



## SWITCHBOARD VICTORIA

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# STATEMENT ON POLICE MARCHING AT PRIDE MARCH 2022

Switchboard Victoria shares the concerns of many others regarding the proposed participation of Victoria Police marching in uniform in the 2022 Pride March. Our position is informed by our daily work providing trauma-informed support for some of our most marginalised LGBTIQ+ people during their most difficult times. Switchboard believes all members of our LGBTIQ+ communities have the inarguable right to march in an environment that feels welcoming and safe for them.

Switchboard's ask is that Police do not march at Midsumma Pride March in uniform nor with weapons. To be clear, we are not calling for Police members to be banned from attending Pride.

We ask that Police and Midsumma heed the calls from many parts of our community to consider the impact of Police marching in uniforms on the ability of marginalised community members to attend and feel safe at Pride. At the heart of the growing and highly contested discussions around police representation at Pride lies deeply entrenched trauma. We recognise the ongoing work by First Nations and LGBTIQ+ leaders, in partnership with police and government, to rectify a long history of police brutality, mistreatment and discrimination against marginalised communities.

However, at Switchboard, in our everyday work, we hear first-hand ongoing experiences of mistreatment, discrimination and trauma. There is still a long journey of work and community healing ahead before we can consider a time where police participating in uniform might feel safe for all.

Switchboard asks Victoria Police and Midsumma to consider, who is Pride March for and who needs it the most? While we recognise that some members of our community may feel a sense of safety or support from police marching at Pride, we invite you to centre the voices and experiences of people most isolated and marginalised within our communities, as you consider this issue.

We acknowledge the ongoing work of Victoria Police to move in the direction of positive change with LGBTIQ+ communities. Switchboard works alongside police and other agencies to support service users and provide secondary consultation as a community-controlled LGBTIQ+ service. We believe that through trauma-informed community engagement, advocacy, and education, we can continue working together to further much-needed work in justice reform, police accountability, equity and increased investment in prevention that our LGBTIQ+ communities need and deserve.

We note that many past and serving Victoria Police members identify as LGBTIQ+ and some are amongst Switchboard's service users. We will always welcome these community members to access our services for support.

Confidential spaces for survivor-centred truth-telling processes are the first step in healing trauma and sparking positive change. We support the call from many First Nations organisations for Victoria Police to meaningfully engage with, be accountable for and institute reforms to address historic and ongoing harms.

Such processes should address the needs of all marginalised communities, many of whom are LGBTIQ+ people, including First Nations peoples, people of colour, refugees, people living with mental ill health and disability, trans and gender diverse communities, sex workers, young people, and those who have experienced homelessness, incarceration, contact with the legal system, or substance use.

*Passed by the Board of Switchboard Victoria on 13th December 2021*