

Rainbow Rights

“Self Advocacy matters to me because people with a cognitive disability are being heard and getting their issues out around the country. When we are together in a group it allows all members of the group to have confidence and to speak up about the rights of people with ID in the LGBTIQ community.”



Rainbow Rights is a LGBTIQ self advocacy group for people with an intellectual disability.

The group has formed in response to the isolation that many people with intellectual disability who identify as LGBTIQ, experience in relation to connection to the broader community and involvement in the LGBTIQ community.

Rainbow Rights was established in 2016 when *Pride Victoria* approached the Melbourne based Self-Advocacy Resource Unit (SARU) about a number of issues that were being identified by their clients. From this initial meeting it was decided that the SARU would support the development of a self advocacy group to address these issues. *Rainbow Rights* would be this new self advocacy group.

Rainbow Rights is the only self-advocacy group for people with an intellectual disability from the LGBTIQ community in Australia.

Rainbow Rights meets fortnightly to discuss issues, and to think of ways to take their message and stories out into the community through events and a range of other activities. To support this work the group currently receives funding from the *Victorian Department of Health and Human Services*.

One of the key issues for *Rainbow Rights* members are that they feel extremely isolated and alone dealing with the complexities of issues associated with disability and sexuality.

Prior to the group's formation they didn't have a sense of belonging to either the general community or the LGBTIQ community.

Case Study 2

Rainbow Rights

'Although some work has been done by governments and community organisations to break down the barriers faced by people with a disability from the LGBTIQ community, the efforts have been very patchy.' Dean Dadson

One of the key achievements of *Rainbow Rights*, is the ability to address the level of invisibility that people with an intellectual disability who identify as LGBTIQ experience in the gay rights movement.

Currently there is very little research, let alone any specific policy or programs, to deal with this invisibility and the broader sense of stigma that people face.

Rainbow Rights tackles these issues through a range of creative strategies which demonstrates the power of self advocacy to be flexible and responsive to a groups ideas and imagination.

With the support of the SARU and a number of key partners from across the LGBTIQ community, *Rainbow Rights* is emerging as a powerful group that gives voice, power and confidence to its members.

The potential for self advocacy to develop key partnerships and strategic alliances that can have an impact on people and organisations who can champion the cause is also critical.

Key partners include:

- Self Advocacy Resource Unit
- Melbourne Pride Centre
- Pride Victoria
- Office for Disability
- Inclusion Melbourne
- GALFA/VALID Inc



THE VICTORIAN
PRIDE CENTRE



Rainbow Rights

Rainbow Rights members now also have a presence in events that have long been the mainstay of gay rights activism and the celebration of LGBTIQ culture and pride. This includes involvement in the **Victorian Midsumma Festival** and the **Melbourne Pride March**.

The group has developed a range of resources which promote their work which they distribute at these events.

The LGBTIQ community has demonstrated the power of the arts to celebrate and capture their issues in engaging and provocative ways. They have often brought a sense of fun and joy to the more serious issues that have focussed their politics.

Rainbow Rights, similarly has developed a sense of vitality and fun to getting their message out there. It is with great pride that they wear the symbols of the movement and have adopted the rainbow colours on ties and scarves as a mark and sign of connection, collaboration and solidarity.

Recently they took this sense of joy de vivre to the development of a music video produced in partnership with local community cultural development organisation, *Wild at Heart* and the SARU.



Melbourne Pride March

'I believe people are enriched by knowing people who are different – by encountering stories that are different. Becoming open and vulnerable is so important....that sense of not being inhibitedI saw this with the grouptheir lack of inhibition was very refreshing!' Phil Heuzenroeder, Executive and Artistic Director, Wild at Heart



Victorian Midsumma Festival

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The song was played in full as part of an interview with local ABC radio host Myf Warhurst.

'I was on ABC national radio with Myf Warhurst. We launched our song and talked about how we came up with the lyrics.'

This was a very different experience and I felt nervous at first but then I just thought to myself, this is so good to get the Rainbow Rights message out and the song played around Australia, so I spoke up loud'.

Cameron, Rainbow Rights



Rainbow Rights is now 'out there'.

They have a Facebook page; they have developed a film which was shown at the Living Loving and Diversity Conference and they are involved in an Abuse Prevention program with the Victorian Office for Disability..... to name a few of their recent engagements.

They are more visible than ever and there is a feeling that this is just the beginning of something very special.



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