

Innovating for inclusion: Victoria Police Trans and Gender Diverse Employee Network

Jeremy Oliver

Eda Sofia Correa
Bernini

Victoria Police

Victoria Police has a number of employee networks for employees to connect with one another around shared interests and identities. The Trans and Gender Diverse Employee Network (TAGDEN) is in its second year.



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Employee networks provide many benefits to organisations including fostering and promoting inclusion, supporting organisational change, improving and increasing diversity, identifying and developing leaders, providing insight into employee experiences and connection as well as insight into diverse communities within the broader community.¹

Networks can serve a variety of functions:

- Peer-to-peer support and professional development.
- A resource that can be tapped to better understand issues affecting identity groups within organisations or to get insight into how to interact with communities outside of the organisation.
- A space that will foster inclusion and lead to better outcomes for the wellbeing of employees.
- A safe space for employees to discuss, manage, action and advise on issues that are affecting members of their community and raise these issues with a united voice within the organisation.
- Educate members of the organisation through peer-to-peer training.
- A mechanism for employees to connect across silos with one another.

Network members volunteer their time because they are motivated to fill a visible, responsible function in support of people who share their affinity. They are not required to contribute their lived or professional expertise

to organisational priorities. This said, well supported and sponsored employee networks with clear, well-articulated purpose are more likely to contribute to the development of organisational priorities and are more likely to be an asset when dealing with communities.²

Jeremy Oliver said, 'As the LGBTIQ+ Communities Portfolio Manager, and previously one of only 2 full-time LGBTIQ+ Liaison Officers at Victoria Police and a member of the Victoria Police Pride Council, I have been involved in LGBTIQ+ advocacy since I joined the force.

'When I was the LGBTIQ+ Liaison Officer, my role covered Victoria's Southern Metro Region, which afforded me the chance to meet a wide range of employees. During this time, I had the pleasure of meeting trans and gender diverse employees across Victoria, and quickly realised that these employees did not know one another. At the time, I was also exploring my own personal gender identity. I didn't feel entirely comfortable identifying as a 'man' but I didn't have the language or concept of gender diversity to fully explore what this meant to me.

1. Based on a 2023 discussion paper produced by Christine Mulholland from the Department of Justice and Community Services and provided to Victoria Police as a partner in the supporting research. 'Increasing the Sustainability of Employee Resource Groups' draws on survey responses from public sector employers, Diversity and Inclusion Community of Practice members and employee resource group members.

2. Victoria Police Workforce Diversity and Inclusion Framework 2023-2030: Action 4, Employee Networks Review. Research and consultation done by Peter Knight.

'Navigating this personal journey in a professional environment added a level of complexity. I was making enquiries into the supports available and processes that existed for trans and gender diverse employees, of which there was few at the time. The early processes that were in place were clunky and risked causing further harm to employees', said Jeremy.

Innovation is born out of necessity and this led to Victoria Police staff creating the Trans and Gender Diverse Employee Network (TAGDEN), which is supported by the Gender Equality and Inclusion Division and Victoria Police Pride Council. TAGDEN started in August 2022 as a small group for people who identified as transgender, gender diverse, non-binary and/or gender questioning/exploring employees, wherever they were on their gender identity journey.

TAGDEN offers a safe and inclusive space for trans and gender diverse employees to come together, share stories and experiences, seek peer support and feel part of a larger trans and gender diverse community. The focus is on community, connection, support, advocacy and awareness, amplifying voices and celebration. The network is private and confidential, which allows people to come to meetings and events as their authentic self, which includes using affirmed names, pronouns, and gender expression.

Since it began, TAGDEN has connected trans and gender diverse employees and communities by:

- developing strategic partnerships with internal and external stakeholders
- improving visibility through an intranet page and centralised email account
- hosting social events and online meetings
- providing crucial peer support to employees
- emerging as leaders in subject-matter expertise within the organisation
- influencing important organisational improvements such as the implementation of a gender affirmation planning document and advice regarding gender affirmation leave in the enterprise bargaining agreement.

In December 2023, TAGDEN was awarded Pride Initiative of the Year at the inaugural Victoria Police Pride Awards ceremony. This was an opportunity to recognise and celebrate TAGDEN and highlight how it has improved the wellbeing of LGBTIQ+ people and communities in the organisation and across Victoria. The award was sponsored by The Police Association Victoria, which has supported trans and gender diverse employees and improved workplace conditions and culture.

TAGDEN was recognised again in 2024 when it received a Highly Commended Certificate as part of the annual GLOBE Victoria Pride Awards. GLOBE Victoria is a registered



Wayne Gatt, Tyler McRae and Jeremy Oliver at the Australian LGBTQ+ Workplace Inclusion Awards.

Image: The Police Association Victoria

charity that connects LGBTIQ+ people professionally and socially while nurturing communities in Victoria.

TAGDEN has emerged as one of few trans and gender diverse employee networks across the Victorian Government. It continues to build and nurture strong relationships across the Victorian Public Service LGBTIQ+ Pride Network and GenSHED, as well as other Victoria Police employee networks.

In June 2024, Jeremy Oliver received the Euphoria Social's Courage Award in recognition of their efforts to promote LGBTIQ+ inclusion in Victoria Police. Victoria Police was recognised as a Silver Tier Employer at the 2024 Australian LGBTQ+ Workplace Inclusion Awards. The awards are based on results from the Australian Workplace Equality Index (AWEI) that is a benchmarking tool to assess workplaces on their LGBTQ+ inclusion initiatives. In this year's AWEI awards, Victoria Police was the highest Australian law enforcement agency to be recognised and the only Victorian Government agency to be awarded silver.

'I am incredibly proud of where Victoria Police is at and what work is being done for trans and gender diverse employee inclusion. I know there is still a long way ahead but the appetite for change is evident. I encourage people to understand that visibility, equal rights and allyship for trans and gender diverse people is incredibly important. It changes attitudes, opens people's minds, helps to destigmatise diverse gender identities and plays a crucial role in raising awareness to eliminate discrimination and other barriers to inclusion', said Jeremy.