

Media Release

The Hon James Merlino MP
Deputy Premier
Minister for Education
Minister for Mental Health



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NEW FAMILY COUNSELLING SERVICE FOR LGBTIQ+ VICTORIANS

The Victorian Government is investing \$2.5 million for a new specialised counselling service for lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans and gender diverse, intersex and queer (LGBTIQ+) people and their families.

Minister for Mental Health James Merlino and Minister for Equality Martin Foley today announced the funding and invited community organisations to apply to run the service.

Evidence shows LGBTIQ+ Victorians are more likely to experience mental health issues than other Victorians – and the added stresses of the pandemic have made support and connection with family more important than ever.

The new LGBTIQ+ counselling service will build on the \$1.18 million of support the Victorian Government has already provided directly to organisations offering services to LGBTIQ+ Victorians in response to the pandemic.

This includes \$450,000 for Switchboard Victoria, Thorne Harbour Health and Drummond Street Services to support the increased demand for counselling and support services for LGBTIQ+ individuals and their families.

Over the past five years, the Victorian Government has created a more inclusive Victoria by reforming legislation to remove discrimination, building the Victorian Pride Centre and providing strong support for and investment in LGBTIQ+ organisations, community events and festivals.

The release of the tender comes as work continues on the first whole-of-government LGBTIQ+ Strategy, which will set the framework for Victorian Government action to improve outcomes for LGBTIQ+ people across the state.

The tender for the LGBTIQ+ Family Counselling and Support Service - developed in consultation with LGBTIQ+ communities and organisations, Fairer Victoria and the Commissioner for LGBTIQ+ Communities Ro Allen - can be found at: www.tenders.vic.gov.au/

Quote attributable to Minister for Mental Health James Merlino

“We know that LGBTIQ+ Victorians are far more likely to experience mental health issues due to social stigma and discrimination and for some the pandemic has made this hard - which is why we are delivering more specialist counselling and support services.”

Quote attributable to Minister for Equality Martin Foley

“We have made great strides towards equality in Victoria in recent years. But there is more to do to achieve equality of outcomes for LGBTIQ+ Victorians. This program is another step along that path.”

Quote attributable to the Victorian Commissioner for LGBTIQ+ Communities Ro Allen

“It’s so important for LGBTIQ+ organisations and individuals to get the targeted support we need during this pandemic and beyond, so that we can live happily and healthily and demonstrate our trademark strength.”