



PRIDE INCLUSION PROGRAMS

MEDIA STATEMENT

24 AUGUST 2022

STATEMENT ON ACON'S PRIDE IN DIVERSITY PROGRAM

The following statement is in response to articles published in The Daily Telegraph on Wednesday 24 August, titled 'Woke loos a wee for all' (print) and 'ACON is giving advice to Prime Minister's Office, ABC, government departments, universities, police' (online).

Pride in Diversity is ACON's national not-for-profit employer support program for LGBTQ workplace inclusion.

The goal of *Pride in Diversity* has always been to work with employers to create more inclusive workplaces for LGBTQ workers and improve awareness among their colleagues. The program provides resources and other tools through a self-funded membership model.

Pride in Diversity was established following requests from employers, seeking advice and support in this area to enable parity with their international offices and emerging best practice in diversity and inclusion. Without market demand, *Pride in Diversity* would not exist.

Surveys show that 86% of employees at participating organisations felt more productive at work and 81% feel more engaged with their organisation as a direct result of the program.

Pride in Diversity membership is open to all employers in Australia. Members range from those just starting to implement LGBTQ workplace diversity and inclusion initiatives for the first time right through to those that would be considered best practice internationally.

Pride in Diversity is not a public advocacy organisation. Its remit is strictly related to workplace inclusion.

Pride in Diversity enjoys widespread support from all workers, LGBTQ and otherwise. A 2021 Australian Workplace Equality Survey of 45,000 employees found 85% of people supported the work their organisation does for LGBTQ inclusion. Nearly 60% of respondents said a business's track record in this aspect of inclusion would positively influence their decision to join the organisation.

The importance of *Pride in Diversity's* work must be situated in a broader social context. The Australian Workplace Equality Index (AWEI) shows Australia still has unfinished business regarding equality for LGBTQ Australians in the workplace. For example, only 28% of respondents would consider themselves an active ally to LGBTQ people, 11% did not feel managers/team leaders would address bullying and 14% of respondents witnessed negative jokes/commentary targeting LGBTQ people.

Research also demonstrates a link between LGBTQ Australians not feeling safe at work and negative mental health outcomes. La Trobe University research from 2020 found 57.2% of more than 6,000 surveyed LGBTQ people were experiencing high or very high levels of psychological distress, while 41.9% reported thoughts of suicide over the past 12 months.

Through the *Pride in Diversity* membership program and the AWEI, we have seen substantial shifts in LGBTQ inclusion within Australian workplaces. This, in turn, have helped improve health outcomes for LGBTQ employees.



PRIDE INCLUSION PROGRAMS

There are multiple instruments that measure inclusion in a wide range of areas both in Australia and overseas. Some measure inclusion initiatives for those with a disability, others measure inclusion for culturally and linguistically diverse communities.

Global indices that measure LGBTQ inclusion can be found in the US, UK, Ireland and Hong Kong.

The AWEI is a free benchmarking instrument available to all Australian employers.

Its purpose is to (a) assess, measure and determine the current Australian benchmark for LGBTQ workplace inclusion annually, and (b) to assess the body of work completed by participating organisations against that benchmark in order to provide feedback for organisations' strategy development and planning.

Questions in the AWEI are specific to Australia and reflect Australian culture. Determining the areas addressed within the index is driven by current practice here in Australia.

ACON is a community-based organisation specialising in community health, HIV responses and inclusion for LGBTQ people. ACON works to achieve better health outcomes for LGBTQ communities through a range of programs and services including sexual health, mental health, alcohol and drugs, community safety, domestic and family violence, ageing, disability and inclusion.

Established in 1985, our purpose is to create opportunities for people in our communities to live their healthiest lives.

We know that health and wellbeing outcomes of LGBTQ people are directly related to experiences of stigma, prejudice, discrimination and abuse.

At ACON, we strive to ensure that all people we work for feel welcomed by the services we offer, the spaces we provide and the language we use. We encourage others to do the same so that no one is left behind.

MEDIA ENQUIRIES

David Alexander
ACON Media and Communications
dalexander@acon.org.au
0428 477 042