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## SPECIALIST COMMUNITY LEGAL SERVICE FOR LGBTIQ COMMUNITIES RECEIVES VITAL GOVERNMENT GRANT

The Victorian Government afforded a funding lifeline to the state's first and only specialist legal service for LGBTIQ communities, the [LGBTIQ Legal Service](#), just as the Service's foundation funding was drawing to its conclusion. Established as a two-year pilot program and health-justice partnership between [St Kilda Legal Service](#) and [Thorne Harbour Health](#), the LGBTIQ Legal Service received additional funding as part of a package announced earlier this year by the Attorney-General in recognition of the outstanding legal support the Service has provided vulnerable LGBTIQ Victorians throughout the COVID-19 pandemic.

The government grant will allow the LGBTIQ Legal Service to continue to operate its existing services for an additional two years, including responding to requests for legal help via the LGBTIQ Legal Service [website](#) and providing wrap-around legal assistance as part of a health justice partnership model.

Launched in 2018 with a founding grant from the Victorian Law Foundation, the LGBTIQ Legal Service has assisted hundreds of clients with a range of legal issues including discrimination, family violence, personal safety and other human rights issues. Over the past two-years, the LGBTIQ Legal Service has carried out [extraordinary advocacy](#) on many law reform and justice-related issues affecting the community, including birth certificate law reform, anti-vilification protections, the federal 'Religious Freedom' bills and sexual harassment in the workplace.

Addressing the delivery of the grant, **Minister for Equality Martin Foley commented**, *"the important work of the LGBTIQ Legal Service over the past two years has provided valuable insights into the legal needs of Victoria's LGBTIQ communities."*

*"The Victorian Government is proud to be providing more than \$540,000 in funding to help the St Kilda Legal Service continue offering specialist support to LGBTIQ communities, particularly as they face the risk of increased legal needs during the COVID-19 pandemic."*

While the Victorian Government has provided much-needed and urgent assistance to enable the LGBTIQ Legal Service to continue its crucial work, a key finding of the Service's [Legal Needs Analysis Report](#) is that ongoing and secure funding is required to maintain a permanent specialist community legal service for LGBTIQ communities. The Report also found additional funding and resources are required for a specialist LGBTIQ community legal service to respond to particular and more specialised areas of law, such as immigration and family law, which made up more than 50% of the LGBTIQ Legal Services client enquiries during the two-year pilot.

**Chief Executive Officer at St Kilda Legal Service, Mel Dye**, said *"the establishment and success of the LGBTIQ Legal Service has identified a great need for dedicated and specialist legal services for LGBTIQ communities in Victoria. Funding for these services must be secure and ongoing, and services must be sufficiently resourced to respond to the extent of legal need across the state and across communities."*

Over the past two years, the LGBTIQ Legal Service has also developed a series of advocacy and community assistance initiatives that require ongoing funding to ensure longevity. These initiatives include:

- [Roberta Perkins Law Project](#); Victoria's first dedicated community legal service program for the trans and gender diverse community
- [Change Your ID Day](#); a one-stop-shop for the Victorian trans and gender diverse community to change their sex and gender descriptors on legal identification documents
- [Reflections on LGBTIQ Legal Need report](#); Victoria's first LGBTIQ legal needs analysis, highlighting the specific and varied legal needs of the states LGBTIQ population to support policy makers in better understanding and meeting these needs

*"The LGBTIQ Legal Service plays an important role, not only in supporting our communities, but in documenting and highlighting the ongoing disparities and barriers faced by LGBTIQ people in everyday life. The challenges for our communities didn't end with marriage equality. The support from the Andrews Government to keep this service going is greatly appreciated and will ensure LGBTIQ people are better able to go about their lives with dignity,"* said **Thorne Harbour Health CEO, Simon Ruth**.

With secure ongoing funding, the LGBTIQ Legal Service can continue to play an integral role in addressing the legal needs of the LGBTIQ community, and work with policy makers to affect positive, long-lasting change.

To make a financial contribution to the LGBTIQ Legal Service visit [www.givenow.com.au/lgbtiqlegal](http://www.givenow.com.au/lgbtiqlegal) to improve outcomes for the LGBTIQ community through the law.

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