

LGBTQIA+ YOUTH EVENTS GUIDE

Creating Safe and
Accessible Events for
LGBTQIA+ Youth.

MINUS18

VICTORIA

CO-CREATED WITH LGBTQIA+ YOUNG PEOPLE & COMMUNITY

This guide is informed by the expertise and lived experience of LGBTQIA+ young people at Minus18 and our community partners.

Partnership & Funding

Victorian Government
Office of the Victorian
Commissioner for LGBTQIA+
Communities

Community Partners

Centre for Multicultural Youth
Victorian Aboriginal Child and
Community Agency
HEY Partners

Thank You

City of Melbourne
City of Port Phillip
Each
Parents & Caregivers of
LGBTQIA+ Young People
Queerspace Youth
Victoria Police



Minus18 is Australia's charity improving the lives of LGBTQIA+ young people.

We believe LGBTQIA+ youth deserve to live with pride, and we inspire and create opportunities to make this a reality.



Minus18's office is located on the land of the Yalukut Weelam Clan of the Boon Wurrung people. We acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of all the lands on which these consultations were conducted.

This always was, always will be Aboriginal land.

Published August 2026



Foreword

Celebration and connection have always been part of what makes our LGBTIQA+ communities strong. This guide builds on that history and embeds lived experience and expertise to help make events across the state safer and more inclusive. It has been designed for young people, parents, carers, event organisers and youth workers alike, with practical guidance on making your event as safe and accessible as possible.

Minus18's 2025 Queer Youth Now report found that 99% of LGBTIQA+ young people consider making queer friends to be an important part of their lives. All around the state, Victoria's vibrant and diverse pride festivals and events are where so many of these friendships and connections begin.

Celebration and safety must go hand in hand. We also know that LGBTIQA+ communities can face higher rates of discrimination, harassment and mental health challenges. That's why supportive events can be a refuge for everyone to express themselves – safely, wholly and freely.

While this guide has been co-designed with young people, this excellent resource can be used to support safe events for LGBTIQA+ people of all ages. Every Victorian deserves to celebrate who they are, without fear. This guide is one way we can continue working together to make this vision a reality.

I am proud to have supported this Safe Events guide, in partnership with Minus18 and the Commissioner for LGBTIQA+ Communities.

**The Hon. Steve Dimopoulos MP,
Minister for Equality.**



LGBTQIA+ Youth Deserve to Live with Pride

LGBTIQA+ youth events are about far more than bringing people together for a day. They are where young people discover they are not alone, experience the joy of belonging, and begin to imagine a future where they can live openly and authentically.

It has never been more important to create safe spaces where people can connect in person, build genuine relationships and strengthen community. As adults in young people's lives, we have a responsibility to show what welcoming and inclusive communities look like, giving young people the confidence and inspiration to build those communities for themselves.

Co-designed with young people and community partners, this guide provides practical advice to help make every LGBTIQA+ youth event safer, more inclusive and welcoming.

Joe Ball,
Victorian Commissioner for LGBTIQA+ Communities





MINUS18

Safe, inclusive environments for LGBTQIA+ young people require careful planning.

For over 28 years, Minus18 has designed and delivered safe events for more than 100,000 LGBTQIA+ young people across Australia. This guide brings together that experience, alongside the voices and experiences of young people and our community, to support you to create events that are safe and accessible.

This resource builds on existing work across the sector, including **ACON's Guide for Hosting LGBTQ Events Safely** and **Rainbow Health Australia's Celebrate Pride**, which have informed and shaped this resource.



Getting Started

How To Use This Guide

This guide provides practical, step by step guidance to support the planning, design, and delivery of safe and accessible events for LGBTQIA+ young people. You can:

- Read it end to end
- Jump to relevant sections
- Use the Check Lists as a starting point for planning

Designed for youth workers,
schools, councils, and community
organisations.

Making The Case

- Why LGBTQIA+ Youth Events Matter 8
- What Makes a Safe LGBTQIA+ Youth Event 10

Event Planning & Delivery

- Planning Safe Events 14
- Planning & Delivery Check List and Timeline 18

Accessibility & Inclusion

- Understanding Participant Needs 24
- Putting Accessibility into Practice 25
- Creating Information Guides Checklists 27
- Engaging First Nations Young People (by VACCA) 30
- Engaging Multicultural Young People (by CMY) 32

Supporting Information

- Further Support 34
- References 36



Glossary

This glossary explains key terms used throughout this guide, along with some related words that are useful for you or those you are working with to understand alongside it.

- **Accessibility** — Making sure an event is easy for everyone to take part in.
- **All-gender bathroom** — A bathroom that is signed for anyone to use, regardless of their gender.
- **Chosen name** — A name a person prefers to use for themselves, which may be different from the name on their birth certificate or ID.
- **Child Safety Standards** — The state based and national rules that organisations must follow to help keep children and young people safe from harm.
- **Code of Conduct** — A set of rules explaining how people (like staff, volunteers or performers) are expected to behave at an event.
- **Cultural safety** — An environment where people feel respected and comfortable being who they are, based on their culture, without judgement or unfair treatment.
- **De-escalation** — Calmly managing a tense or hostile situation so it doesn't get worse.
- **Emergency management plan** — A detailed plan for how staff will respond if something serious happens, such as a fire, medical emergency or security threat.
- **Gender-affirming space** — An environment where people's gender identity is respected and supported.
- **Intersectionality** — People can have multiple identities that overlap. Rather than experiencing these separately, they combine to create unique experiences that can shape what people need to feel safe.
- **LGBTQIA+** — Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer/Questioning, Intersex, Asexual, and the "+" stands for other identities not listed.
- **LGBTQIA+ Liaison Officer (LLO)** — A police officer who is specially trained to work with LGBTQIA+ communities and support their safety.
- **LGBTQIASB+** — Similar to LGBTQIA+, but the "SB" adds "Sistergirl and Brotherboy," terms used by some Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities for trans and gender-diverse people.
- **Neurodivergent** — A word used to describe people whose brains work differently from what's considered "typical," such as people with autism or ADHD.
- **Pronouns** — Words used to refer to a person based on their gender, like 'she/her', 'he/him', or 'they/them'.
- **Rainbow Mob** — A term used for First Nations LGBTQIASB+ young people.
- **Risk assessment** — A document that looks at what could go wrong at an event, who might be affected, and what steps will be taken to stop it or reduce harm.
- **Tokenism** — Making only a small, surface-level effort to include a group (like putting up a flag) without real, ongoing support or respect behind it.
- **Working With Children Check** — A background check in Australia that confirms a person is safe to work or volunteer with children and young people.

MAKING THE CASE



Why LGBTQIA+ Youth Events Matter

The Experiences of LGBTQIA+ Young People

Approximately 18.9% of 16-24 year olds in Australia identify as part of the LGBTQIA+ community,¹ and they are growing up in a world where discrimination, exclusion and anti-LGBTQIA+ hate are still a reality.

Insights from Queer Youth Now (2025) highlight the scale of this:

- 89% of LGBTQIA+ young people have experienced bullying, harassment or violence
- 55% have experienced discrimination due to their identity
- 1 in 10 experienced physical violence in the past year
- 1 in 2 experienced verbal harassment in the past year.²

These experiences can lead to social isolation and anxiety, and many LGBTQIA+ young people feel less safe in everyday life. As a result, LGBTQIA+ young people experience much poorer mental health than young people who are not LGBTQIA+.

In this context, access to safe, affirming environments is critical.

The Power of Connection and Joy

Connection to community and feeling affirmed help protect young people's mental health and are associated with:

- Increased resilience
- Improved mental health outcomes
- Stronger sense of identity and self-worth.

These experiences are also highly valued by young people themselves.

- 99% say making queer friends is an important part of their lives.

¹ Australian Child Maltreatment Study (2023) ACU

² Queer Youth Now: The National Survey of LGBTQIA+ Youth Voice in Australia (2025)



Why LGBTQIA+ Youth Events Matter

The Role of LGBTQIA+ Youth Events

For many LGBTQIA+ young people, these events are among the few spaces where they feel consistently safe, seen and supported. They are a proven and effective way to foster connection, belonging and joy.

- Provide safe, purpose-built environments where young people can express their identity without fear of judgement or harm
- Help young people connect with each other and build community
- Create pathways to trusted services, supports and networks
- Offer opportunities for participation, visibility and self-expression
- Connect young people to support early, before things reach a crisis point
- Build confidence, resilience and leadership capability.

Creating safe, inclusive and affirming spaces is a practical, research-backed way to improve the lives of LGBTQIA+ young people.



“Community connection is life changing and life saving”

LGBTQIA+ Young Person,
Via consultation held for this resource

“We all need somewhere to belong and be our true and authentic selves. Sometimes those don’t exist in mainstream spaces, that’s why we need queer affirming spaces”

LGBTQIA+ Young Person,
Via consultation held for this resource



What Makes a Safe LGBTQIA+ Event

Safety is not just about physical protection. It includes feeling safe to express all aspects of who you are, build healthy relationships, and participate fully.

LGBTQIA+ young people and community partners have identified four key areas that make events safe for LGBTQIA+ youth:



Developed in consultation with LGBTQIA+ youth and community partners.

INFORMED

Event design is shaped by ongoing engagement with LGBTQIA+ young people and their communities

Young people have choice and autonomy during the event

Clear information is shared to support informed participation.

ACCESSIBLE

Events are designed to reduce barriers to participation, including physical, financial and geographic access

Spaces are appropriate, safe and support the diverse needs of attendees, including alcohol, drug, smoke and vape-free

INCLUSIVE

Identity, pride and self-expression are actively celebrated

Connection and friendship are actively facilitated

Cultural and spiritual identities are respected and embedded

Diverse LGBTQIA+ identities are visible across staff and space.

PROTECTIVE

Promotion balances visibility with the safety of staff and attendees

Expected behaviours are clearly communicated through guidelines or codes of conduct

Child Safety Standards are in place, including checking the suitability of all staff and volunteers

Staff are visible, approachable and understand their responsibilities

Clear steps are in place for dealing with incidents and risks

Support is provided for young people to access other LGBTQIA+ specific services or community groups

Privacy and confidentiality of young people is respected.

Enablers of Participation

More young people can take part when barriers are removed. The table below shows the most common barriers LGBTQIA+ young people face at events, and ways to address them. It draws on the experiences shared by more than 2,600 young people across Australia:

BARRIERS	ENABLERS
Not knowing anyone attending 66%	Activities that help young people make new friends and build connection Support to bring a friend or get to know people beforehand
Social anxiety 54%	Welcoming, flexible environments Trained, approachable and supportive staff Clear pre-event information (Access Guides, Social Scripts)
Difficulty accessing transport 54%	Clear travel information and events held in accessible locations Changing facilities and storage for bags
Cost of attending 47%	Free or low-cost events No strict dress codes
Not my vibe 34%	Centre fun, celebration and queer joy Engage young people in the planning and delivery of the event
Unsure of safety 31%	Provide clear information on safety and accessibility when promoting the event
Fear of being outed 17%	Discreet event design and inclusive communications (e.g. “for LGBTQIA+ youth and their friends”) Clear practices to support privacy of attendees
Not feeling my identity is represented 14%	Diverse identities are visible across staff, programming and environment

Queer Youth Now: The National Survey of LGBTQIA+ Youth Voice in Australia (2025)

Designing for Diverse Communities

LGBTQIA+ young people have diverse identities that can overlap, and safety looks different depending on lived experience. Events should be inclusive of all LGBTQIA+ young people, including those who are:

- Trans, gender diverse and non-binary (TGDNB)
- First Nations young people, including Rainbow Mob, sistergirls and brotherboys
- Young people from multicultural and multifaith backgrounds
- Disabled and neurodivergent young people (such as those with autism, learning difficulties or ADHD)
- Young people in regional and rural communities.

Creating safe spaces includes:

- Ongoing community engagement
- Representation across staff and programming
- Flexibility in how young people participate
- Responding to cultural needs and showing respect for different experiences of identity.

There is no single approach to inclusion. Instead, it is an ongoing practice of listening, learning and responding to the needs of the young people you are working with.

Community-Led Practice

This guide includes contributions from organisations with deep community expertise, offering practical insights and real-world examples of how safety and inclusion can be applied in different contexts.



Victorian Aboriginal Child & Community Agency (VACCA)

Explores cultural safety for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander LGBTQIASB+ young people and the importance of relationships, and connection to community and Country as an ongoing practice.

→ Page 28



Centre for Multicultural Youth (CMY)

A practical case study on designing inclusive events for multicultural young people through a youth-led approach that enables young people to participate in ways that feel right for them.

→ Page 30

PLANNING & DELIVERY



Planning Safe Events

Getting Started

Safety planning should be built into every LGBTQIA+ youth event, whether it is a small group activity, a workshop, or a large public gathering. The goal is not to create extra paperwork; it's to make sure the event suits the young people attending, the setting, and the level of risk.

When planning, take into consideration the scale and visibility of the event, based on:

- **Who is attending** - The number of participants, their age and needs
- **Where it takes place** - The venue, surrounding environment and how people arrive or leave
- **What will occur** - The types of activities, entertainment or content being discussed
- **How visible the event is to the public** and the likelihood of external disruption around the event.

Planning For Different Scale and Visibility

LOWER SCALE	HIGHER SCALE
 Such as group workshops, small social gatherings, craft sessions, online spaces. This may include:	Such as dance events, outdoor events, multi-room events, or events with a high visibility. This may include: 
A simple risk assessment	A detailed risk assessment
Understanding the venue, including basic emergency procedures	A formal emergency management approach
Clear roles and active supervision	Structured staffing with defined roles (e.g. youth safety, first aid, event coordination)
Safe access based on individual needs	Detailed event guides that supports diverse needs
Engaging LGBTQIA+ young people through feedback or informal consultation where possible	Deeper engagement with LGBTQIA+ young people in shaping and delivering the event
Sharing information about LGBTQIA+ organisations, working with LGBTQIA+ identifying people	Strong partnerships with LGBTQIA+ community organisations



Planning Safe Events

Risk Assessment

A risk assessment is a simple planning tool that helps you identify what could go wrong at your event and figure out how to prevent or manage it.

Every event carries risks, and you can't remove them completely. But you can reduce them, prepare for them, and know what to do if something happens. The goal isn't to stop people from participating. It's to make the event as safe as possible for everyone involved.

A risk assessment usually includes:

- What could go wrong, how likely it is, and how serious the impact would be
- What you're doing to reduce the chance or impact of harm
- Who's responsible if an incident occurs
- How to log incidents so there's a clear record to review afterwards.

Review and update your risk assessment regularly as the event gets closer, and again if anything changes while planning.

Most organisations have their own policies and procedures for risk assessments, so check with yours first. If you don't have one, or this is your first time planning an LGBTQIA+ youth event, we've created a Risk Assessment Template that guides you through the process and explains it in more detail:

LINK: RISK ASSESSMENT TEMPLATE

For LGBTQIA+ Youth Events - Minus18



Supervision Roles

Having the right people in place is essential to creating safe environments for LGBTQIA+ young people. How you staff an event will depend on its scale and visibility. Focus on ensuring:

- Young people are appropriately supervised at all times. No one under the age of 18 should be left alone with a single adult
- Where possible, maintain staffing levels to ensure visibility across all spaces, including the entry points.

Each event should have defined roles for those responsible for aspects of the event. In smaller events, these may sit across the same people, including:

- Who is leading the event and activities overall
- Who is responsible for youth safety and wellbeing
- Who to go to if a safety issue arises, including with the venue.
- Prior to the event starting, all staff and volunteers should:
- Be briefed on the roles of those responsible
- Understand how to respond to incidents or concerns
- Be clearly identifiable and approachable to young people (e.g. t-shirts or lanyards)
- Know how to access additional support if needed.



External Contractors

When engaging external contractors for an event (such as security, first aid, AV or catering) it's important they understand the context of the event and the young people attending. Some ways you can do this are to ensure contractors:

- Receive an inclusive language briefing, covering appropriate terminology, the use of chosen names and pronouns, and respectful engagement
- Are briefed on de-escalation techniques for managing protestors or hostile individuals, with an emphasis on calm, non-confrontational responses that prioritise young people's safety and de-escalate rather than inflame a situation
- Understand and can demonstrate alignment with Child Safety Standards, including reporting obligations and appropriate conduct.

Where possible, choose contractors with demonstrated experience working with LGBTQIA+ communities or young people, and confirm these requirements in writing.

Engaging LGBTQIA+ Community

Building connections with LGBTQIA+ community groups can strengthen both safety and inclusion. These relationships help ensure events are informed by lived experience and connected to broader support systems. This can include:

- Partnering with local organisations, services or community groups
- Seeking input or advice to inform event design and delivery
- Creating pathways for youth to connect with these organisations beyond the event

Buying pride merchandise or inclusion posters from LGBTQIA+ groups to create a visibly welcoming space.

Youth Participation

When young people are genuinely involved in creating and running events, those events are more likely to meet their needs. This can include:

- Involving young people in planning and decision-making, such as informal focus groups, brainstorming workshops or a planning committee.
- Creating opportunities for young people to perform, speak or lead activities at the event
- Paying young people for their time and contributions
- Asking young people for feedback after the event through surveys or focus groups, and using this to improve future events.

LINK: YOUTH PARTICIPATION

Youth Affairs Council of Victoria (YACVIC)



Access and Event Information

Simply accessing an event safely for LGBTQIA+ young people can be a barrier, as some young people may not feel safe expressing their LGBTQIA+ identity in public in the same way they do at the event. Supporting this can include:

- Maintaining privacy by avoiding unnecessary disclosure of LGBTQIA+ context to parents or caregivers
- Empowering young people to use their chosen name and pronouns, rather than what might be on their ID or sign up information.
- Providing ways for young people to change their clothes when arriving and leaving the event, as well as a place to store bags
- Supervising group walks between the event and public transport hubs.

Planning Safe Events

Safe Promotion

Consider a balance of visibility and safety when promoting your event. This can include:

- Using inclusive but lower-risk language in event titles and descriptions. For example, “A range of LGBTQIA+ performers” instead of specific names of people involved
- Being specific in your promotion by using targeting ads or community networks
- Limiting event details to those attending (e.g. provide location after registration)
- Using shared or generic contact information for inquiries
- Planning for how social media comments will be moderated, including whether comments should be limited or turned off if promotion attracts harmful behaviour.

External Safety & Police Liaison

For higher scale or higher visibility events, building a relationship with Victoria Police LGBTQIA+ Liaison Officers (LLO) ahead of time can support a more confident response to safety concerns if they arise. This can include:

- Contacting Victoria Police early in planning to discuss the event and agree on the level of police involvement
- Establishing an agreement on visibility, for example agreeing that officers remain in plain clothes, outside the venue, or nearby rather than maintaining a uniformed presence within the event space
- Acknowledging that some young people may feel anxious or unsafe around police, and planning ahead to manage this, such as communicating in advance if police will be present around the event

- Providing staff with guidance on how to explain any police presence to young people in a clear and reassuring way
- Having a clear point of contact for liaising with police on the day.

Managing Detractors

In the instance negative comments do occur, planning ahead can help ensure a confident response. This can include:

- Identifying who will lead the response.
- Aligning messaging with your organisation’s values and purpose
- Actively moderating online spaces by removing harmful content and blocking users where necessary
- Not engaging directly with people posting harmful content
- Reporting harmful behaviour and engage Victoria Police LGBTQIA+ Liaison Officers if you experience safety concerns
- Providing regular check-ins or further support for LGBTQIA+ staff, especially after difficult or emotional experiences.

LINK: CELEBRATE PRIDE

Rainbow Health Australia



LINK: HANDLING HATEFUL COMMENTS

ACON



Planning & Delivery Checklist

This step by step guide supports you through each stage of delivering an event for LGBTQIA+ youth. Whether you're planning your first event or building on existing experience, these steps are designed to help you prioritise a safe and positive experiences for young people.

We've created a Word Document version of this check list for you to download and adapt these steps to suit your local context.

LINK: PLANNING & DELIVERY CHECKLIST

For LGBTQIA+ Youth Events - Minus18



EARLY PLANNING

6-12 Months Before

Setting the vision, partnerships, and securing the right venue

Confirm event date and time

Establish event goals and priorities

Engage young people to inform the event concept and design

Book a suitable and accessible venue or online platform

Identify local LGBTQIA+ organisations to engage

Confirm event name and high level event concept

For higher scale or visible events

Conduct venue walkthrough to confirm suitability, and confirm venue hire contract

Develop initial communications approach (for LGBTQIA+ youth and wider community)

Begin contacting key partners and organisations (e.g. councils, partner organisations and funders)

Establish formal partnerships or sponsorship agreements

Confirm budget, resourcing and internal approvals

Planning & Delivery Checklist

LOGISTICS AND EARLY BOOKINGS

3–6 Months Before

Planning and engagement of stakeholders

- Begin a simple risk assessment (to be reviewed and updated over time)
- Identify roles, responsibilities and supervision requirements, including Code of Conduct
- Confirm and understand the venue, including emergency procedures
- Share information with LGBTQIA+ organisations and community where relevant
- Engage young people and relevant stakeholders to inform and confirm the event plan
- Gain any required approvals for the event
- Review event plan against insurance policies to ensure coverage

For higher scale or visible events

- Book key contractors (e.g. first aid, catering, security, interpreters)
- Consider external factors that may impact delivery (e.g. nearby activity, public visibility, or media coverage of recent similar events)
- Register your event with Victoria Police LGBTQIA+ Liaison Officers for larger, high-profile events or where safety concerns have been identified
- Engage your local Aboriginal Land Council or Native Title representative body to arrange a Welcome to Country

Planning & Delivery Checklist

RISK & PROGRAMMING

1–3 Months Before

Building your safety framework and shaping event delivery

Operations & Safety Planning

Continuously review Risk Assessment; confirm how safety and wellbeing incident response will be managed

Programming

Involve young people in shaping programming, activities or promotional messaging

Confirm who will welcome young people to the event (e.g. facilitator, emcee or young person)

Promotion

Plan and create how young people will sign up (e.g. ticketing platform)

Develop event messaging and promotional materials

Launch promotion (e.g. email, social media, community networks)

Share event information with community partners to support promotion

For higher scale or visible events

Risk Assessment & Safety Planning

Develop a detailed risk assessment matched to the size and public profile of your event

Develop Emergency Management Plan

Programming

Book host, emcee and programming (e.g. performers, DJs or guest speakers)

Engage production support (e.g. sound, lighting, screens, photography) where required

Collect programming details (e.g. run sheets, technical requirements, scripts)

Share programming details with venue, contractors and interpreters as needed

Planning & Delivery Checklist

COMPLIANCE AND FINAL DETAILS

In The Month Before

Ensuring all policies, people and plans are in place

Operations & Safety Planning

Provide performers and contributors with Code of Conduct and expectations

Complete screening of all staff, volunteers and contractors (inc Working With Children Checks)

Confirm roles and rosters, and share event plan

Prepare contingency plans (e.g. weather and other emerging risks)

Finalise and distribute Access Guide, Social Script and key event information

Finalise event materials (e.g. directional signage, identity affirmation posters, activity resources)

Programming

Confirm performers, facilitators and final programming details

For higher scale or visible events

Operations & Safety Planning

Submit Risk Assessment to insurance (if required)

Share Event Plan with key partners and stakeholders

Finalise Emergency Management Plan

Confirm production support (e.g. sound, lighting, screens, photography)

Planning & Delivery Checklist

EVENT DELIVERY

Day Of The Event

Coordinating a safe and well-run event on the day

Set up event space, signage and resources

Conduct final staff briefing and confirm roles and responsibilities

Welcome attendees and communicate key information (e.g. safety, access, expectations)

Actively monitor safety, access and wellbeing, respond to incidents or support needs as they arise

For higher scale or visible events

Manage the set-up of equipment and deliveries

Brief external providers (e.g. first aid, security, contractors)

Maintain active communication across teams throughout the event

REFLECTION & CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

After the Event

Capturing learnings and measuring impact

Collect feedback from young people, staff and partners

Review feedback and any incidents to identify key learnings

Thank and acknowledge participants, volunteers and contributors

Share good news stories and outcomes with stakeholders

For higher scale or visible events

Conduct a formal debrief with staff, partners and providers

Review operational performance (e.g. safety, logistics, attendance)

Document outcomes and recommendations for future events

ACCESSIBILITY AND INCLUSION



Accessibility & Inclusion

When it comes to safety at events, accessibility means creating environments where all young people are able to participate without barriers. Accessibility is not just about physical access — it includes sensory, cultural, social and financial accessibility.

Core Principles

Accessible and inclusive events are:

- **Proactive:** Barriers are identified and addressed early
- **By Design:** Accessibility is built in from the beginning
- **Responsive:** Events consider physical, sensory and cultural needs
- **Equitable:** Young people have fair access to participate, regardless of their identity or background
- **Respectful:** Young people are supported to participate in ways that are right for them.

Understanding Participant Needs

Accessible events are created through deliberate choices made in advance that reduce barriers and support different ways of participating.

While the approach may differ depending on the scale of the event, the principles remains the same.

A simple way of understanding where to begin is to ask participants about their access or support needs during registration and then taking reasonable steps to respond.

The key is taking a proactive approach to understanding needs in advance, rather than reacting once barriers arise and a young person is excluded or unable to participate fully.



Putting Accessibility into Practice

The following initiatives are common, practical ways to improve access at LGBTQIA+ youth events:

Low Sensory and Quiet Spaces

This can help address sensory overwhelm, anxiety, and social fatigue

Provide a dedicated space where young people can take a break from noise or stimulation.

- Consider soft lighting, comfortable seating, and minimal noise (e.g. away from music or crowds)
- Include sensory tools (e.g. fidget tools, earplugs, headphones)
- Ensure the space is supervised and easy to find (e.g. signposted or announced by emcee).

Clear Event Information (Access Guides and Social Scripts)

This helps address sensory overwhelm, fear of the unknown, and social anxiety.

Share clear, detailed information before the event so young people know what to expect.

- Include how to get there, what the space looks like, and what to expect when they arrive
- Use visuals, maps or simple language where possible
- Share this information in advance through registration or promotion.

Clear Sensory Information (Sensory Guides)

This helps address sensory sensitivity, anxiety, and fear of the unknown

Provide a sensory guide to help young people understand what the event will feel like across different senses.

- Outline whether the spaces in the event are low, medium or high sensory, and if a quiet space is available
- Include a sensory map, content warnings (letting people know in advance about challenging content), and what young people might see, hear, smell or feel
- Describe potential emotional experiences (e.g. excitement, connection, overwhelm).

Safe Arrival and Departure

This helps address barriers related to transport access, safety concerns, and attending alone.

Consider how young people will get to and from the event safely.

- Identify nearby public transport, pick-up/drop-off points
- Consider timing of the event in relation to transport options and other public events
- Provide clear directions and safety information ahead of time
- Supervise group walks between the event and public transport hubs.

Flexible Participation Options

This helps address social anxiety and diverse abilities

Design events so young people can engage in different ways, based on their comfort level.

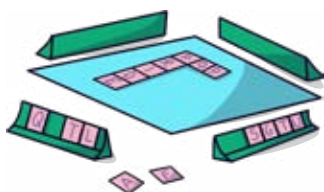
- Allow for observing, participating, or taking breaks
- Offer a mix of structured and unstructured activities
- Avoid pressure to participate in any one way.

Initiatives that Support Privacy

This helps address privacy and public safety concerns.

Provide initiatives that support young people to access the event privately, without needing to disclose their LGBTQIA+ identity to others.

- Offer areas for young people to change clothes and store bags so they can express their identity safely when travelling to and from the event
- Avoid signage outside the event or disclosing to people outside the event that it is for LGBTQIA+ people
- Allow young people to use chosen names without requiring ID where possible
- Provide ways for young people to opt out of photos or being identified.



Accessible and Inclusive Facilities

This helps address barriers related to physical access and identity

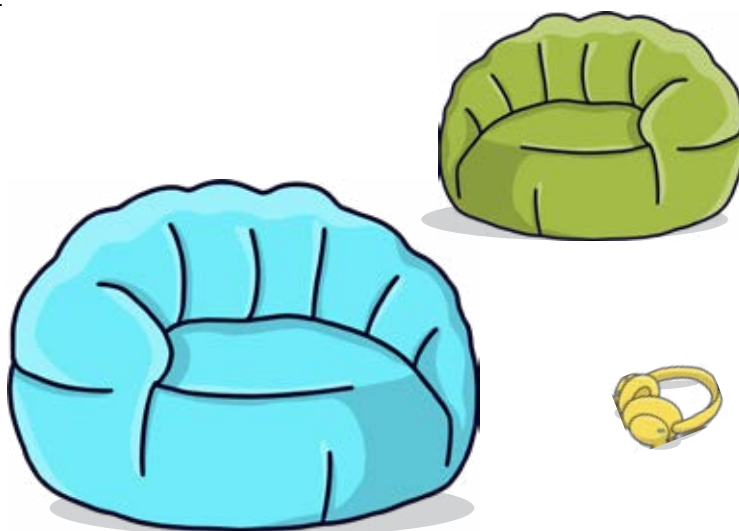
Ensure the physical environment supports a range of access needs.

- Provide step-free access, accessible bathrooms
- Ensure all-gender bathrooms are available
- Consider seating, layout and ease of movement throughout the space
- Ensure key areas are easy to find and navigate through maps, high contrast signage or with aids for people who are blind, or have low vision.

Auslan Interpreters and Live Captioning

This helps address communication barriers for people who are deaf or hard of hearing.

- Book Auslan interpreters on request, and proactively for larger public events without tickets
- Offer live captioning on request and for large events or conferences, and if possible, provide a transcript afterwards.



Creating Information Guides

Sensory Guides

A sensory guide helps young people understand what an event will look, sound and feel like before they arrive. Providing this information upfront can reduce uncertainty and support informed participation, especially for those who are neurodivergent, disabled, or experiencing anxiety.

Use this checklist as a starting point for what you might include in your own sensory guide:

SENSORY GUIDE KEY CONSIDERATIONS

Event Overview A short summary of the event and it's different spaces

Provide a description of the whole event.
Will this be a Low Sensory / Medium Sensory / High Sensory environment?

Quiet spaces. Is there a designated low sensory or quiet area?
Where is it located and how can it be accessed?

Sights

Lighting: Type of lighting (natural, fluorescent, stage lighting)? How bright is it?

Flashing or strobe lights: Will any be used? (Avoid where possible)

Colours and visual intensity (e.g. bright colours, decorations)

Crowd size and movement (e.g. crowded, open space)

Screens, projections or moving visuals

Sounds

General noise level (low, moderate, loud)

Sudden or loud sounds (e.g. cheering, clapping, music, announcements)

Ongoing background noise (e.g. music, crowd noise)

Availability of sensory supports (e.g. earplugs, noise-cancelling headphones)

Smells

Food being prepared or served

Strong scents (e.g. perfume, deodorant, cleaning products)

Outdoor smells (e.g. petrol, smoke, nearby activity)

Sensations & Experiences

Physical environment (e.g. crowd size, shared personal space, movement between areas)

Surfaces and terrain (e.g. flooring changes, indoor/outdoor transitions)

Temperature (e.g. air-conditioned, warm, outdoor weather exposure)

Common emotional experiences (e.g. excitement, joy, affirmation, anxiety, overwhelm)

Access Guides

An access guide helps young people understand how to get to, enter, move through and leave an event before they arrive. Providing this information upfront can reduce uncertainty and remove practical barriers to participation, particularly for disabled young people or those who may need additional support.

Use this checklist as a starting point for what you might include in your own access guide:

ACCESS GUIDE KEY CONSIDERATIONS

Event Overview Key information about the event and venue

A short summary of the location (e.g. venue name, address and entry point)

A summary of the venue (e.g. venue type, the number of spaces and floors)

What is provided and what young people should bring

What activities are occurring, and whether these flexible (e.g. can opt-in or observe)

Travel

Directions to the venue (including map links)

Nearby public transport options and closest stops, including distance to each

Accessibility of travel routes (e.g. step-free)

Drop-off points (e.g. taxi, rideshare) and accessible parking options

Arriving and Leaving

Clear description of the entry and exit points, ground surfaces (e.g. flat, uneven, paved) and presence of steps, ramps or slopes. Location of wheelchair accessible entrances.

Door types (e.g. automatic, manual, heavy, swipe access) and width.

Lighting conditions at entry points, especially at night

Any external factors or potential disruptions

Whether re-entry is an option (e.g. pass-outs)

What to expect in terms of security and bag checks.

Moving Through the Space

Venue layout (e.g. single-level, multi-level)

Access between spaces (e.g. lifts, ramps, stairs) and availability of space to navigate away from crowds

Continued on Next Page

Creating Information Guides

Continued from Previous Page

Additional Accessibility Features

Available hearing supports (e.g. hearing loops, audio supports)

Interpreter availability (e.g. AUSLAN)
--

Availability of sensory supports (e.g. earplugs, fidget tools) and where to find them

Whether there is access to refrigerated medication storage if required
--

Safety and Support

How young people can ask for help or support during the event) and how staff and volunteers can be identified (e.g. lanyards, uniforms)

Photography and filming practices, including how to opt out

Availability of private spaces (e.g. changing, making a call, taking a break)

Facilities & Amenities

The location of accessible and all-gender toilets

Quiet or low sensory space and where it is located
--

Seating options, including accessible seating

Catering information (including access to free drinking water and dietary considerations)

Additional spaces (e.g. cloak room, prayer room, outdoor areas)

Safe Events for First Nations Youth



Connected by culture
VACCA

VICTORIAN ABORIGINAL CHILD AND COMMUNITY AGENCY



Authentically creating culturally safe environments for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander LGBTQIASB+ young people is complex, and it requires ongoing commitment, reflection, and accountability.

The following principles are a starting point, not an exhaustive guide, to building safe event spaces for Rainbow Mob. We invite you to consider that cultural safety is not a checklist, it is an ongoing practice grounded in relationships, learning, and truth-telling.

“Queer mob exist and are more than just case studies or labels in a dictionary. We’ve existed for thousands of years not only as mob, but as Rainbow Mob. Even though our identities have been historically targeted, these identities are ancient and inherent to who we are as people. That can be a real source of strength for the young people”

TJ (she/they)

Victorian Aboriginal Child & Community Agency

Connection to Community and Family Systems

Cultural safety is relational, extending beyond individual young people to include family, kinship systems, community, and Elders.

Event planning should consider the whole family system, recognising that a young person’s

participation may depend on whether their family feels safe, supported and able to make informed decisions about the safety of their young person if they are attending. Building trust with community is both critical, and requires active and ongoing efforts.

We encourage this to include:

- Engaging with families, carers, and community where appropriate
- Partnering with Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations (ACCOs)
- Involving trusted organisations to provide holistic, culturally safe support for Rainbow Mob

Recognising diverse kinship systems strengthens safety and ensures young people feel connected and proud of their identities.

Connection to Culture and Identity

There is no single way to experience or express connection to culture. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people come from hundreds of Nations and language groups (more than 400!), with varied relationships to culture shaped by colonisation, assimilation, and experiences of intergenerational trauma (the lasting effects of historical harm passed down through families).

Acknowledging these experiences is central to being able to cultivate a truly safe space for young Rainbow Mob at your event.

Event spaces need to:

- Avoid assumptions about cultural knowledge or identity
- Be mindful not to over-emphasise culture in ways that may cause discomfort or shame
- Allow young people to define their own connection to culture and identity

Affirming both cultural identity and LGBTQIASB+ identity is important, but must be approached with care, flexibility, and respect for individual experience. Autonomy and self-determination are crucial elements of this, so ensure to cultivate event spaces that encourage this expression.

Country and Environment

Understanding of place, history, and ongoing impacts of colonisation are non-negotiable elements that cultural safety calls for.

Venues should be carefully considered, including their historical context and how they may be experienced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. For some families and Elders, certain spaces may carry histories of harm that influence whether they feel safe supporting a young person's participation.

Acknowledging these histories through truth-telling is essential. Connection to Country also extends beyond land to include relationships with environment, community, and cultural practice. Think more broadly than the walls of your event space, and be intentional in understanding the vastness of what Connection to Country and place means for Rainbow Mob.

Meaningful Visibility and Representation

Visibility is a source of safety for young Rainbow Mob when it is intentional, authentic, and community-informed.

Being able to see staff who are First Nations and LGBTQIASB+, volunteers, and community members, particularly intergenerational representation such as Elders, can be deeply affirming and a source of pride and safety for young people. It reinforces that their identities are valued, enduring, and supported culturally and spiritually.

Visible markers of inclusion (e.g. flags or signage) can support this, but must be used thoughtfully to avoid tokenism.

Representation should be grounded in real relationships and ongoing engagement, not one-off gestures. When these foundations are central to your event, visibility becomes meaningful and genuine for Rainbow Mob.

When we talk about cultural safety, it's about reframing from being a one-off outcome to a living and breathing commitment to listening, learning and being accountable to community. To do this requires organisations to move beyond intention and embed these principles in ways that are consistent, thoughtful, and responsive to the diverse experiences of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people.

As TJ reminds us, LGBTQIASB+ mob have always existed, and their identities are ancient and inherent to who they are. When this is recognised and honoured, event spaces can become places of connection, strength, and pride, where young Rainbow Mob feel safe to exist fully, proudly and unapologetically in who they are.

CASE STUDY:

Harmony Youth Summit



At the Centre for Multicultural Youth (CMY) we know that many multicultural young people navigate racism, migration experiences, trauma and multiple intersecting identities. Feeling safe means more than managing risk. It means feeling seen, respected and having choice and control over how they take part with respect for culture, faith, sexuality and gender identity.

CMY's largest youth-led event, the Harmony Youth Summit, brings together 150 multicultural students from 10 schools, and provides a case study for how safety and inclusion can be created in practical ways.

1. Put Young People at the Centre

Youth leadership is core to CMY's safety approach. At the Summit, student workshops were co-designed and delivered multicultural young leaders from Western Young People Independence Network (WYPIN), Le Mana Pasifika and Jamma for multicultural young people, ensuring content reflected lived experience..

As Rida (WYPIN) shared, "Young multicultural people facilitating and managing the event makes events safe, inclusive and engaging."

Are young people shaping not only the content of your event, but how safety and participation are defined?



2. Create Clear, Supportive Structures

Safety is supported through clarity, consistency and predictability. CMY prioritises:

- Child safety training for staff, volunteers and facilitators
- Clear, shared ground rules created with young people including respect for diversity and zero tolerance for discrimination based on gender identity, sexuality, culture or faith
- Up-front communication about what to expect
- Avoid assumptions about cultural knowledge or identity

As Jessie (WYPIN) reflected, "Training to establish housekeeping and ground rules and clear communication led to increased confidence." Mohamed also highlighted the importance of "trained and practiced child-safe practices in the activities".

Have expectations been communicated in ways that young people can understand, influence and trust?

3. Create Space to Understand and Celebrate Culture

Creating spaces where young people feel safe to express their culture, language and gender identity includes recognising diversity within diversity, avoiding assumptions and understanding that culture shapes how young people participate. At the Summit, a participant from the Māori community thanked a guest speaker by offering to perform a Haka in her honour and others joined in a collective display of culture. CMY takes time to ask about cultures and builds this into event design.

Jessie (WYPIN) suggests: “Do your background check, what are their interests, backgrounds, values. Don’t assume or generalise the young people as just young audiences.”

Representation among staff and facilitators plays a key role.

As Rea (WYPIN) shared: “We had many staff and mentors from various multicultural backgrounds, similar to some of our young people - which made them feel seen, included and more likely to relate.”

Does your team reflect the communities you are working with? Does your event actively invite young people to express their culture and language?



4. Build in Flexibility and Choice

CMY designs events with multiple ways to engage, including opt-in participation, quiet or chillout spaces and real-time responsiveness to feedback.

For LGBTQIA+ young people, especially those navigating family, cultural or faith contexts, having choice around participation and disclosure is a critical part of feeling safe.

Mohamed (WYPIN) suggests: “Be easy going with the dynamics. Don’t force them to do anything or get involved at the start. Let them make that first step.”

As Margaux (WYPIN) noted: “Issues with activities were heard and actually improved once raised.”

Does your event meet young people where they are at in their participation journey and give them opportunities to share feedback?

Impact

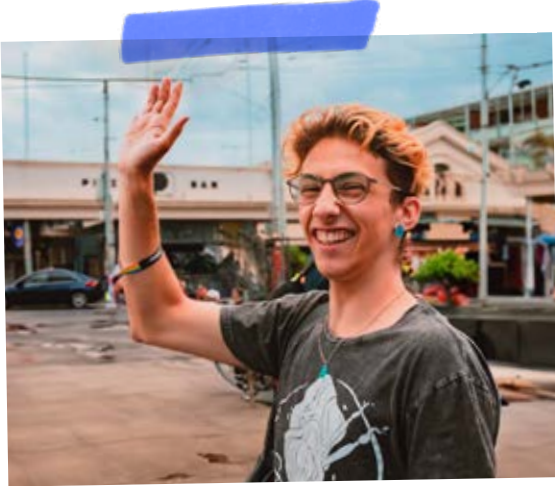
The Harmony Youth Summit was rated highly by 95% of young people, who reported increased cultural pride, motivation and a sense of belonging. Participants reflected:

- “It’s okay to be yourself no matter what.”
- “Identity and connection to culture are key to our success.”

Intentionally designing inclusive spaces is particularly important for queer multicultural young people, who may not always experience cultural or LGBTQIA+ spaces as safe, and benefit from environments where all parts of their identity are affirmed and celebrated.

Further Support

Find Local LGBTQIA+ Youth Groups



Minus18 Services Directory

The Minus18 Services Directory is a free, national online tool that helps LGBTQIA+ young people, youth workers and families find youth groups near them.

It makes it easier to connect with the right support, when it's needed most.

minus18.org.au/youth-directory

Thank You!

Rainbow Community Angels

Rainbow Community Angels are trained volunteers who support LGBTQIA+ events and communities, particularly where there may be heightened public attention.

Rainbow Community Angels have supported Minus18 events for more than 10 years, and their contribution has played an important role in helping create safe and inclusive spaces for LGBTQIA+ communities.

rainbowcommunityangels.org.au



Further Support for Event Safety

ACON – Safe Events Guide

The ACON Safe Events Guide provides practical guidance for planning and delivering LGBTQIA+ events in higher-risk contexts, including where there may be protest, public scrutiny, or targeted opposition. It covers risk assessment, safety planning, communications, partnerships, and harm reduction strategies to support safe, community-led events.

acon.org.au/what-we-are-here-for/safety-inclusion/

eSafety Commission

The eSafety Commissioner helps address serious online abuse and illegal or harmful content. They offer practical tools and guidance to manage online safety risks, including how to report and respond to online harm.

esafety.gov.au

Rainbow Health Australia – Celebrate Pride

Celebrate Pride is a resource by Rainbow Health Australia that supports organisations to plan inclusive and affirming Pride events. It offers guidance on engagement and creating safe, spaces for LGBTQIA+ communities.

rainbowhealthaustralia.org.au/news/celebrate-pride

Rainbow Ready Roadmap

The Rainbow Ready Roadmap supports organisations to strengthen LGBTQIA+ inclusion, safety, and responsiveness across leadership, policies, and service delivery. It provides practical tools to identify gaps and embed inclusive, safe practices in events and programs.

vic.gov.au/rainbow-ready-roadmap

Victoria Police LGBTQIA+ Liaison Officers

LGBTQIA+ Liaison Officers are trained Victoria Police members who work with LGBTQIA+ communities to support safety and communication. They can provide advice ahead of events and assist if there are safety concerns.

police.vic.gov.au/LGBTIQA-liaison-officers

Crisis Support Services

QLife

Available 3pm-12am daily

[Call 1800 184 527](https://1800184527) or [WebChat](#)

Lifeline

Available 24/7

[Call 13 11 14](https://131114) or [Text 0477 131 114](https://0477131114)

Suicide Call-Back Service

Available 24/7

[Call 1300 659 467](https://1300659467)

References

Practice Frameworks

Australian Institute of Family Studies. (2019). Child safe organisations: Information for organisations on how to keep children safe.

Williams, R. (2008). Cultural safety: what does it mean for our work practice? Australian and New Zealand Journal of Public Health, 23(2) pp. 213-214.

National Office for Child Safety, SNAICC and VACCA. (2021). Keeping Our Kids Safe: Cultural Safety and the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations

ACON. (2023). Guidance for hosting LGBTQ events safely.

Rainbow Health Australia. (2023). Celebrate Pride.

Image and Illustrations

Centre for Multicultural Youth

Darcy Murphy

Dijana Risteska

Emma Sjaan Beukers

Mara Marsa

Kyamm Ross

Leah Hulst William Hamilton-Coates

Ryan Wee

Victorian Aboriginal Child & Community Agency

Research and Youth Insights

Queer Youth Now: The national survey of LGBTQIA+ youth voice in Australia. Minus18 Foundation (2025)

Australian Child Maltreatment Study, Queensland University of Technology. Haslam D, Mathews B, Pacella R, Scott JG, Finkelhor D, Higgins DJ, Meinck F, Erskine HE, Thomas HJ, Lawrence D, Malacova E (2023)

Writing Themselves In 4: The health and wellbeing of LGBTQIA+ young people (aged 14-21) in Australia. Victorian Summary Report. Australian Research Centre in Sex, Health and Society, La Trobe University. Hill AO, Lyons A, Jones J, McGowan I, Carman M, Parsons M, Power J, Bourne A (2021)

Private Lives 3: a study of health and wellbeing among LGBTQ+ adults (aged 18+). Adam Hill, Anthony Lyons, Ruth McNair (2020 - 2021)

From Blues to Rainbows: Mental health and wellbeing of gender diverse and transgender young people in Australia. Melbourne: The Australian Research Centre in Sex, Health, and Society. Smith, E., Jones, T., Ward, R., Dixon, J., Mitchell A., & Hillier, L. (2014).

Trans Pathways: the mental health experiences and care pathways of trans young people. Telethon Kids Institute, Perth, Australia. Strauss, P., Cook, A., Winter, S., Watson, V., Wright Toussaint, D., Lin, A. (2017)



MINUS18

VICTORIA