions and attacks being experienced in Sydney, Newcastle, Goulburn and other regional centres. In February 2023, a police guard was required due to protests and a reported bomb threat at a drag storytime event at Manly Library in Sydney. On 20 May 2023, an LGBTIQ+ poetry workshop was disrupted at the Newcastle City Library by far-right protesters in a coordinated attack.

During WorldPride, a group of around 30 men held an unauthorised protest march in Newtown, reportedly intimidating others and attempting to enter LGBTIQ+ venues. The men belong to "Christian Lives Matter" which frequently features posts critical of LGBTIQ+ activism and pride on its Facebook page. Videos of the vandalism of the WorldPride mural outside Wynyard station and the rainbow stairs outside Pitt Street Uniting Church have also been posted.

In response to these growing threats, Nicolas Parkhill AM, the Chief Executive Officer of ACON, wrote to me inviting the City of Sydney to co-host a statewide LGBTIQ+ Local Government Safety Summit jointly with ACON and Local Government NSW. The summit would bring together councils, NSW Government agencies including police and emergency services and LGBTIQ+ community organisations and researchers.

The aims of the summit are to:

- raise awareness about the escalating threats of violence and intimidation targeting the LGBTIQ+ community events, particularly those involving trans and gender diverse people;
- foster collaboration and dialogue among local councils, Local Government NSW, community representatives, and stakeholders to collectively address these safety concerns;
- develop a coordinated response plan to mitigate risks and improve safety measures for LGBTIQ+ community events;

- empower local councils to implement targeted strategies, policies, and initiatives that support the safety and well-being of LGBTIQ+ people and events within their respective jurisdictions;
- strengthen community resilience and promote a culture of inclusivity, diversity, and acceptance across NSW; and
- share the efforts of local councils that are supportive of LGBTIQ+ community events and their strategies for safeguarding their communities.

The summit will provide an opportunity for participating councils and community groups to issue a joint public statement condemning the violence that has occurred and setting out a coordinated response plan to combat future threats of violence.

ACON is proposing that the summit be a one-day, in person event at a City of Sydney venue. ACON will develop a comprehensive program of presentations and workshops focused on mitigating risk, enhancing safety and sharing case studies highlighting the great work of Councils already responding to these challenges.

On 1 August 2005, Council unanimously adopted a comprehensive resolution in support of the LGBTIQ+ community which included the following:

“Council, recognising that violence and harassment remains a major issue of concern for the gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender community, will actively work with relevant gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender organisations and government agencies and organisation to end such violence and harassment.”

I strongly support the City of Sydney co-hosting this summit, which is consistent with and progresses this resolution.

The City continues to host and support a wide range of programs and events for the LGBTIQ+ communities. They include *Liberate!*, an exhibition in Customs House celebrating 45 years of community-led social change, including a series of panel conversations, online Pride Amplified Storytime videos, a panel discussion on how HIV is represented in the media in Australia titled ‘Positive Musings: Reflections of HIV in Modern Australia’ at Customs House, and *Queer as Fiction*, a fun and engaging hour of Queer storytelling at Green Square Library.

The City also celebrates Wear it Purple Day each year, and last year this was marked by a roller derby workshop in Glebe and a three-part online inclusivity training workshop series, and Transgender Day of Remembrance.

Last year, the City worked with community partners to deliver a ceremony and candlelit vigil on the ground of the University of Sydney to mark the day. Fortunately, these programs and events have all taken place without incident. It is our responsibility to ensure that we are able to continue hosting and supporting these events without putting our staff and community at risk.

The City also supports LGBTIQ+ community groups through our grants and sponsorship program. Since 2017, the City has granted nearly \$5.2 million in cash to 158 projects where LGBTIQ+ communities are a primary or secondary beneficiary. This includes, support of the annual Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras Parade and Festival, support of Sydney WorldPride in 2023 and a two-year commitment to support an LGBTIQ+ museum in Darlinghurst.

Recommendation

It is resolved that:

- (A) Council note the City of Sydney is a proud supporter of the LGBTIQ+ community and is committed to working with relevant organisations and NSW government agencies to end violence and harassment experienced by them;
- (B) Council endorse ACON's proposal for a NSW LGBTIQ+ Local Government Safety Summit;
- (C) Council agree in principle to co-host this summit with ACON at a suitable City of Sydney venue; and
- (D) the Chief Executive Officer be requested to consider what support the City can provide for this summit with a report to be provided to Council.

COUNCILLOR CLOVER MOORE AO

Lord Mayor