
www.fdpn.org.au/queer-displacements-conference/



Forcibly Displaced
People Network

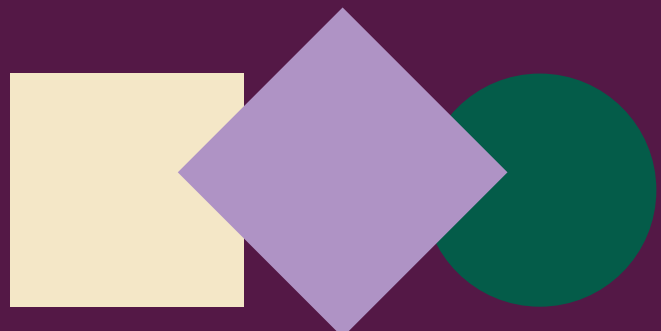
2025

Queer Displacements Conference

FOCUS ON THE ASIA AND THE PACIFIC REGIONS

Conference program

3-5 September 2025 | Victoria University City
Tower | Naarm (Melbourne) Australia



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Acknowledgement of Country

On behalf of the Forcibly Displaced People Network, we acknowledge the Traditional Owners of the lands on which the 2025 Queer Displacements Conference takes place – the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung peoples of the Kulin Nation. We pay respect to their Elders past, present, and emerging.

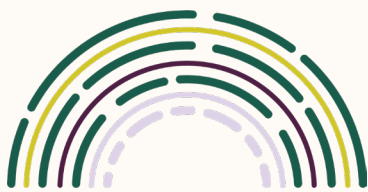
We honour their ongoing and unbroken connection to, and care for, the land, waters, and sky, sustaining this Country since time immemorial.

We extend our deepest respect to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples across this continent now known as Australia. We express our immense gratitude for the ways in which First Nations peoples have welcomed other displaced people, and we recognise their enduring leadership in struggles for justice, dignity, and self-determination.

As forcibly displaced people who have also lost our homes, we stand in solidarity with First Nations peoples. We commit to practising allyship by working in solidarity with you, in ways that you choose and determine.

Sovereignty was never ceded. This always was, and always will be, Aboriginal land.

Organiser



**Forcibly Displaced
People Network**

The event is presented by the Forcibly Displaced People Network (FDPN).

The Forcibly Displaced People Network is the first registered LGBTIQ+ refugee-led organisation in Australia. Our mission is to create a future where every LGBTIQ+ forcibly displaced person not only survives but thrives, and where their rights and dignity are not just recognised but celebrated and protected.

WE ARE THE VOICE OF LGBTIQ+ DISPLACEMENT.

The Queer Displacements Conference would not be possible without the commitment and excellent work of the organising committee.

We extend our gratitudes to:

- our Volunteer Coordinators Samina Hassan and Elodiea Wilson and the large team of volunteers for their support in making this event run smoothly and efficiently,
- our Board and in particular Dr Brandy Cochraine for making this conference a reality,
- our members and Lived Experience Advisory Group for assisting with the assessment of abstracts and scholarship applications.

We would like to also thank each and every LGBTIQ+ displaced person attending this event for trusting us, for sharing their lived experience and expertise, and challenging us all to be better.

Welcome to the 2025 Queer Displacements Conference

This year marks five years of the Forcibly Displaced People Network (FDPN). Five years of building community, of collective action, creating safer systems, and ensuring LGBTIQ+ forcibly displaced people are not just seen but respected, supported, and included.

The Queer Displacements conference has been an integral part of FDPN's work.

This conference is a space for all of us – people with lived experience, service providers, researchers, advocates, and decision-makers – to come together with a shared purpose. We are here to collaborate, to listen deeply, to work together, and to act.

On behalf of FDPN, I acknowledge those who heard us at the first Queer Displacements Conference in 2019 and took action. You employed us. You resourced our leadership. You moved beyond tokenism and committed to structural change. We see you, and we thank you.

Still, the work is far from over.

We gather as anti-gender forces continue to rise across the world. Our communities are targeted, criminalised, and excluded.

But we are not powerless. Across Asia and the Pacific, people are organising, resisting, and leading change rooted in care, knowledge, and cultural strength.

This conference centres the voices, brilliance, and strategies of LGBTIQ+ forcibly displaced people in Asia and the Pacific. These are not just regions of concern – they are places of action, survival, and bold vision.

During the 2025 Queer Displacements Conference, we will share solutions, build relationships, and hold space for difficult and transformative conversations. All of you come with different perspectives and roles, but all of us are united in our commitment to justice and change.

As the Co-founder and Executive Director of FDPN, I would like to thank you all for being part of this journey. Thank you for choosing solidarity over silence.

Thank you for showing up – not just today, but for the long haul.

Together, we're building something that lasts.

Together, we move from survival to thriving.

Dr Renee Dixson (they/them)

Co-founder and Executive Director | FDPN

GRATITUDE to Sponsors and Partners

We extend our heartfelt gratitude to all of our event sponsors, partners and supporters for their commitment to supporting LGBTIQA+ forcibly displaced people.

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SECTOR PARTNERS

- Multicultural Youth Advocacy Network Australia
- Rainbow Railroad
- Refugee Council of Australia
- Settlement Council of Australia
- Welcoming Australia

GOVERNMENT PARTNERS

- Victorian Government Department of Families, Fairness and Housing (Pride Events and Festivals Fund)
- Australian Government (Multicultural Grassroots Initiatives Grant)

VISUAL MEDIA PARTNERS

- EventEquipment
- Snaps By Simz

About the 2025 Queer Displacements Conference

Conference Code of Conduct

Our Commitment

The Queer Displacements Conference is a space for truth-telling, advocacy, and collective care. We prioritise the safety, dignity, and leadership of LGBTIQ+ forcibly displaced people. Everyone attending, regardless of background, role, or experience, is expected to treat others with respect and as equals.

By taking part in all conference and official side events, you agree to follow these principles.

Respect, safety, accessibility and inclusion

This conference is built on values of inclusion, equality, and care. All attendees have a role in creating a space where everyone feels safe and respected.

LGBTIQ+ forcibly displaced people are not "guests" or "case studies." **LGBTIQ+ forcibly displaced people are our peers, leaders, experts and collaborators.**

The following behaviours will not be accepted:

- » Give a verbal or written warning
- » Harassment, intimidation, or bullying
- » Racism, xenophobia, or anti-refugee sentiment
- » Homophobia, biphobia, transphobia, or intersex exclusion
- » Ableism, ageism, or classism
- » Sexual harassment or inappropriate contact
- » Misgendering, deadnaming, or outing someone without consent
- » Other behaviours or actions causing harm
- » Speaking over, interrupting, or tokenising people with lived experience
- » Disrupting sessions or social spaces
- » Photographing or filming someone without permission.

All conference attendees are expected to:

- » Use microphones so everyone can hear
- » Always use and respect people's correct names and pronouns
- » Avoid using perfumes with strong scents

- » Avoid loud yelling, or crowding around others
- » Respect different ways of communicating – some people may pause, speak quietly, use assistive tech, or express emotion differently.

Consent, participation, and trauma-informed engagement

- » Always ask before taking someone's photo or video. **If a person has a red dot on their lanyard, they must not be photographed or filmed.**
- » Don't ask questions like "Why did you leave your country?" or "What happened to you?" This is not a space to seek personal stories.
- » If someone starts sharing a personal experience, check if it's okay to continue the conversation. Example: "Would you like to keep talking about this, or would you prefer a break?"
- » **You never have to share your story of LGBTIQ+ displacement to participate.**
- » If someone disengages or says no, respect their choice without question.
- » If you feel unsafe or see something concerning, please speak with an FDPN team member or go to the info desk.
- » You don't have to be directly affected to report an issue – if you see something, say something.
- » If someone tells us something happened to them, we will listen and believe them.

What happens if the Code is broken

If someone breaks this Code of Conduct, FDPN may:

- » Give a verbal or written warning
- » Ask the person to leave a session or the conference with no refund
- » Report serious incidents to authorities if required

These actions are taken at FDPN's discretion, based on the safety of our community, especially LGBTIQ+ forcibly displaced attendees.

Sustainability

We aim to reduce waste and ensure care for the environment:

- » Printed materials are limited. We encourage you to download a copy of this program.
- » If you are bringing materials to share, please be mindful of quantity and take back what has not been used.
- » Please return your lanyards at the end of the event.
- » The name badges are printed on recycled cardboard, please recycle them after.
- » We strongly encourage you to bring your water bottle and take-away cup.
- » All crockery and cutlery is biodegradable or recyclable.

Catering

The pre-conference and main conference are fully catered.

We are proud to partner with **Beit Siti** ("my grandma's home" in Arabic), a woman-owned Palestinian catering studio, whose dishes are not only nourishing but resisting the colonial erasure. Beit Siti is an edible testament to Palestinian sovereignty and survival.

Wellbeing support

We are proud to partner with The Iceberg Foundation, whose counsellors will be providing wellbeing support to all attendees. The team wears bright pink lanyards.

They can be approached by all attendees for a quick debrief.

A separate counselling room is available.

If you need more support

- » QLife: LGBTIQ+ peer counselling by phone and webchat 1800 184 527 (3 pm – midnight daily); [www.qlife.org.au](http://www qlife.org.au)
- » Beyond Blue: phone and online counselling 1300 224 636 (24/7) www.beyondblue.org.au
- » LifeLine: crisis support by phone 13 11 14 (24/7)

Safety at the event

FDPN staff and volunteers are here to help. FDPN volunteers and staff are distinguishable by a bright pink lanyard.

Security is also present at the event.

Venue information

Venue: Victoria University City Tower

Address: 370 Little Lonsdale Street, Melbourne VIC 3000

Getting to the venue

The City campus is located in the centre of Melbourne. Use the [PTV Journey Planner](#) to plan your trip. There is no parking onsite.

Conference rooms

Pre-conference: Level 10 (room 15) with one session taking place on Level 6 (room 11).

Main conference's sessions take place over three levels:

- » Level 25: Main conference room for registration, all plenary sessions and meal breaks
- » Level 10 (room 15) and Level 24: Parallel sessions

Level 10 (L10) has shared access and additional shared facilities such as a public kitchenette, café and balcony. To get to this level, use the first set of lifts.

Level 24 (L24) and Level 25 (L25) will be used by the Conference attendees only. To get to these levels, use the second bank of lifts. Volunteers on site will help locate the rooms.

Other rooms for attendees:

- » Multi-faith room: Level 5, Room 7
- » Parenting room: Level 10, Room 6
- » Quiet space: Level 24

Accessibility

The venue is wheelchair accessible. Lift access is available.

Weather in Melbourne

In early September, Melbourne moves from winter to spring. Days are about 10°C to 18°C. Mornings and nights are cooler. It can be windy and often rains. Bring a warm jumper, a waterproof jacket, and an umbrella.

Social media

Official conference hashtag: **#QueerDisplacements**

Please capitalise each word for accessibility for people using screen readers.

FDPN social media accounts: @FDPN.LGBTIQ on Facebook and Instagram.

Make sure to check consent before posting people's photos.

Official *SIDE* Events

3:30 PM - 5:00 PM

Wednesday 3 Sep 2025

Online Only

Workshop

My Story Doesn't End: Critical Storytelling As Trans & Queer Refugee Activism

A/Prof Debanuj DasGupta | University of California Santa Barbara

Trans & Queer refugees, asylum seekers are often required to repeat a scripted narrative of surviving torture in their countries of origin in order to receive asylum or refugee status in countries of the global North. This script frames Trans & Queer refugees as victims in need of saving by the global humanitarian complex.

This workshop offers insights from a Queer and Trans refugee lead scholar & activist collaboration supported by the University of California Humanities Research Institute. During this two year long collaboration between researchers and Trans & Queer refugee activists, we used letter writing, creative mapping, and story writing in order to bring out affective attachments between country of origin and new home country, refugee world-making practices that seek to disrupt the global humanitarian complex.

The workshop will explore how to develop creative writing, mapping based short story telling sessions that attends to layered everyday aspects of the lives of queer and trans refugees. The learning outcomes are transferrable for those engaging with refugee lived experiences in research and advocacy.

TARGET AUDIENCES: Post-graduate students, early career researchers, refugee advocates (both with and without lived experience).

Separate ticket is required | Register Online: <https://events.humanitix.com/workshop-critical-storytelling-as-trans-and-queer-refugee-activism>

6:30 PM - 9:00 PM

Wednesday 3 Sep 2025

The Victorian Pride Centre

Fundraising Film Screening

Out of Iraq

In 2004, Ramadi was the most dangerous place on earth and the last place anyone would expect to find love. But that's what happened between an Iraqi translator working for the U.S. and an Iraqi soldier. Out of Iraq is the story of their unwavering love, against all odds. This fundraising film screening will be followed by the panel discussion.

Separate ticket is required | Register Online: <https://events.humanitix.com/out-of-iraq>

7:30 AM - 9:30 AM

Friday 5th Sep 2025

By Invitation only

Donor Breakfast

Community Voices for Funders

This intimate gathering will bring together key philanthropists, government representatives, and donors to celebrate Forcibly Displaced People Network's five year impact, and what is coming up next. Hear from experts, funders, and community voices, and learn how you can support the future of LGBTIQ+ forcibly displaced people in Australia.

If you are a representative of a philanthropic organisation or government funder, and would like to attend this event, please email: renee.dixon@fdpn.org.au

My conference *AGENDA*



Pre-conference | 3 SEPTEMBER 2025

for LGBTIQ+ forcibly displaced people only

PROGRAM AT A GLANCE

12:30 PM - 1:00 PM

Arrival and Lunch

1:00 PM - 3:00 PM

Room 15, L10

LGBTIQ+ Forcibly Displaced Communities Forum

3:00 PM - 3:30 PM

Coffee Break

3:30 PM - 5:00 PM

Workshops

Room 15, L10

Workshop One

Raising Our Voices: A workshop on self-advocacy for people with LGBTIQ+ and refugee experiences

Hanna Qereqeretabua, Bijan Kardouni, Epipola and Parissa Bozorg | STARTTS NSW, Walk on Walk Strong | Australia

Room 11, L6

Workshop Two

Strengthening Social Capacity: Building healthy relationships and conflict management skills for LGBTIQ+ refugees

Dr Li-Min Lee | Australia

ABSTRACTS AND DETAILS

1:00 PM – 3:00 PM

LGBTIQA+ Forcibly Displaced Communities Forum

Room 15, L10

Thuy-Vi Huynh and Benjamin Oh | FDPN, Australia

This forum is a dedicated space for LGBTIQA+ forcibly displaced people to speak about the changes they want to see in Australia. We know that many LGBTIQA+ refugees, people seeking asylum, and migrants face exclusion – not only in systems like housing, healthcare, and visas, but also within multicultural and community spaces meant to support them. Homophobia, transphobia, racism, and isolation often overlap, making it hard to feel safe or included.

This session is about listening, sharing, and working together. **What needs to change so that you feel seen, heard, and supported? What would a truly inclusive multicultural community look like for LGBTIQA+ displaced people?**

This is not a consultation. It's a community-led space to centre your voice and set the agenda. Insights from this forum will help guide future advocacy, training, and partnerships between multicultural organisations and LGBTIQA+ forcibly communities. Come share your ideas, your vision, and your experiences. This is your space to speak, and our role is to listen.

3:30 PM – 5:00 PM

Workshops

Workshop One Raising Our Voices: A workshop on self-advocacy for people with LGBTIQA+ and refugee experiences

Room 15, L10

Hanna Qereqeretabua, Bijan Kardouni, Epipola and Parissa Bozorg | STARTTS NSW, Walk On Walk Strong, Australia

This workshop co-creates a space for participants to build skills and confidence in advocating for their needs, helping participants develop advocacy skills, gain confidence, and connect with peers in a welcoming and affirming environment. Participants will use tangible tools and strategies to navigate challenges and effectively advocate for themselves and their communities. Participants will leave the workshop with a draft of an advocacy plan they can actually use.

During the session, participants will be guided step-by-step through the manual, learning concrete skills such as identifying advocacy goals, preparing compelling narratives, navigating complex systems (e.g., immigration, housing, healthcare), and accessing relevant support services. This workshop also enables time for connecting with peers and discussing shared experiences and unique perspectives.

Workshop Two Strengthening Social Capacity: Building healthy relationships and conflict management skills for LGBTIQ+ refugees

Room 11, L6

Dr Li-Min Lee | Australia

This workshop focuses on strengthening the social capacity of LGBTIQ+ refugees, asylum seekers, and migrants from CALD backgrounds. Participants will engage in practical activities designed to build essential skills for fostering healthy relationships, setting boundaries, and managing power dynamics within cross-cultural contexts. Given the specific risks for LGBTIQ+ displaced individuals, who often experience heightened isolation due to intersecting factors such as race, sexuality, and migration status, this workshop will provide a supportive environment to address these challenges. The workshop will focus on Healthy Relationships and Boundaries, guiding participants to recognise and establish healthy relationships while navigating cultural differences.

Through role-play exercises and group discussions, participants will build confidence in navigating social relationships and advocating for themselves.

DAY 1 | 4 SEPTEMBER 2025

PROGRAM AT A GLANCE

8:00 AM - 9:00 AM	Registration Opens	
9:00 AM - 10:45 AM Main Conference Room L25	Morning Plenaries Welcome to 2025 Queer Displacements Conference	
	Panel Discussion	First Nations, Climate and Migration Justice Maryanne Rimbao Humanity and Nature Indigenous Women's Association PNG, Matcha Phornin Sangsan Anakot Yawachon Development Project Thailand, Ben Tyler Kakadu Kitchen Australia
	Lived Experience Good Practice Spotlight	Leveraging Community-led Initiatives to Drive Outcomes for LGBTIQ+ Clients through the SETS Program Francis Jimoh STARTTS NSW, Australia
10:45 AM - 11:15 AM	Coffee Break	
11:15 AM - 1:00 PM Main Conference Room L25	Lived Experience Good Practice Spotlight	LGBTIQ+ Refugees and People Seeking Asylum in the Settlement Engagement and Transition Support (SETS) Program Leticia Many Coloured Sky, Australia
	Lived Experience Keynote	The Hidden Rainbow: LGBTQIA+ Refugee's Survival in Malaysia Hasan Al-Akrra, Lovishniakri Sekaran Refugee Emergency Fund, Malaysia
	Lived Experience Panel Discussion	Queer language justice: embracing solidarities between community members, language practitioners and service providers Mikhael Touma, Frankie Hanman Siegersma, Blossom Ah Ket, Paige Matthews Language Justice Network, Australia
1:00 PM - 2:00 PM	Lunch	

2:00 PM – 3:30 PM	Parallel Sessions
Main Conference Room L25	Gender-based Violence, Persecution and Conversion Practices
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Redefining conversion practices as gender-based violence Dr Tina Dixon FDPN, Australia » “There’s no saving here”: resisting LGBTQA+ conversion practices at the intersection of migration, culture and religion Percy Gurtler ARCSHS, La Trobe University, Australia » The queer migrant project: domestic and family violence, intersectionality, and the LGBTQ+ migrant community in QLD Dilsah de Rham, Saina Avesta and Mark Kleine LGBTI Legal Service, Australia » Perseverance: identifying and responding to family violence in the context of queer displacement Jesse Brown Thorne Harbour Health, Australia » Gender persecution in Tasmania: experiences of LGBTIQ+ forcibly displaced people Taya Ketelaar-Jones University of Tasmania, Australia
L24	Refugee Status Determination and Policy Frameworks <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Shirking responsibility: Australia’s offshore processing regime Michaela Rhode Asylum Seekers Resource Centre, Australia » Ministerial intervention under s48b: examining the process through an LGBTIQ+ lens Iona Moller Refugee Legal, Australia » Representing SOGIESC clients with the Department & Tribunal: what we’ve learned, seen, and what we’re advocating for Katie Wrigley and Gretel Emerson Refugee Advice and Casework Service, Australia » The legal and social landscape surrounding queer asylum in Japan A/Prof Haruko Kudo Kobe University, Japan » Communicating LGBTIQ+ claims in Australia and the Asia-Pacific: the role of legal advocates Jaskiran Kaur Rekhraj Australia

Room 15, L10	Mental Health and Trauma Recovery	
	»	Exploring the experiences of queer international students accessing mental health support in Victoria Xin Hu Australia
	»	Co-designing mental health resources for LGBTIQ+ displaced people and migrants: promoting wellbeing and help-seeking Dr Li-Min Lee Australia
	»	Heartspace: co-designing a model of mental health and wellbeing for LGBTIQ+ refugees and people seeking asylum Grace Dee Macauley Many Coloured Sky, Australia
	»	Who gets to be well? The mental health implications of necropolitics Alex Duarte and Kelli Charles Australia
	»	Resilience in movement: supporting the mental health and wellbeing of displaced LGBTIQ+ people Néstor Iván Elvir Hernández Asociación Honduras Diversa, Honduras/ Spain
3:30 PM - 4:00 PM	Coffee Break	
4:00 PM - 5:45 PM Main Conference Room L25	Afternoon Plenaries	
	Keynote	Attacking LGBTQIA+ rights in the name of ‘defending women’: Confronting the contradictions of ‘anti-gender’ movements in pursuit of gender justice Dr. Lata Narayanaswamy University of Leeds, UK
	Lived Experience Panel Discussion	Queer liberation as a global fight for safety, dignity, and self-determination Rami Elghattis, Melak Khaleel, Anastasia Le facilitated by Basem Kerbage Queer Arabs, Australia
	Good Practice Spotlight	The role of philanthropy in enhancing refugee-led advocacy and solutions for forcibly displaced LGBTQIA+ people Dr Ruth McNair AM Pride Foundation Australia
6:00 PM - 7:00 PM L24	Welcome Reception	

9:00 AM – 1:00 PM

Morning Plenaries

Main Conference Room | L25

Welcome to the 2025 Queer Displacement Conference

MC | Noushin Barghi

- **Welcome to Country** | Wurundjeri Elder Annette Xiberras, Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation
- **Human Rights Sponsor Welcome Message** | Dr Ruth McNair AM, Pride Foundation Australia
- **FDPN Welcome Message** | Dr Renee Dixon, Co-founder, Executive Director, FDPN

Panel Discussion

First Nations, Climate and Migration Justice

Maryanne Rimbao | Humanity and Nature Indigenous Women's Association PNG Matcha Phornin | Sangsan Anakot Yawachon Development Project, Thailand and Ben Tyler | Kakadu Kitchen, Australia

This panel brings together First Nations advocates working across different regions to explore the intersections of climate justice, displacement, and LGBTIQ+ rights. First Nations speakers will reflect on experiences from Australia, Papua New Guinea, and the Thailand–Myanmar border, highlighting the deep links between colonialism, land dispossession, statelessness, and anti-LGBTIQ+ violence.

While the speakers come from varied cultural and political contexts, each will speak to the shared realities of communities facing multiple layers of marginalisation – where First Nations rights, land rights, gender justice, and climate resistance are deeply connected.

The panel will also explore approaches to fostering inclusion of LGBTIQ+ people within Indigenous movements, including efforts to resist religious and colonial narratives that drive exclusion. Speakers will share strategies for building safety, belonging and allyship in contexts shaped by colonisation and resistance, which offer transferrable learnings to achieving LGBTIQ+ inclusion in multicultural spaces.

This discussion invites everyone to listen, reflect, and engage in solidarity – recognising that there

is no refugee justice without First Nations justice, and neither can be realised without addressing the climate crisis. The panel will offer practical insights for cross-community work and call for deeper relationships between displaced communities and First Nations peoples grounded in respect, learning, and collective care for land and each other.

Lived Experience Good Practice Spotlight

Leveraging community-led initiatives to drive outcomes for LGBTIQ+ clients through the SETS Program

Francis Jimoh | STARTTS NSW, Australia

This Good Practice Spotlight presents STARTTS' agile casework model within the Settlement Engagement and Transition Support (SETS) program, grounded in the peer-led Walk On, Walk Strong program for LGBTIQ+ refugees and asylum seekers.

Our Casework is rooted in lived experience; the program leverages an existing community to deliver all-rounded and accessible support. Our localised casework is supported community members who draw on shared cultural and psychosocial insights to direct our casework hours to achieving relevant support that people need.

Our Steering Committee composed of peer leaders and staff, including those with lived experience function as a semi-governance body, contributing to service delivery based on real-time community feedback and priorities.

This agile model ensures that individual and

community needs are addressed holistically and flexibly. Evidence shows that peer-led approaches enhance trust, access, and outcomes in LGBTQIA+ service provision. STARTTS' model demonstrates how SETS can support inclusive, co-designed, and locally embedded pathways to wellbeing and social inclusion.

Lived Experience Good Practice Spotlight

LGBTQIA+ refugees and people seeking asylum in the Settlement Engagement and Transition Support (SETS) Program

Leticia | Many Coloured Sky, Australia

Many Coloured Sky, the queer development agency, works both internationally and within Australia to provide support, community building and strategic advocacy for LGBTQIA+ communities locally and internationally.

Since 2024, Many Coloured Sky in partnership with Drummond Street Services runs the first and only LGBTQIA+ specific settlement service to date funded through Settlement Engagement and Transition Support (SETS). The funding provides an opportunity to bring an intersectional and peer-led approach to service delivery within the settlement space and contribute to systems change advocacy through capacity building across the sector.

Informed by the lived experiences and expertise of the Many Coloured Sky community, this presentation will provide an overview of some of the challenges for LGBTQIA+ refugees in accessing safe and affirming services that are responsive and attuned to their settlement needs. Due to the visa eligibility of the SETS program, there is an inherent challenge and need for creativity in how we incorporate it into the broader work, given Many Coloured Sky's commitment to working with all refugees and people seeking asylum regardless of visa status. Our work also includes making visible a number of assumptions within settlement services about the needs and experiences of LGBTQIA+ refugees that continue to undermine individual and collective safety. In doing so, this presentation offers an opportunity for important awareness raising and critical consideration of different ways of working.

Through discussion of some identified barriers, we will then explore ways of working that are responsive to the unique needs of LGBTQIA+ refugees and people seeking asylum. Many Coloured Sky's way of working within the SETS program is led by the community's living experience of settlement

services for LGBTQIA+ people and is therefore continuously adapting as we collectively learn. As a small organisation and the only LGBTQIA+ specific settlement provider, we also recognise the need for collaboration with generalist settlement services to increase safety and inclusivity for LGBTQIA+ refugees and people seeking asylum through a focus on systems change advocacy, organisational capacity building and partnership.

Lived Experience Keynote

The Hidden Rainbow: LGBTQIA+ Refugee's Survival in Malaysia

Hasan Al-Akraa and Lovishniakri Sekaran | Refugee Emergency Fund, Malaysia

As of December 2024, UNHCR Malaysia recorded 192,240 refugees. The Malaysian Government is not a signatory to the 1951 Refugee Convention, therefore refugees are not legally recognized. This results in limited access to basic human rights like work, healthcare and education. They are constantly at risk of exploitation, arrest, and detention, and often find themselves unable to access essential healthcare services, quality living conditions and affordable housing.

The situation is particularly dire for LGBTQIA+ refugees, who face even greater challenges. LGBTQIA+ refugees are deemed "illegal" not only due to their documentation but also because of their sexual orientation and gender identity. These challenges include workplace discrimination, barriers to housing and healthcare, access to HIV treatments, societal stigma, difficulties in social integration, and rejection from their communities.

The Refugee Emergency Fund (REF) plays a pivotal role in addressing critical gaps for forcibly displaced communities in Malaysia. Founded by and for these communities, REF operates as a grassroots, community-led organization uniquely positioned to offer financial assistance that alleviates the substantial economic burdens faced by the communities we serve. REF's direct aid is building an effective alternative for meeting the needs of refugees, asylum seekers, and stateless individuals. While we acknowledge that it is not the responsibility of these communities to bear the burden of the load, we firmly believe that community-led initiatives like REF are critical in filling this unmet gap. Direct aid is imperative as we advocate for affordable healthcare for all, and this is important because we need to start shifting from a service delivery model to a mutuality model to bring material and sustainable change.

Lived Experience Panel Discussion

Queer Language Justice: embracing solidarities between community members, language practitioners and service providers

Mikhael Touma, Frankie Hanman Siegersma, Blossom Ah Ket and Paige Matthews | Language Justice Network, Australia

This presentation highlights the critical role of solidarity between language practitioners (interpreters/translators), service providers, and community members in achieving language justice for LGBTIQ+ forcibly displaced people in Australia. It explores the systemic violence, discrimination, harassment, and social exclusion faced by these individuals during settlement, including barriers to accessing essential services, navigating legal and health systems, and participating in everyday activities like employment, housing, and education.

This panel presentation features Arabic and Spanish interpreters, a counsellor, and a Spanish-speaking community member, examining the politics of

language injustice. It critiques entrenched English language supremacy in Australian policies and practices that perpetuate epistemic and structural injustices, flatten intersectional identities, and marginalise culturally and linguistically diverse worldviews. The discussion connects these mechanisms to broader critiques of Western constructs of gender and sexuality, which often exclude non-Western perspectives.

The presentation emphasises queer and feminist interpreting and translating practices as tools for fostering non-extractive and decolonial knowledge exchange. These approaches, grounded in ethics of solidarity, activism, and community organizing, offer opportunities for meaningful collaboration between service providers, language practitioners, and community members.

It also critiques the inadequate application of existing language services, arguing for the need to engage LGBTIQ+ language practitioners to ensure that community knowledge, practices, and ways of life are preserved, reaffirmed, circulated, and reimagined. This approach acknowledges and uplifts the lived experiences of LGBTIQ+ forcibly displaced people in Australia.

2:00 PM - 3:30 PM

Parallel Sessions

Session One Gender-based Violence, Persecution and Conversion Practices

Main Conference Room | L25

Redefining Conversion Practices as Gender-Based Violence

Dr Tina Dixson | FDPN, Australia

Gender-based violence (GBV) refers to violence that stems from rigid gender norms, unequal power, and discrimination. While often used interchangeably with violence against women, GBV also includes violence directed at LGBTIQ+ people, because their identities as seen as challenging social expectations about gender and sexuality.

Despite this, different forms of GBV are often treated as separate. Forced marriage and female genital mutilation/cutting are usually seen as affecting women from migrant and refugee communities, while sexuality and gender identity (S&GI) conversion practices are viewed as harms specific to LGBTIQ+ people. This separation ignores the reality that these forms of violence often overlap – especially for LGBTIQ+ forcibly displaced people.

Drawing on data from *Inhabiting Two Worlds At Once*, this presentation shows how forced marriage and FGM/C can act as tools of S&GI conversion practices. Yet these forms of violence are rarely recognised as linked, especially when services are gendered and exclude trans and non-binary people, or when visa status creates legal barriers. This presentation calls for expanded definitions of conversion practices that include forced marriage and other gender-based harms, and for recognising them as forms of GBV. It calls for intersectional prevention strategies and better training for services. It also highlights the need for resourcing peer-led responses that reflect the complexity of these experiences and centre the agency of LGBTIQ+ forcibly displaced communities.

“There’s no saving here”: resisting LGBTQA+ conversion practices at the intersection of migration, culture and religion

Percy Gurtler | ARCSHS, La Trobe University, Australia

Conversion practices are activities which attempt to change or suppress an LGBTQA+ person’s sexuality or gender identity to straight or

cisgender. In multicultural, migrant, refugee and asylum seeker communities LGBTQA+ people may be particularly vulnerable to conversion practices because of the intersecting marginalisations of colonialism, migration, religion, cultural belonging, and LGBTQA+ identity. In Australia, less is known about conversion practices in diverse cultural and religious communities, and research on conversion practices has tended to focus on their harms.

This paper aims to highlight the strengths of conversion survivors by examining the strategies they use to respond to and resist conversion practices. This paper includes data from 21 life history interviews with LGBTQA+ conversion survivors from diverse cultural and migrant backgrounds in Australia. Using narrative inquiry to retell interviewees' stories in their own words, the paper explores how they navigate family pressure, cisheteronormativity and expectations for cultural and religious belonging that conflict with their LGBTQA+ identities.

Multicultural and multifaith conversion survivors resist these pressures in subtle, considered and strategic ways. Resistance enables survivors to navigate loss, minimise harm and renegotiate belonging as LGBTQA+ people experiencing conversion practices at the intersection of migration and minority cultural belonging. Significantly, this research found that resistance is both protective and healing for those experiencing harm from conversion practices. This research has significant implications for the support of LGBTQA+ migrants, refugees and asylum seekers experiencing conversion practices, as recognising strength, resilience and resistance may aid in recovery.

The queer migrant project: domestic and family violence, intersectionality, and the LGBTQ+ migrant community in Queensland

Dilsah de Rham, Saina Avesta and Mark Kleine | LGBTI Legal Service, Australia

The Queer Migrant Project was established by the LGBTI Legal Service in 2024 in partnership with Third Queer Culture, QPASTT and Queer and Trans Workers Against Violence (QTWAV) in Meanjin (Brisbane).

The project aims to nurture the voice of LGBTQ+ immigrant, refugees, and asylum seekers (queer migrants) in Queensland when addressing domestic, family, and sexual violence (DFSV). A Peer Advisory Group was recruited from the local LGBTQ+ migrant community with lived experience of DFSV. Regular meetings with the group were organised by three

Project Facilitators and generated many insights and observations about the needs of the LGBTQ+ migrant people in the context of DFSV.

The presentation will introduce the processes that led to the production of a best practice guideline for practitioners working with queer migrants in the context of DFSV. Moreover, we will discuss key gaps that were identified by the Peer Advisory Group in services and resources as well as key recommendations for change.

The Queer Migrant Project is a rare study about DFSV focused on the intersectional needs of queer migrants in Queensland. It provides crucial responses when evaluating DFSV services and resources with an intersectional lens. It also showcases the establishment of communities by marginalised groups in the face of a shared existential threat, further complicated by intersections. It represents an opportunity to share, inspire, and build networks for similar endeavours in Australia and overseas.

Perseverance: Identifying and responding to family violence in the context of queer displacement

Jesse Brown | Thorne Harbour Health, Australia

Thorne Harbour Health is a LGBTQIA+ health service that operates an integrated family violence program, servicing both people experiencing and using violence. We work with many clients that have been identified as forcibly displaced from their country of origin.

Forced displacement and family violence often intersect, yet many LGBTQIA+ people seeking asylum face barriers to accessing service. A 2023 FDPN report found that while 60% of forcibly displaced queer people experienced violence in Australia, only 14% sought support. This presentation will focus on the intersectionality of the experiences of family violence and forced displacement. The key learning objectives are:

- » Explore the prevalence of family violence in the process of seeking asylum and providing a nuanced discussion of how these two experiences co-exist.
- » Identifying and responding to violence using a power and control analysis
- » Mapping relevant supports for both practitioners and community members

This presentation will promote awareness of different forms of family violence and share

practical resources to assist in responding when LGBTQIA+ forcibly displaced people experience violence.

Gender persecution in Tasmania: experiences of LGBTQIA+ forcibly displaced people

Taya Ketelaar-Jones | University of Tasmania, Australia

The International Criminal Court (ICC) Office of the Prosecutor (OTP) is developing a new set of Principles on the Crime of Gender Persecution, focusing on prevention, protection, survivor participation, and relief and recovery. The Principles are intended to provide a unified framework for recognising and addressing gender persecution as a crime under international law.

The University of Tasmania's Faculty of Law was tasked with researching and reporting on experiences of gender persecution in lutruwita/Tasmania. The focus was on four key communities: Tasmanian Aboriginal people, LGBTQIA+ communities, people with disabilities, and refugees, asylum seekers, and migrants. The research identified both unique challenges as well as shared experiences among the four groups.

This presentation reports on the findings from consultations with forcibly displaced people in lutruwita/Tasmania. It explores how the experiences of gender persecution faced by migrants, refugees and asylum seekers frequently intersected with other forms of marginalisation and discrimination, such as those based on sexual orientation, gender identity and disability. Consultations also revealed a continuum of risk and harm across the migration journey—beginning before displacement or departure and continuing in transit and through to post-arrival in Australia. For individuals with intersecting identities—such as LGBTQIA+ and/or disabled asylum seekers and refugees—the risk of experiencing gender persecution was amplified by overlapping systems of oppression.

Session Two Refugee Status Determination and Policy Framework

L24

Shirking responsibility: Australia's offshore processing regime

Michaela Rhode | Asylum Seekers Resource Centre, Australia

Australia has a long history of outsourcing refugee processing to third-countries starting in 2001. In 2013, a new policy was introduced whereby anyone that arrived by boat after 19 July 2013 would be sent offshore to Manus Island or Nauru. This remains the abhorrent policy in place today.

It is particularly problematic that queer people seeking asylum are subjected to Australia's offshore processing regime. Under Nauruan and Papua New Guinean law, same-sex relations is criminalised. Even if someone is found to be owed protection due to persecution relating to their sexual orientation or gender identity, there is no pathway for settlement to Australia and instead they are held in offshore processing centres where they remain at risk of the very same harm they are fleeing from.

In November 2024, the Australian Government rushed through new legislation in response to a series of High Court cases that challenged the detention regime in Australia. These new laws have expanded the Minister's powers in a number of concerning ways including allowing for the government to enter into "third country reception arrangements" with foreign countries potentially countries with anti-LGBTI laws.

This presentation will seek to address the following:

- » History of Australia's offshore processing regime
- » Placement of queer asylum seekers in PNG and Nauru
- » Overview of Australia's recent legislation regarding third-country removals
- » Potential negative implications of the new legislation for queer communities
- » Recommendations to ensure Australia is protecting and upholding the rights and dignity of queer asylum seekers

Ministerial intervention under s48b: examining the process through an LGBTQIA+ Lens

Iona Moller | Refugee Legal, Melbourne, Australia

Refugee Legal are witnessing a growing trend of individuals who are classified as 'finally determined', meaning their applications for protection are no longer under review, who for a variety of reasons have not put forward protection claims that relate to their gender and sexuality in their initial protection application. People in this situation are only able to request Ministerial Intervention under s351 or s48B of the Migration Act. Members of the LGBTQIA+ community are particularly disadvantaged by this

system, whether they are currently being held in detention, or have been able to remain in the community. This presentation seeks to cover the following:

- » Overview of the process of seeking Ministerial Intervention under s351 or s48B
- » Reasons that queer people are more likely to need to rely on the ministerial intervention process due to the nature of their claims
- » The ways in which the risk of harm is heightened for queer people in detention
- » The consequences of detention on s48B requests intersecting with and exacerbating the existing difficulties with Ministerial Intervention requests
- » The risk of deportation for this cohort.
- » Conclusion as to practical ways to support clients who are making requests for Ministerial Intervention

Representing SOGIESC clients with the Department and Tribunal: what we've learned, seen, and what we're advocating for

Katie Wrigley and Gretel Emerson | Refugee Advice and Casework Service, Australia

In April 2022, the Refugee Advice and Casework Service started its specific LGBTQI+ Safety Program run by queer lawyers supporting refugees and people seeking asylum who are fleeing harm based on SOGIESC grounds: people who are or would be persecuted in their home countries due to their sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression and/or sex characteristics (SOGIESC).

The aim of this presentation is to share information about the Australian experience for LGBTQI+ people seeking safety. Discussing the experience of the SOGIESC legal safety program over the past three years, we will focus on what we've learned from listening to LGBTQI+ asylum seekers about their experience of seeking asylum and their fears; what we've seen from Australian decision makers: the good the bad and the ugly; and what we're still fighting for in terms of improved processes at a systemic level with the Department of Immigration and the Tribunal in Australia.

The legal and social landscape surrounding queer asylum in Japan

A/Prof Haruko Kudo | Kobe University, Japan

This paper aims to draw the landscape surrounding

sexual orientation and gender identity (SOGI) cases in Japan from the legal and administrative framework as well as ongoing movement in the society related to queer issues. It examines how SOGI asylum claims are interpreted within Japan's refugee and asylum system, an area that remains understudied despite international recognition of SOGI asylum.

Through an analysis of nine SOGI cases in Japan since 2004, drawing from summaries of refugee status determinations (RSDs) and court decisions, this study highlights both the partial protections available to queer asylum seekers and the limitations of Japan's legal framework and administrative procedures in recognising SOGI-based persecution. While constrained by the small number of claimants and limited access to case information, this document review situates SOGI asylum within the broader social recognition of LGBTQ+ individuals in Japan.

Although some developments in the legal and social landscape surrounding queer people seem to reflect global sexual politics, the issue of queer displaced persons has not yet gained significant prominence. This discussion demonstrates how these dynamics possibly contribute to inconsistent interpretations of SOGI asylum cases and argues for the need to develop alternative theoretical frameworks that move beyond the conventional global North-South dichotomy to better capture Japan's nuanced geopolitical context.

Communicating LGBTIQ+ claims in Australia and the Asia-Pacific: the role of legal advocates

Jaskiran Kaur Rekhraj | Australia

Legal services are not traditionally included in 'settlement services' however in settling in a new country it requires the person has the legal right to settle there. This presentation would focus on the necessity of culturally competent and affordable legal representation during the refugee status determination (RSD) process. The Australian government has introduced free legal service providers for onshore asylum seekers which is not matched by the United Nations (UN) or other bodies in refugee camps in the Asia-Pacific. Further, the Australian government and UN primarily focus on the competency of their decision makers however the same requirement is not applicable for legal advocates.

The process of seeking asylum is confusing for any person but is more so for LGBTIQ+ people who

often present with non-legal concerns including experiences of trauma and discrimination by government bodies. Such issues form a barrier for LGBTIQ+ asylum seekers revealing sexuality/gender-based/queer claims and delays in presenting information in their applications in onshore and offshore applications.

The role of the legal advocate to represent a person's claim requires bridging the gap between understandably distrustful or uncertain applicants and the decision-making responsibilities of a government or other RSD body. Where an advocate does not create the bridge, it can dissuade an applicant entirely. Many applicants find the process re-traumatising which is exacerbated by a culturally incompetent advocate.

This presentation also includes how to build trust including gathering as much information as possible before meeting an applicant, asking preferred names and pronouns, not making assumptions and obtaining instructions under time constraints.

Session Three Mental Health and Trauma Recovery

Room 15, L10

Exploring the experiences of queer international students accessing mental health support in Victoria, Australia

Xin Hu | Australia

International students (IS) generate significant revenue in Australia, bringing diversity, but also distinctive needs and values. IS experience unique mental health challenges and their unmet support needs have recently received public and academic attention, notably during the COVID-19 pandemic.

A small number of existing Australian studies have examined IS mental health experiences, focusing on their individual behaviours and attitudes towards help seeking. However, framing IS as homogeneous misses important variations within this population. This study therefore explores the experiences of a diverse IS subgroup – queer international students (QIS), and the barriers and facilitators that influence how they seek and gain mental health support. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with six QIS studying in Victoria. Results show that the persistent impacts of broader socio-cultural factors and systemic gaps act as barriers for QIS to access support, while awareness of intersectionality is critical in providing appropriate professional assistance to QIS.

Co-designing mental health resources for LGBTIQ+ displaced people and migrants: promoting wellbeing and help-seeking

Dr Li-Min Lee | Australia

This presentation explores the co-design of mental health and wellbeing resources tailored to LGBTIQ+ displaced people, asylum seekers, and migrants from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds in South East Queensland. The project seeks to improve mental health outcomes by addressing the social isolation and barriers to accessing mental health support faced by LGBTIQ+ individuals. These individuals often experience compounded challenges due to intersecting factors such as race, sexuality, migration status, and financial insecurity, contributing to higher risks of mental health issues like anxiety, depression, and trauma.

Through focus group discussions and collaborative design, the project works with community members to develop culturally appropriate resources that promote mental health awareness, self-care, and accessing support. These resources provide practical guidance on recognising mental health challenges, navigating services, and fostering a sense of belonging within broader LGBTIQ+ and CALD spaces. The session will emphasise the importance of centring lived experience in the co-design process and the role of community-driven solutions in overcoming mental health barriers.

The presentation will showcase outcomes, including publications, toolkits, and digital resources that provide accessible, culturally relevant mental health information for displaced LGBTIQ+ individuals. It will also discuss how co-design ensures these tools resonate with the cultural and emotional needs of those they aim to support. The session will explore the impact of these resources on mental health wellbeing, reducing stigma around help-seeking, and empowering displaced people to take control of their mental health in culturally safe and supportive environments.

Heartspace: co-designing a model of mental health and wellbeing for LGBTIQ+ refugees and people seeking asylum

Grace Dee Macauley | Many Coloured Sky, Australia

Many Coloured Sky's Heartspace program grew from the learnings of our work led by LGBTIQ+ refugees and people seeking asylum over several years. With a grant from Victoria's Department

of Health we have been able to work with our community to design a program of mental health and wellbeing support that recognises both the unique circumstances of this community and the universal underpinnings to mental health for everybody.

At its core, Heartspace recognises the need for community, safety and connection, and that for many LGBTIQ+ forcibly displaced people there are deep challenges that undermine any sense of community, safety or connection that they may have had. This recognition leads us to build all of our mental health and wellbeing work on the foundation of peer support, community-led social events and the creation of safe spaces and multiple points of access to support. One measure of the success of this foundational work is the number of community members who refer to Many Coloured Sky as "family".

Co-creating the conditions under which a diverse and isolated group of people, many of whom have experienced significant trauma, can come together and find family and community requires ongoing attention to the expressed needs and feelings of each participant, and sometimes challenging conversations about what it needed for everyone to feel safe.

Hearspace and Many Coloured Sky more broadly also work to influence change across the mental health sector, and to advocate for improved access to both safe and inclusive mental health services and to those needs that form the base of everyone's mental health, such as our collective impact work on access to safe housing.

Who gets to be well? The mental health implications of necropolitics

Alex Duarte and Kelli Charles | Australia

We will aim to explain some of the ways in which necropolitical power (Mbembe, 2003) governs access to mental health care of forcibly displaced LGBTIQ+ people in Australia. We will have a particular focus on community services mental health systems. We will base our presentation on three strategies used by necropolitical power that impose LGBTIQ+ forcibly displaced people a condition of living in pain.

The three strategies we will discuss are: classification of groups of people, extraction of resources and building and sustaining cultural imaginaries (Mbembe, 2003). To do this, we will give real-life examples of how these strategies are

enacted leading to poor mental health outcomes for LGBTIQ+ forcibly displaced individuals (FDPN, 2023). We will imagine a world where, instead of following necropolitical logics, we make space for those whose direct experience and traditions of resistance can guide and reshape our responses to human suffering.

Resilience in movement: supporting the mental health and wellbeing of displaced LGBTIQ+ people

Néstor Iván Elvir Hernández | Asociación Honduras Diversa, Honduras/Spain

Displaced LGBTIQ+ people face unique challenges that combine the impacts of forced displacement with discrimination and exclusion based on their identity. These factors aggravate the risks to their mental health, affecting their emotional, social and physical wellbeing. This presentation will explore how comprehensive mental health support can be a driver to strengthen resilience and promote the wellbeing of this population in contexts of forced mobility.

Drawing on the experience of Honduras Diversa, Nestor will share innovative practices such as art therapy workshops, emotional support groups and the training of community leaders, specifically designed to address the needs of displaced LGBTIQ+ people. The presentation will highlight the positive impacts of these interventions, as well as the challenges faced when implementing support programs in contexts of structural exclusion and limited resources. Recommendations for adapting these strategies in different regions will also be provided, highlighting the importance of creating inclusive support networks that foster wellbeing and community integration.

The session will be an opportunity to inspire practitioners, activists and policymakers to prioritise mental health as an essential tool in humanitarian responses for displaced LGBTIQ+ people, promoting sustainable and intersectional solutions.

4:00 PM – 5:45 PM

Afternoon Plenaries

Main Conference Room | L25

Keynote

Attacking LGBTQIA+ rights in the name of 'defending women': Confronting the contradictions of 'anti-gender' movements in pursuit of gender justice

Dr. Lata Narayanaswamy, | University of Leeds, UK

The language of 'gender', which began as an emancipatory language to mobilise against power imbalances, has become over the last few decades something to measure and occasionally report on as part of the tick-box of technocracy. Amidst rising global instability and insecurity accelerated by the financial crisis of 2007–8, we are witnessing the rise of pro-family/anti-gender movements that are exercising ever-increasing levels of political power both within and beyond the multilateral system. These movements cite 'gender ideology' as an existential threat to the 'traditional' family, explicitly framing their political interventions as driven by commitments to 'protect' and 'defend' women as a path to stability.

So it is timely to ask: Who is considered a 'woman' in these narratives? What I will argue is that the primary focus of this so-called defence is heterosexual women and girls in their reproductive years, because a 'smart economics' approach – understood in neoliberal, economic terms – is really only interested in the (unpaid) reproductive/caring labour and increasingly (paid) productive labour women and girls undertake. People deemed to fall outside of this narrow reproductive categorisation, notably LGBTQIA+ people, are never identified as 'women', as these identities are perceived to pose existential threats to the gender binaries on which our current system depends.

Furthermore, the pursuit of the 'traditional' cannot be disentangled from underpinning ethno/religious-nationalisms, colonialism and the associated hardening of borders, in which (gender-based) violence is so integral. These entanglements in turn have implications for how we recognise the rights and social protection entitlements that are theoretically enshrined in a range of global instruments that anti-gender movements are systematically seeking to fracture and ultimately rescind in relation to gender diversity and bodily autonomy. It is only through global dialogue and

building solidarity across movements that a more gender just future for all will be realised.

Lived Experience Panel Discussion

Queer liberation is a global fight for safety, dignity, and self-determination

Rami Elghattis, Melak Khaleel and Anastasia Le facilitated by Basem Kerbage | Queer Arabs Australia

While progress has been made in some places, queer communities still face violence and marginalisation. This presentation examines how queer liberation intersects with the Palestinian struggle for human rights and how these global struggles are connected.

Palestinians, many living under occupation and facing systemic violence, experience unique challenges, particularly queer Palestinians who navigate both societal stigma and the harsh realities of displacement. Their fight for dignity and safety underscores how deeply intertwined global struggles for queer liberation are.

True queer liberation cannot be achieved without speaking up for those who are silenced – especially queer Palestinians and others living in oppressive environments. The fight for equality is incomplete without including those denied the most basic human rights. True queer liberation must be collective, ensuring that every person, wherever they live, can exist freely and safely.

The silence of global leaders, organisations, and communities in the face of such injustice also profoundly impacts the queer diaspora. The mental toll of watching loved ones suffer abroad, especially when our struggles are ignored, leaves emotional scars. This disconnection exacerbates feelings of isolation and abandonment, harming our collective mental health.

Liberation cannot be externally imposed; it must come from within communities, honouring their autonomy and lived experiences. By standing in solidarity with oppressed queer communities, including Palestinians, we fortify our shared struggle for a future where liberation for all is not just possible, but inevitable.

Good Practice Spotlight

The role of philanthropy in enhancing refugee-led advocacy and solutions for forcibly displaced LGBTIQA+ people

Dr Ruth McNair AM | Pride Foundation Australia

Funding streams for LGBTIQA+ forcibly displaced people are extremely limited globally and in Australia, with little prioritisation from Government and NGOs. In particular, both refugee and queer community groups have not focused on this important subgroup of constituents. This exacerbates existing inequalities and further marginalises queer refugees and people seeking asylum.

Queer engaged philanthropy has an important role in filling this funding gap. We have a number of strengths that lend themselves to this work including a committed and equity driven pool of donors, a focus on lived experience led initiatives and partnerships, and a lack of political agendas. We have the freedom to partner with key stakeholders of our choice and navigate the road of advocacy.

Pride Foundation Australia has worked with LGBTIQA+ refugees and people seeking asylum since 2019. Our methods involve first establishing advisory structures that place the experience of queer displaced people front and centre. We raise funds specifically for this purpose as part of our equity framework. The funds come from individual donors and like-minded businesses and other foundations. We fund grant rounds with a national call-out, and commission work including the establishment and maintenance of peer-led support groups. This has led to a wide range of funded projects, often collaborations between mainstream organisations and queer refugee organisations and we will profile a few of these amazing initiatives.

We also support individual refugees through encouraging community-led sponsorship groups and auspicing their fundraising. Finally, we are part of advocacy to build policy and inclusion support queer displaced people. This is a slow and steady approach, and we are in it for the long haul to change attitudes and open minds.

PROGRAM AT A GLANCE

8:00 AM - 9:00 AM

Registration Opens

9:00 AM - 10:45 AM

Main Conference
Room | L25

Morning Plenaries

Lived Experience
Panel Discussion

Strength in Sisterhood: Focus on the Leadership of Trans Displaced Women

Aisya Zaharin, Amao Leota Lu, facilitated by Sasja Sjödek | Trans Sisters United, Australia

Lived Experience
Keynote

Intersectional Invisibility: Experiences of Queer Migrants in Türkiye

Ali Aliyev | Positive Solidarity and Sabancı University, Türkiye

Good Practice
Spotlight

The Role of Organisations in Secondary Trauma and Burnout Experience among LGBTI+ Mental Health Workers Supporting Forcibly Displaced LGBTI+ Clients

Dr Farnaz Shahimi | Foundation House & MCRI, Australia

10:45 AM - 11:15 AM

Coffee Break

11:15 AM - 12:45 PM

Workshops

Main Conference
Room | L25

Workshop One

From Tools to Allies: Redefining Collaboration with Language Practitioners for Inclusive Service Delivery

Mikhael Touma, Blossom Ah Ket and Paige Matthews | Language Justice Network, Australia

L24

Workshop Two

Crafting Narratives of Resilience: Exploring the Passport of Life with LGBTIQA+ People with Refugee Experiences

Alireza, Victoria, Amy Luschwitz and Heathergrace Jones | STARTTS NSW, Australia

Room 15, L10	<p>Workshop Three</p> <p>Celebrate with Manaya Pride: a Taste of Community-Based Mental Health Support for Collective Connections and Care</p> <p>Manisha Abraham, Lauren Breen, Anirudh Chilukuri and Hanada Ghazala The Iceberg Foundation, Australia</p>
12:45 PM – 1:45 PM	Lunch
1:45 PM – 3:00 PM	Parallel Sessions
Main Conference Room L25	<p>Grassroots and Community Work</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Eliminating community shame: co-Designed work-integrated learning for queer Anatolian displaced individuals Cansu COL Anatolian Queers Collective, Australia » Forgotten queer asylum seekers from Central Asia and the Middle East in Türkiye with anti-LGBTQIA+ Laws: lessons for RSD and third country processing Saina Avesta Third Queer Culture, Australia » Redefining support services for forcibly displaced LGBTQIA+ communities: insights from the Zyara Social Support Program Mikhael Tuma Queer Arabs Australia, Australia » Navigating Settlement: addressing the needs of Chinese queer diasporic communities in Australia using a community-centred approach Shutong (Ash) Chen Australia
L24	<p>Controlling Bodies, Restricting Rights: Legal, Digital, and Structural Barriers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Changing name and gender on identity documents for displaced and migrant trans and gender diverse community Niamh Joyce Inner City Legal Centre, Australia » Perception and understanding of privacy among queer people in Nepal: How do they see and express themselves in digital spaces? Shubha Kayastha Australia » Surveilling transfemininity: the disciplinary politics of 'ladyboys' in neoliberal Thailand Dr Jean Linis-Dinco Australia

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » The Change or Suppression (Conversion) Practices Prohibition Act: The law as prevention education Kenton Penley Miller Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission, Australia
Room 15, L10	Intersectionality in Displacement <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Christianity and community among LGBTQIA+ African heritage refugees and asylum seekers in Greater Western Sydney Dr Kathleen Openshaw Western Sydney University, Australia » Are we well? Supporting Indigenous/Pasifika LGBTQIA+ displaced peoples in Australia and Aotearoa Prof Corrinne Sullivan Western Sydney University, Australia » Recognition and community-led protection for refugees with diverse SOGIE in Southeast Asia Tamara Megaw University of Sydney, Australia » Rohingya Hijra Refugees: An ethno-religious category in the making in the context of forced displacement Kazi Ashraf Uddin UNSW Sydney, Australia
3:00 PM - 3:30 PM	Coffee Break
4:00 PM - 5:15 PM	Afternoon Plenaries
Main Conference Room L25	<div> Lived Experience Panel Discussion </div> <div> The LGBTQIA+ Politics of Borders, Detention and Deportation A/Prof Debanuj DasGupta University of California, Santa Barbara, US </div>
	<div> Good Practice Panel Discussion </div> <div> Launch of the Roadmap for Action: Achieving Asylum and Migration Justice for LGBTQIA+ Forcibly Displaced People Dr Renee Dixon FDPN, Maria Dimopoulos AM Settlement Council of Australia, Dr Ruth McNair AM Pride Foundation Australia, and Jasmina Bajraktarevic-Hayward STARTTS NSW, Australia </div>
	Closing Plenary Where to next?

9:00 AM - 10:45 AM

Morning Plenaries

Main Conference Room | L25

MC | Saina Avesta

Lived Experience Panel Discussion**Strength in Sisterhood: focus on the leadership of trans displaced women**

Aisya Zaharin and Amao Leota Lu, facilitated by Sasja Sijdek | Trans Sisters United, Australia

Trans Women of Colour (TWOC) face severe discrimination due to their gender identity, race, and socioeconomic status, increasing their risk of violence and marginalisation. This paper examines their experiences within LGBTQIA+ advocacy, highlighting their resilience amid intersectional challenges, particularly for those displaced by socio-political upheaval.

Using an intersectionality lens, we explore climate justice, critiquing how capitalism and colonialism exploit resources, damaging the environment and displacing marginalised communities, including transgender individuals. For example, rising sea levels threaten Pacific Islands, leading to displacement. Integrating climate justice into LGBTQIA+ discussions is essential, as justice is futile on a drowning planet. Global conversations about carbon footprints often obscure ongoing environmental damage, benefiting elites while neglecting indigenous rights.

TWOC experience widespread violence, underscoring the need for inclusive transformative justice. The lack of global support frameworks creates barriers to essential services, with many facing mistreatment in medical and legal contexts. Although some progress has been made in the Global South, systemic issues often compel many to engage in sex work for survival. We emphasise TWOC rights in the context of sex work, prioritising autonomy within criminalised environments. Operations like Inglenook facilitate racial profiling of TWOC in Australia, leading to detention.

This study highlights the power of transgender sisterhood through personal stories of support and resilience, recommending the creation of support networks, legal reforms, and safe spaces to protect the rights of all LGBTQIA+ individuals.

Lived Experience Keynote**Intersectional Invisibility: Experiences of Queer Migrants in Turkey**

Ali Aliyev | Positive Solidarity and Sabancı University, Türkiye

Turkey's historical ties, economic opportunities, and geopolitical position make it a preferred destination and transit country for migration. In its migration system, individuals are classified into distinct statuses based on a "voluntary-forced" dichotomy, along with factors such as the length and purpose of stay and country of origin. This classification is part of a broader process of migrantization, in which the state, often under the pretext of security concerns, systematically places migrants into rigid categories. This process shapes accessing rights, services, and support while exposing migrants to discrimination and rights violations. Additionally, beyond legal status, intersecting identities—such as gender, sexual orientation, and health status—further stratify migrants' experiences, exacerbating their vulnerabilities. Despite limited but growing research on refugee mobility in Turkey, the lived experiences of migrants, especially queer migrants with residence permits remain understudied. Thus, this study explores the life experiences and struggles of queer migrants in accessing housing, education, employment, and healthcare.

As a queer migrant myself, my positionality is essential to this research, as it allows for the creation of a safe space where participants can openly share their experiences and feel understood. By adopting a feminist methodology, this study challenges the traditional researcher-researched binary, fostering a more mutually empowering research process.

Centering solidarity as both a methodological and ethical principle, this research not only amplifies the voices of queer migrants but also contributes to feminist scholarship that prioritizes agency, mutual support, and transformative knowledge production. Furthermore, it problematizes the dominant binary of voluntary-forced migration through queer experiences, emphasizing the complexity of migration experiences beyond rigid

categorizations. By doing so, it fosters a more nuanced understanding of migration policies and their implications for marginalized communities.

Good Practice Spotlight

The role of organisations in secondary trauma and burnout experience among LGBTIQ+ mental health workers supporting forcibly displaced LGBTIQ+ clients

Dr Farnaz Shahimi | Foundation House & MCRI, Australia)

Forcibly displaced LGBTIQ+ individuals often are survivors and, in some cases, continue to endure layers of trauma stemming from interpersonal and structural violence. In this context, LGBTIQ+ mental health professionals with lived experiences of marginalisation face heightened risks of

experiencing secondary trauma, vicarious trauma, compassion fatigue, and burnout.

To create meaningful and sustainable support for both clients and workers, trauma- and violence-informed approaches are critical. These approaches emphasise fostering safety—not just for clients but also for the staff providing care. A safe workplace environment acknowledges the unique vulnerabilities of LGBTIQ+ staff, particularly those with lived experiences of migration and refugee experiences, ensuring their well-being is prioritised alongside client needs.

This presentation discusses structural and organisational interventions that play a vital role in mitigating vicarious trauma and moral distress. While self-care and boundary-setting are essential strategies, they are insufficient without intersectional lenses and systemic change in organisations.

11:15 AM -12:45 PM

Workshops

Workshop One From tools to allies: redefining collaboration with language practitioners for inclusive service delivery

Main Conference Room | L25

Mikhael Touma, Blossom Ah Ket and Paige Matthews | Language Justice Network, Australia

Language justice is critical in addressing the challenges faced by LGBTIQ+ forcibly displaced people. Effective communication goes beyond linguistic accuracy, requiring deep understanding of cultural, social, and individual contexts. This interactive workshop redefines language practitioners as vital allies in fostering inclusion, trust, and empowerment within service delivery frameworks.

Participants will explore the distinctions between interpreters and translators and learn strategies to build collaborative relationships with interpreters as integral members of support teams. The session highlights the transformative role of interpreters with regional historical knowledge and lived experience, whose cultural and social alignment with clients enhances rapport, empathy, and effective communication.

The workshop introduces a co-design approach to translation, involving community members in developing linguistically accurate and culturally resonant materials. Case studies will demonstrate

how community-centred translation processes improve outcomes and empower LGBTIQ+ forcibly displaced people.

Through practical tools, role-playing, and group discussions, attendees will gain skills to address language injustice and explore systemic barriers perpetuating English language supremacy. The session underscores the importance of culturally inclusive practices in overcoming these barriers and supporting diverse identities.

This workshop offers service providers, policymakers, and community leaders innovative strategies to transform language services. By elevating language practitioners as partners in advocacy and inclusion, it provides a roadmap for advancing solidarity and justice for queer forcibly displaced communities. After the workshop, you will be able to gain a better understanding of how to collaborate with interpreters to create safe and affirming spaces for service and support provision.

TARGET AUDIENCE:

professionals working with LGBTIQ+ forcibly displaced people.

Workshop Two Crafting narratives of resilience: exploring the Passport of Life with LGBTIQ+ people with refugee experiences

L24

Alireza, Victoria, Amy Luschwitz and Heathergrace Jones | STARTTS NSW, Australia

This interactive workshop, co-facilitated by people with the lived experience of navigating the intersection of seeking safety and LGBTIQ+ identities, and clinicians who work alongside this cohort, introduces and explores the narrative therapy tool: the "Passport of Life". This methodology is an adaption from the Tree of Life, a narrative therapy approach which is a hopeful and inspiring approach to working with people who have experienced hard times.

The Passport of Life was developed as part of a project with queer people with refugee experiences in England in 2019. This workshop will delve into how this approach can be used to support LGBTIQ+ people with refugee backgrounds to honour their skills, knowledges, networks and dreams. It will also welcome ways to adapt the passport methodology to reflect the strengths and dreams of people who have sought sanctuary in Australia on the basis of their diverse Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity, Gender Expression, and Sex Characteristics.

This workshop offers the opportunity for practitioners and people with lived experience to learn collaboratively, share personal narratives, and co-research the effectiveness and adaptation of this methodology.

TARGET AUDIENCE:

practitioners working with LGBTIQ+ forcibly displaced people.

Workshop Three Celebrate with Manaya Pride: a taste of community based-mental health support for collective connections and care

Room 15, L10

Manisha Abraham, Lauren Breen, Anirudh Chilukuri and Hanada Ghazala | The Iceberg Foundation, Australia

The Manaya Pride Program (MPP) was established as part of The Iceberg Foundation to celebrate and uplift the LGBTIQ+ forcibly displaced community.

Rooted in anti-colonial principles, MPP provides no-cost therapeutic and psychosocial support alongside social inclusion events to address the intersectional barriers the community faces. By integrating trauma-informed care, cultural connection, and identity-affirming practices, MPP seeks to foster healing, belonging, and joy in a way that traditional therapeutic models don't prioritise.

In this interactive workshop, participants will experience MPP's innovative approach, which blends therapeutic practices like parts mapping with cultural connection through food and cultural humility. With diverse participants' needs in mind, the workshop provides both practical tools and a deeper understanding of the importance of cultural connection in addressing mental health.

MPP counsellors will guide participants through parts mapping, an anti-colonial therapeutic exercise that conceptualises an individual's experiences as interconnected parts of their identity. This acknowledges the impacts of lived experiences, encouraging participants to explore and honour their various facets.

The workshop centres around shared cultural experiences. Participants will connect over homemade dishes from diverse cultures, reflecting on how food, and collective care contribute to mental health.

Key learnings will include creating identity-affirming spaces, integrating community care into mental health, embedding anti-colonial practices, celebrating joy as a tool for healing.

TARGET AUDIENCE:

all conference attendees

1:45 PM – 3:00 PM

Parallel Sessions

Session Four Grassroots and Community Work

Main Conference Room | L25

Eliminating community shame: co-designed

work-integrated learning for queer Anatolian displaced individuals

Cansu COL | Anatolian Queers Collective, Australia

In collaboration with Anatolian Queers and

the Anatolian Diaspora, we have developed a comprehensive, culturally tailored program to dismantle community shame and empower participants through education, advocacy, and inclusive professional pathways leading to employment.

Grounded in educational design principles, our program integrates #Lubunya ideology—a framework of resilience, solidarity, and fluidity—into its social and pedagogical values. This ensures every learning experience is culturally responsive and transformative for participants. It features:

- » Culturally Inclusive Internships: Work-integrated placements to bridge skill gaps and foster cultural belonging. Tailored mentorship builds confidence and prepares participants for meaningful contributions in professional spaces.
- » Safety and Advocacy Training: Workshops on LGBTQIA+ and ally safety, hate crime prevention, employment rights, and navigating workplace discrimination. Emphasis on empowering participants to self-advocate in challenging environments.
- » Community-Led Co-Design: Workshops developed with queer Anatolian diaspora members to address cultural stigmas and provide context-specific solutions. Focus on eliminating community shame via shared narratives and collective healing.
- » Integration of #Lubunya Ideology: Framework prioritising solidarity, care, and participant agency. Creates a values-driven ecosystem celebrating identity and fostering resilience.
- » Educational Impact and Vision: Using co-designed, culturally responsive strategies, this program equips queer Anatolian displaced individuals to overcome systemic barriers and build empowered lives. Early outcomes show improved employment rates, reduced isolation, and enhanced community cohesion. This model has global potential to inform scalable educational programs and policy frameworks, setting new benchmarks for addressing the intersection of displacement, cultural shame, and exclusion through inclusive, community-centered learning.

Forgotten queer asylum seekers from Central Asia and the Middle East in Türkiye with Anti-LGBTQIA+ laws: lessons for RSD and third country processing

Saina Avesta | Third Queer Culture, Australia

Third Queer Culture (TQC) is a Brisbane-based peer support group for LGBTQIA+ refugees and people seeking safety, with members originating from various countries around the world. Established in 2022, TQC promotes social cohesion and integration, and is also introducing advocacy efforts. Facing persecution and discrimination in their home countries, TQC members have been displaced in their pursuit of safety. Along their journey, some members experienced transitory stays in processing countries such as Türkiye.

This presentation highlights the lived experiences of our members, who were forced to stay in processing countries where LGBTQIA+ individuals are not legally protected or even openly persecuted. These ongoing hardships—including the lack of rights to work or study and being criminalised—have left lasting impacts even after TQC members have resettled in Australia.

The experiences of violence, particularly among transgender individuals in these processing countries, have resulted in an increased risk of mass death under systematic socio-religious and political oppression. For too long, our members have been denied the opportunity to have their voices heard. This conference provides a platform to share their stories.

Additionally, the presentation will highlight the efforts of organisations and individuals who support LGBTQIA+ refugees in these processing countries. It will also propose solutions, strategies, and concrete actions to assist this heavily marginalised and overlooked group.

Finally, the presentation will conclude with a call to action, urging policymakers to prioritise the safety and dignity of LGBTQIA+ refugees throughout their journey of seeking safety. By informing policy-making processes, we hope to ensure these individuals can live safely and with respect, even in processing countries.

Redefining support services for forcibly displaced LGBTQIA+ communities: insights from the Zyara Social Support Program

Mikhael Tuma | Queer Arabs Australia, Australia

Forcibly displaced LGBTQIA+ individuals face compounding barriers during resettlement, including systemic exclusion, language inaccessibility, and cultural insensitivity. Traditional settlement services often overlook the intersectional challenges of queer refugees and asylum seekers, while queer organisations are under-resourced in creating

accessible and tailored support to address their needs. These gaps exacerbate feelings of marginalisation, leaving individuals unable to access vital resources or navigate their new lives smoothly.

Zyara is a program specifically designed to support LGBTQIA+ Arabs, completely in Arabic, using a community-led, co-design approach that centres lived experiences. It eliminates the need for interpreters, fostering authentic, direct connections in a culturally affirming space. Peer facilitators guide discussions on relevant topics (e.g. migration and health), addressing the nuanced needs of participants. This participant-driven model bridges gaps in traditional service delivery, empowering individuals to find affirming community, and design their own initiatives and solutions in their language. Zyara shows how service design can move beyond addressing immediate needs, to building sustainable networks and leadership within the community it supports. This approach challenges traditional, top-down service delivery models and highlights the transformative power of grassroots, community-led advocacy.

This presentation will explore how Zyara's innovative co-design process empowers intersectional marginalized communities, offering a replicable framework for creating equitable and culturally sensitive solutions.

Navigating settlement: addressing the needs of Chinese queer diasporic communities in Australia using a community-centred approach

Shutong (Ash) Chen | Australia

This paper will examine the unique settlement needs of LGBTQIA+ forcibly displaced individuals from the ethnic Chinese societies within the region of Asia, with a focus on the intersection of migration, cultural competence, and access to services in Australia. This presentation will highlight the barriers faced by Chinese queer migrants in the resettlement process. These barriers will be compounded by discriminatory immigration policies, cis-heteronormative service frameworks, and a lack of culturally safe spaces for marginalized queer populations.

The research aims to investigate the settlement experiences of Chinese queer migrants in Australia, particularly their interactions with settlement services. The study will use a combination of methods, including a survey to capture broader community perspectives, interviews with service

providers to gain insight into existing service gaps, and workshops for service co-design to engage the community in developing solutions. It will explore the significant gaps in culturally competent and inclusive support systems, which often fail to meet the complex needs of queer diasporas. Informed by both qualitative data and the lived experiences of queer diasporas, this paper will discuss the role of community-led initiatives in addressing these support gaps and advocate for tailored settlement programs that prioritize the unique needs of displaced queer individuals.

The significance of this research lies not only in its identification of critical gaps in service provision but also in its contribution to developing sustainable and inclusive programs. The paper will provide broad recommendations for policymakers, service providers, and community advocates, urging the adoption of culturally competent, queer-friendly services that engage the community in co-designing ideal social service systems. It will contribute to the growing discourse on queer displacement, offering actionable insights into improving settlement services for Chinese queer migrants and other displaced LGBTQ+ communities.

Session Five Controlling Bodies, Restricting Right: legal, digital and structural barriers

L24

Changing name and gender on identity documents for displaced and migrant trans and gender diverse community

Niamh Joyce | Inner City Legal Centre, Australia

Displaced/migrant trans and gender diverse people can face a range of legal issues in Australia, such as relating to discrimination, identity documents, domestic violence and interactions with police. Despite acceptance as a trans or gender diverse person for the purposes of seeking asylum, correcting name and gender marker on identity documents can be difficult.

We will explore the Inner City Legal Centre's work providing non-immigration legal assistance to displaced/migrant trans and gender diverse people. Attendees will learn about common legal problems faced by such clients in NSW. We will provide a brief introduction on how to change name and gender markers on ID documents in Australia.

Perception and understanding of privacy among queer people in Nepal: How do they see and express themselves in digital

spaces?

Shubha Kayastha | Australia

Literature has shown that privacy is important for an individual to manage their boundaries. As individuals' subjectivity is greatly shaped by society, privacy can provide some sense of self-determination.

Visibility of queer bodies can put queer people at risks of violence in the heteropatriarchal society, thus navigating privacy is built in everyday queer lives. In addition, the profit-driven motive of most of the digital technologies, privacy is capitalised and bodies are digitalized without one's consent. When raised privacy concerns related to digital innovation and privacy breach, privacy is seen as anti-progressive and anti-innovation. But the very data breach and context collapse is making it harder for one to take control of their privacy. While the digital space continues to be an escape and safer space for queer young people, the policies and infrastructure around it can shape people's behavior and can be determinant on choices they made.

Today, privacy is a highly contentious topics given everyday life of people and the systems around intersects with digital technology, without always having an option to opt-out. The affordances of digital technology has been studied in great extent in lives of queer people, showing the opportunities, it creates for them to find community, space for exploration and expression. However, digital space also mirrors the queerphobia and discrimination queer people face in their daily lives because of their socio-cultural, legal and political situation. Queer privacy is therefore an important area to explore to learn queer digital culture. Studying how queer people understand privacy will provide a framework on how they are navigating balance between privacy and visibility in the age of surveillance capitalism.

Surveilling transfemininity: the disciplinary politics of 'ladyboys' in neoliberal Thailand

Dr Jean Linis-Dinco | Australia

In this presentation, I interrogate the intersection of surveillance, transgender femininity, and neoliberal tourism economies through a Marxist lens. Focusing on recent registration practices targeting ladyboys in Patong, Thailand, I critique how the state enacts social control under the guise of maintaining public safety and promoting tourism. In December 2024, Patong Police began

systematically registering transgender women frequenting Bangla Road, aiming to prevent crime and protect tourism interests. This practice has in many ways criminalised trans presence while simultaneously exploiting their visibility as cultural commodities within the tourism industry.

Through a Marxist analysis, I will examine how the intersection of capital and state power disciplines gender nonconformity to maintain social order and economic stability. In this context, displacement occurs on multiple levels. By rendering ladyboys (both hyper-visible and constantly monitored), the state enforces a form of social regulation that aligns with capitalist interests, which in some ways turn trans femininity into both an economic asset and a social threat. Registration of identities signals the regulation of gender and sexuality and highlights how trans bodies are displaced within their own communities.

I will situate Patong's approach within the broader global capitalist framework, where marginalised identities are made profitable while simultaneously subjected to heightened scrutiny and repression. By exposing how state apparatuses collaborate with capitalist economies to produce docile and manageable queer bodies, the paper challenges narratives that portray trans visibility as inherently progressive. Instead, it reveals how surveillance practices and economic exploitation reinforce the dominance of heteronormative and capitalist structures, ultimately maintaining the status quo while presenting an illusion of inclusivity.

The Change or Suppression (Conversion) Practices Prohibition Act: The law as prevention education

Kenton Penley Miller | Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission, Australia

Survivor advocates have often cited Victoria's Change or Suppression (Conversion) Practices Prohibition Act (the CSP Act) and the Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission's (VEOHRC's) civil scheme as world best practice. In plain language this session offers a brief outline of the Victoria law and its context, including other legislation around Australia. It explores both the criminal aspects of the law and the functions of the civil scheme. An outline of the survivor-and-trauma-informed education work done by VEOHRC shows how they are using the law as a harm reduction and prevention education tool. VEOHRC centres lived experience in their education and engagement work, whether it's with faith leaders or families. The intersectional focus of their work is also explored.

Session Six Intersectionality in Displacement

Room 15, L10

Christianity and community among LGBTQIA+ African heritage refugees and asylum seekers in Greater Western Sydney

Dr Kathleen Openshaw | Western Sydney University, Australia

African Heritage refugees and asylum seekers in Australia, who are also LGBTQIA+ and Christian, experience high levels of ostracization from their host, diasporic and church communities. Vitally, churches are social hubs and extensions of their communities where people access spiritual, social and material supports. In their 2023 report of their visit to Australia, the UN Working Group of Experts on People of African Descent flagged concerns for the physical and psychological safety of African Heritage LGBTQIA+ people in Australia.

The complexity of community connections for negatively racialised LGBTQIA+ people of faith, re-settling in Australia is absent from the literature on African refugees and asylum seekers. This paper explores the preliminary results of research (conducted in partnership with ACON and the African Australian Advocacy Centre), that investigates the everyday experiences of faith, (re) settlement, community, intimacy and life in Greater Western Sydney, where most of this cohort re-settle in New South Wales.

Critically, this paper tends to the knowledge gap concerning the experiences of displacement when LGBTQIA+, negatively racialised and Christian identities intersect. It contributes to an evidence base that nuances resettlement service provision and informs advocacy among African heritage communities to build, and restore, community connections and settlement support for this highly marginalised cohort of people.

Are we well? Supporting Indigenous/Pasifika LGBTQIA+ displaced peoples in Australia and Aotearoa

Prof Corrinne Sullivan | Western Sydney University, Australia

This presentation offers a comprehensive overview of the existing literature and backgrounds of Indigenous, Māori, and Pasifika LGBTQIA+ individuals who have been displaced or felt compelled to relocate to Australia and Aotearoa (New Zealand). The focus is on understanding the

multifaceted reasons behind displacement, which often include seeking a safe environment to express authentic identities free from discrimination and socio-cultural pressures. The presentation delves into the health and wellbeing of these communities, highlighting the unique experiences encountered, such as navigating mental health, accessing culturally competent healthcare, and the impact of displacement on overall quality of life. Additionally, it explores the importance of maintaining social and cultural connections, which are crucial for a sense of identity and belonging.

By examining these aspects, the presentation aims to shed light on the resilience and strength of Indigenous, Māori, and Pasifika LGBTQIA+ individuals, while also advocating for better support systems and policies to enhance wellbeing. This project underscores the need for inclusive and culturally sensitive approaches to address the specific needs of these communities in both Australia and Aotearoa.

Recognition and community-led protection for refugees with diverse SOGIE in Southeast Asia

Tamara Megaw | University of Sydney, Australia

Many people with diverse sexual orientation, gender identity and expression (SOGIE) are forced to flee their country of origin or place of habitual residence to avoid persecution and to safely exercise their human rights.

This presentation explores challenges for people with diverse SOGIE seeking asylum in Southeast Asia, a region that hosts large numbers of forcibly displaced people but several countries have not ratified the UN Refugee Convention, nor developed comprehensive legal protections. The research compares sites in Indonesia, Malaysia and Thailand to learn about the diverse and contingent protection strategies that refugees enact in their struggle against exclusion and discrimination. The research is based on interviews with forcibly displaced people with diverse SOGIE and supplemented by interviews with UNHCR, refugee service providers, refugee advocates and academics based in Southeast Asia. Multiple forms of injustice are highlighted through an intersectional analysis of refugee-ness with sexuality, gender, age and ethnicity.

The research discusses how minority refugees can safely become legible and visible in Southeast Asia to access services and have their rights recognised by humanitarian actors. The research discusses

how minority refugees can safely become legible and visible in Southeast Asia to access services and have their rights recognised by humanitarian actors. The paper shows how civil society in Malaysia has emerged to fill gaps in mainstream protection services, developing inclusive processes for identifying and supporting refugees with diverse SOGIE. Learning from these acts of solidarity, the paper highlights the effectiveness of community-led approaches to refugee protection. The paper argues that refugees with diverse SOGIE can only be protected and have their needs supported when a safer space is created in which they can be visible and known in their full identities.

Rohingya Hijra Refugees: An ethno-religious category in the making in the context of forced displacement

Kazi Ashraf Uddin | UNSW Sydney, Australia

In Bangladesh, Rohingya refugees who defy traditional gender norms face harsh conditions due to transphobia within the socio-religious intersections of the refugee camps. Coming from Myanmar as an unrecognised gender category in the Bangladeshi socio-cultural and legal context, these transgender

refugees adopt a cultural assimilationist approach for survival. To understand their vulnerabilities, researchers must use culturally sensitive and secure methodologies. An intersectional approach may offer insights, but understanding the host country's context and reflecting on the research purpose and consequences are essential.

Drawing from ethnographic fieldwork with transgender Rohingya refugees conducted between 2022 and 2023, this paper sheds light on two aspects of Rohingya transgender refugees' lived experiences in an ethno-religious context (i) Islamic moral policing in the refugee camps and (ii) ethnocultural solidarity between the Bangladeshi hijras and the Rohingya non-binary refugees. Drawing from Agamben's notion of the sovereign and the "bare life", this paper argues that an intra-community sovereign is construed within the refugee camps that deploys the carceral moral logic to instrumentalise the repressive gender policing stripping the Rohingya trans people of their legal subjecthood.

This paper might help transgender researchers in the context of forced displacement in South Asia to adopt situational ethics and safety protocols.

4:00 PM - 5:15 PM

Afternoon Plenaries

Main Conference Room | L25

Lived Experience Panel Discussion

The LGBTIQ+ politics of borders, detention and deportation

A/Prof Debanuj DasGupta | University of California, US

In this talk, I will trace histories of the war on immigrants in the US through a rise in detention and deportation procedures. The war on drugs, war on terror and simultaneous surge in Transphobia and Xenophobia frames the lives of Trans and Gender Queer immigrants, refugees and asylum seekers in a constant state of precarity.

The United States has one of the largest detainee populations in the world, while it receives a very small portion of displaced persons from the world. The largest benefactor of the detention and deportation system are private corporations since the majority of the detention facilities are managed by private corporations. If we put people first and not corporations, we might reimagine a world without jails and detention centers.

In the second portion of this talk, I will highlight the activism of trans and queer detainees that is calling for prison and detention abolition. In doing so, I argue that reforming detention centers to make them Trans/Queer friendly is not enough. Trans/Justice is delivered when we work to abolish prisons and detention centers.

Good Practice Panel Discussion

The launch of the Roadmap for Action: Achieving asylum and migration justice for LGBTIQ+ forcibly displaced people

Dr Renee Dixon | FDPN, Maria Dimopoulos AM | Settlement Council of Australia, Dr Ruth McNair AM | Pride Foundation Australia, and Jasmina Bajraktarevic-Hayward | STARTTS NSW, Australia

The Roadmap for Action aims to establish a collective, cross-sector, and comprehensive approach to achieving asylum and migration justice for LGBTIQ+ forcibly displaced people. The session will launch the Roadmap for Action.

Speaker BIOS

Aisya A. Zaharin (she/her)

Aisya is a Muslim trans woman of colour and a PhD researcher working across interdisciplinary fields of political science, history, and social justice to LGBTQIA+ and Islam. She comes to the academic-activist realm from her lived experience and shares the voices of those experiencing intersecting discrimination with a focus on improving social inequality and promoting cultural relativism, intersectionality and decoloniality.

Alex Duarte (they/them) and Kelli Charles (she/her)

Alex and Kelli are community services workers with experience working with survivors of state-sanctioned violence and supporting LGBTQI+ people in regional Australia. They are committed to navigating the community services industrial complex through an anti-oppressive framework that brings dignity and honours resistance. As a white settler, Kelli recognises her privilege and is committed to using her skills to facilitate truth telling, advocacy and giving up space for others. Alex works with heart, integrity and persistence to restore dignity to each human life, ensuring that people don't get left behind by systems that too often exclude and harm those at the intersections of oppression.

Ali Aliyev (they/them)

Ali is a queer, HIV+ migrant from Azerbaijan who has lived in Türkiye for nearly 12 years. They hold a master's degree in migration policy, where they researched human rights violations faced by LGBTI+ migrants, and are currently completing a second Masters in Cultural Studies at Sabancı University. Their current research focuses on how HIV+ queer migrants are disproportionately excluded from vital services. Ali is deeply involved in HIV and sexual and reproductive health and rights advocacy and is a co-founder of Positive Solidarity, a network supporting people living with HIV through peer counselling, advocacy, community education, and policy change.

Alireza (he/him)

Alireza is an Iranian LGBTIQ refugee who fled Iran in 2016, seeking safety in Turkey amid severe persecution risks for homosexual individuals and the broader LGBTIQ community. In 2022, Alireza relocated to Australia. By January 2025, he took on the role of Lived Experience Project Officer for STARTTS' LGBTIQ+ Refugee and Asylum Seeker

Project. Drawing on his lived experiences, Alireza now works to advocate for LGBTIQ+ asylum seekers worldwide, focusing on those in Turkey and Iran.

Amao Leota Lu (she/her)

Amao Leota Lu is a proud Samoan Fa'afafine and Indigenous Pasifika trans woman of colour. She is a trans community advocate, consultant, ambassador and board member. Her work spans over 30 years in the fields of social justice, education, health, employment, the arts, film and television. For 22 years, she has been actively involved in LGBTIQ community affairs both locally and internationally. She advocates strongly for her trans community and proudly shares and weaves the tapestry of intersectionality of race, culture and gender identity within her work.

Amy Luschwitz (she/her)

Amy is a mental health social worker and narrative therapist who works in a counselling role at STARTTS on stolen Dharawal land (Wollongong). Amy has practised as a counsellor for 12 years and as a social worker for 17 years working more recently with communities from refugee backgrounds and before this working with First Nations communities in the Illawarra and Yarrenyty-Aritere, central Australia. Amy is a cis queer woman and proud to be in a family with many queer relatives.

Anastasia Le (she/her)

Anastasia Le is a Vietnamese Australian transgender woman with a refugee background whose work spans social justice and economic equity. Anastasia works with the most marginalised people in employment and social services. Her work supports inclusion across LGBTQIA+, migrant, and disability communities. She has also worked on visibility campaigns, media, policy and organisational change. Anastasia's authentic leadership is shaped by years of listening, surviving, and helping create space for others. Her passion is to empower and uplift those unseen, generating sustainable impact and long lasting change.

Anirudh Chilukuri (they/them)

Anirudh Chilukuri is a neurodivergent, non-binary, and queer social worker dedicated to trauma-informed care. With a focus on supporting forcibly displaced queer individuals, they bring a wealth of knowledge in social work and intersectional advocacy.

Basem Kerbage (he/him)

Basem Kerbage is a human rights activist, and is part of the leadership team of Queer Arabs Australia, Australia's first national organisation supporting LGBTQIA+ Arab/South West Asia North Africa (SWANA) communities.

Ben Tyler (he/him)

Ben Tyler is a Bininj Man whose homeland is on Murudjurl Country in Western Arnhem Land. Ben lives with his family on Pataonga Homestead, which is a remote Indigenous community in central Kakadu National Park. Ben is an entrepreneur and transdisciplinary practitioner and researcher with experience in screen printing, acting, pearling, public relations, park ranger, fashion and textiles, hospitality and tourism and multimedia. Ben is the owner and founder of Kakadu Kitchen, a 100% Indigenous-owned bush food business. He is also the author of 'Walking in Gagudju Country' and 'Walking The Rock Country In Kakadu'.

Benjamin Oh (he/him)

Benjamin is a community worker, organiser, advocate and adult-educator specialising in human rights, interfaith dialogue, HIV/AIDS prevention, international aid and development, and LGBTQIA+ rights. Benjamin has served on boards of the Australian LGBTIQ Multicultural Council, the NSW Gay and Lesbian Rights Lobby, Equal Voices, and Rainbow Catholics InterAgency for Ministry. He was a part of the Australian National Dialogue of Christians (NCCA), Muslims (AFIC), and Jews (ANDCMJ) and was the founding Secretary of the Global Network of Rainbow Catholics. He is a co-founder of the Asian Australian Alliance and the national convenor of the Asian Australian Rainbow Alliance (AAuRA). Currently, Benjamin is a board director at FDPN. Apart from being parent to two kids and partner to one spouse, Benjamin also works as a Pastoral Supervisor for religious leaders and occasionally serves as a celebrant over the weddings and life-ceremonies of his beloved community.

Bijan Kardouni (he/him)

Bijan arrived in Australia from Iran seeking safety as a gay man. Shortly after arriving, he applied for asylum and became an Australian citizen in 2022. Since 2020, he has been working with STARTTS as a group facilitator, focusing on support and advocacy for LGBTQIA+ refugees. He also raises awareness of issues affecting marginalised communities, including forced marriage and LGBTQIA+ rights. His lived experience as a forcibly displaced person drives his commitment to fostering inclusive communities and amplifying the voices of LGBTQIA+ people facing similar challenges.

Blossom Ah Ket (she/her)

Blossom Ah Ket is a NAATI-certified Spanish interpreter and translator, working in community health and legal settings. Living and studying in Colombia, Indigenous resistance led her to see language as a tool of solidarity. Blossom's dedication to language justice continues her family tradition as the third interpreter over five generations.

Cansu COL (she/her)

Cansu COL is the founder of Education Principles and the Anatolian Queers Collective. An unapologetically queer educator with lived experience of forced displacement, she specialises in teaching vocational and higher education courses on Business & Change Management, Diversity, Inclusion & Equity (DIE), and Work-Integrated Learning.

Corrinne Sullivan (she/her)

Dr Corrinne Sullivan is a Wiradjuri and queer scholar. She is a Professor in Geography and Urban Studies in Social Sciences at Western Sydney University. Her research aims to understand the ways in which Indigenous peoples negotiate their social, cultural, and political identities in relation to place-based and spatial dynamics. Her research areas include: Indigenous LGBTQIA+ people's social and emotional wellbeing; Indigenous peoples and urban spaces; Indigenous communities and organisations; Indigenous education; and gender and sexuality studies.

Debanuj DasGupta (he/him)

Dr Debanuj DasGupta is an Associate Professor of Feminist Studies at University of California, Santa Barbara. Debanuj's research and teaching focuses on the global governance of migration, sexuality, and HIV. As a feminist geographer, Debanuj remains interested in trans/queer place-making and world writing. Debanuj is a survivor of the detention/prison industrial complex and has previously lived as an undocumented immigrant in the US for over a decade. Prior to joining academia, Debanuj has worked in movements for sexual liberation and migrant justice in both the US & India.

Dilsah de Rham (they/them)

Dilsah, a queer community worker and artist from Sri Lanka, Switzerland/France, is an intersectional Indigenous feminist with experiences of child trafficking, domestic abuse, and invisible disabilities. They are one of the facilitators for the Queer Migrant Project at LGBTI Legal Service and the DFSV counsellor at Open Doors Youth Service.

Epipola (she/they)

Epipola is a facilitator, co-trainer and founding member in the STARTTS LGBTIQA+ project. Her background is in teaching in her home country of the Kingdom of Tonga. She is an advocate for Trans people of colour and for all people who have sought asylum based on their sexual orientation or gender identity. She is currently studying a Diploma in Community Services and Mental Health and works as a casual interpreter. She also designs and creates traditional Tongan attire and teaches traditional dance to nurture access to Tongan culture.

Farnaz Shahimi (she/her)

Dr. Farnaz Shahimi is an Iranian Psychologist with a particular focus on working with marginalised populations and survivors of trauma. She has worked with families and adolescents in private practice in Iran. She has also served as a psychosocial counsellor for Afghan and Iraqi refugees at the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in Iran, undertaking individual therapy sessions with survivors of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV). She is currently a senior practitioner at Foundation House and a senior research officer at MCRI- Intergenerational Health research team.

Francis Jimoh (he/him)

Francis is a Caseworker at STARTTS and a Master of Counselling student at the University of Canberra. His keen interests include person-centred counselling, trauma-informed practice, and migration trauma support. Francis is passionate about advocacy, inclusive service delivery, and strengthening community voice in settlement work. In his spare time, he enjoys reading, watching football, listening to podcasts, and engaging with ideas that promote social justice and belonging.

Frankie Hanman Siegersma (all pronouns)

Frankie Hanman Siegersma is a faculty member of the Dulwich Centre for narrative therapy and community work. Frankie is interested in non-extractive and decolonial practices of responding to lived experiences of LGBTIQA+ forcibly displaced peoples and works as a counsellor narrative therapist at Aftercare, an LGBTIQA+ suicide support program.

Grace Dee Macauley (she/her)

Grace is a Social Worker at Many Coloured Sky, working alongside LGBTIQA+ refugees and people seeking asylum. Grace is a passionate advocate for social justice and human rights, through her work and personal life. As an international development worker, she led a social enterprise/fashion label

supporting employment for women living in rural India. She then lived and worked in Alice Springs for many years, working across Central Australia supporting communities who have been impacted by family violence. Most recently, she has worked with the asylum seeker community living in Naarm through community development and program work.

Hanada Ghazala (she/her)

Hanada is an experienced community organizer and advocate passionate about mental health within minority communities. As the Events Coordinator for The Iceberg Foundation's Manaya Pride Program, she draws on her background in fostering inclusion to create trauma-informed, safe spaces for LGBTIQA+ forcibly displaced people.

Hanna Qereqeretabua (they/them)

Hanna is a dedicated healthcare professional, educator and advocate for LGBTIQA+ people seeking asylum and refugees. Arriving in Australia in 2018 in search for asylum, they are a passionate trainer providing inclusive practice training for working with people with diverse genders, sexualities, relationships, families and bodies who have sought safety in Australia. As a peer facilitator for LGBTIQA+ people, they continue to use their expertise across multiple fields to uplift and support those in need, ensuring greater visibility and inclusion for LGBTIQA+ asylum seekers and refugees in Australia.

Haruko Kudo (she/her)

Dr Haruko Kudo is an Associate Professor at the Graduate School of Intercultural Studies, Kobe University, Japan. Her research focuses on queer forced migration, examining how norms of sexuality intersect with the history and politics of border control as well as the protection of the "vulnerable" population.

Hasan Al-Akraa (he/him)

Hasan Al-Akraa is a 25-year-old educator, public speaker, social advocate, and fundraiser. He is a Syrian refugee who recently resettled to the United States following a 13-year asylum journey in Malaysia. At 17, he founded the Refugee Emergency Fund (REF) to extend financial aid to refugees and undocumented migrants in Malaysia, particularly in medical and housing emergencies. Hasan worked with numerous local and international entities, championing refugee rights to equitable services that facilitate a dignified life and meaningful participation of people with lived experiences throughout various initiatives.

Heathergrace Jones (she/her)

Heathergrace Jones co-ordinates the STARTTS

LGBTIQA+ project on unceded Gadigal lands. She is a Narrative Therapist with two decades of experience in community and international development focusing on social justice. She works alongside people who have sought sanctuary in this country on the basis of their sexualities, genders, bodies, relationships, or families. She is committed to foregrounding decolonising practices, queer resistances, and centring lived expertise.

Iona Moller (she/her)

Iona started getting involved with Refugee Legal as a volunteer and then as an admin team member while studying a Law/Arts degree at Monash University. She has worked as a solicitor at Refugee Legal since being admitted to practice law. As a queer woman working in immigration law she feels strongly about supporting forcibly displaced members of the LGBTIQ+ community.

Jaskiran Kaur Rekhranj (she/her)

Jaskiran has been working as a migration lawyer for 9 years for clients based in various detention centres in Australia and Nauru. She has worked on matters across the migration portfolio and now primarily works on protection and cancellation matters. She is based in Canberra, ACT and is a council member for the LGBTIQA+ Ministerial Advisory Council for the ACT Government.

Jasmina Bajraktarevic-Hayward (she/her)

Jasmina Bajraktarevic-Hayward is a Social Worker who came to Australia in 1993 as a refugee from Bosnia-Herzegovina. She manages STARTTS' Community Services Program which consists of over 150 staff including the teams: Community Development, Rural and Regional Community Development, Youth, School Liaison, Families in Cultural Transition, Mental Health Community Living Supports for Refugees and Health in My Language; as well as staff covering STARTTS' LGBTIQA+ Project, volunteer management, policy analysis and input, community development evaluation, community cultural development, grant and tender writing and community capacity building. Jasmina is currently the President of the Refugee Council of Australia and a member of the NSW Refugee Communities Advocacy Network as well as a former member of the World Pride Sydney Advisory Committee.

Jean Linis-Dinco (she/her)

Dr Jean Linis-Dinco is an activist from the Philippines holding a PhD in Cybersecurity focused on the cyber aspect of the Rohingya conflict in Myanmar. Through her work, Jean aligns technology with human rights, advocating for human-rights-based (not just ethical) governance on global platforms.

Her work bridges technology and human rights, making significant strides in global impact through her role at the Manushya Foundation in Bangkok. Her innovative projects include using SMS technology to enhance education in the Philippines and developing a translator app for peacebuilding in conflict-affected areas.

Jesse Brown (they/them)

Jesse is a social worker that provides case management support to victim survivors of family violence at Thorne Harbour Health. Jesse has experience providing case management support to both individuals and families that have been forcibly displaced. Jesse additionally has a research background in family violence reform.

Kathleen Openshaw (she/her)

Dr Kathleen Openshaw is a lecturer and the Diversity and Equity Coordinator in the School of Social Sciences at Western Sydney University. Kathleen's research investigates the complexities of negatively racialised migrants' religious expressions.

Katie Wrigley (she/her) and Gretel Emerson (they/them)

Katie and Gretel run the SOGIESC LGBTI safety program at the Refugee Advice and Casework Service (RACS). They are committed to providing a service which is inclusive and informed by what our clients tell us is best practice when helping queer refugees seek safety in Australia.

Kazi Ashraf Uddin (he/him)

Kazi Ashraf Uddin is a PhD candidate at UNSW Sydney. His doctoral research is a decolonial epistemic project that aims to develop a South Asian transgender research methodology. Previously a Scholar-in-residence at the Forum on Contemporary Theory (India) with a transgender research project, Ashraf critically investigates South Asian gender expressions and lived experiences from a socio-anthropological perspective. Ashraf is also working on developing research protocols to do research with gender-diverse people in the refugee context.

Kenton Penley Miller (he/him)

Kenton works at the Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission (VEOHRC). Among many roles, he was the Principal Advisor to Victoria's Commissioner for LGBTIQA+ Communities. He has worked in government and NGOs and has worked and volunteered in queer and trans rights, sole parent rights and other human rights for decades. He is a cartoonist.

Lata Narayanaswamy (she/her)

Dr. Lata Narayanaswamy is an Associate Professor

in the Politics of Global Development, School of Politics and International Studies (POLIS), University of Leeds, UK. Since 2001 Dr. Narayanaswamy has worked as a research practitioner, consultant and now an academic working at the nexus between development theory and practice. Her research critically reflects on gendered/intersectional and post/decolonial dynamics of development knowledge and its perceived contribution to addressing global development challenges.

Lauren Breen (she/her)

Lauren Breen is a queer, trauma-informed counsellor with extensive experience supporting neurodivergent and LGBTQIASB+ individuals. Her work at The Iceberg Foundation builds on a background in creating safe, affirming spaces for growth and healing.

Leticia (they/them)

Leticia is a human rights activist, asylum seeker and LGBTQ+ sex worker. An advocate for people living with HIV, Leticia specialises in public health and promotes health and wellbeing for LGBTQ+ refugees and asylum seekers. They have led campaigns to improve SRHR and advocated for law reform to combat discrimination against LGBTQ+ and sex worker communities. Their efforts have been recognised by UNESCO, and they received the Upcoming Philly Lutaaya Award for their anti-stigma work. In 2024, they were awarded the Global Advocacy for HIV Cure Academy Fellowship for their work on including marginalised populations.

Li-Min Lee (they/them)

Dr Li-Min Lee is a researcher and policy advisor with extensive experience working with peak Australian LGBTIQ+ organisations since 2009. They specialise in LGBTIQ+ health, intersectionality, mental health, and help-seeking behaviours, and have been actively involved in community work and social services to support diverse and vulnerable populations.

Lovishniakri Sekaran (she/they)

Lovishniakri Sekaran is dedicated to challenging and dismantling systems of oppression and power rooted in colonialism, racism, and patriarchy. Doing community work for over a decade, they strive to centre lived experience of disenfranchised communities, advocate for social justice, and promote intersectional feminism. With a background in legal studies, sustainable community development and public policy, Lovish brings experience working with forcibly displaced communities and grassroots organisations. Lovish is a settler-migrant based out of Melbourne and volunteers with the Refugee Emergency Fund (REF).

Manisha Abraham (they/she)

Manisha is a queer Sri Lankan, Fijian-Indian, non-binary woman born and raised in Aotearoa New Zealand. They are a Senior Clinician and the Practice Administrator at The Iceberg Foundation, delivering trauma-informed person-centred narrative therapeutic services. She fosters an inclusive organisational culture while championing meaningful change and sustainable community impact.

Maria Dimopoulos AM (she/her)

Maria Dimopoulos AM is the CEO of the Settlement Council of Australia and a leading advocate for human rights and intersectional justice. A queer migrant woman, Maria has spent over three decades advancing inclusive systems that centre the voices of those most disenfranchised, particularly LGBTQIA+ people from refugee and migrant backgrounds.

She has served on the boards of Midsumma Festival and the Australian GLBTIQ+ Multicultural Council (AGMC), championing visibility and equity across sectors. Her work has shaped national frameworks on settlement, justice, and inclusion. Maria's leadership is grounded in a lifelong commitment to dignity, belonging, and transformative social change.

Mark Kleine (he/she/they)

Mark is a paralegal and artist working with the LGBTI Legal Service in Meanjin (Brisbane) with lived experience and expertise in domestic and family violence in immigrant communities. They are one of the facilitators for the Queer Migrant Project at LGBTI Legal Service and the DFSV counsellor at Open Doors Youth Service.

Maryanne Rimbao (she/her)

Maryanne is a human rights and environmental advocate from Papua New Guinea. She is the founder and director of the Humanity and Nature Indigenous Women's Association, supporting Indigenous women including those who are LGBTIQ+, affected by forced displacement, gender-based violence, and ethnic conflict. A long-time climate justice activist, she has spoken out against mining-related displacement and environmental harm. Due to tribal conflict, Maryanne was forced to leave her home in the highlands and relocate to Port Moresby. She continues her work on human rights, Indigenous rights, HIV/AIDS, land rights, gender justice, digital security, legal rights, and peacebuilding.

Matcha Phornin (she/her)

Matcha Phornin is an ethnic minority and Indigenous lesbian feminist a human rights defender from

the Chiangmai – Tak – Maehongson, the border of Thailand – Myanmar. She is the founder and executive director of Sangsan Anakot Yawachon, an organisation advancing the rights of the Indigenous people especially LGBTIQ, women and girls. Matcha is a leading voice in the intersectional movement to end gender-based violence and violence against LGBTIQ communities. She advocates for land rights and environmental justice in the context of armed conflict, where many Indigenous people are stateless, displaced, and denied access to land and basic protections.

Melak Khaleel (she/they)

Melak is a multidisciplinary visual artist and activist living on Kaurna Country (Adelaide Region) and a part of the organisers for the pro-Palestine movement. Arriving to Australia as a political refugee from Iraq, their work and activism focuses on amplifying the voices of marginalised people and facilitating educational and social development activities for her local community.

Michaela Rhode (she/her)

Michaela is a senior solicitor at the Asylum Seeker Resource Centre in Footscray, Melbourne. She runs a legal clinic assisting people who are applying for protection on the basis of fearing persecution due to their sexual orientation or gender identity. The legal clinic assists people at all stages of the refugee status determination process.

Mikhael Touma (he/they)

Mikhael is a Syrian refugee of Arab and Assyrian descent settling in Naarm (Melbourne). He is working as a NAATI Certified Arabic Interpreter and translator. They are passionate about language justice and the intersectional challenges of being Queer and Arab.

Néstor Iván Elvir Hernández (he/they)

Néstor is a displaced person and has transformed his personal experience into a driving force for social change. Currently, they lead the direction of the Honduras Diversa Association, the only organization in Honduras and Latin America led by displaced LGBTIQ+ youth that works for mental health and citizen participation for displaced LGBTIQ+ people. His commitment is to accompany victims of violence, make the struggles of his community visible and generate sustainable solutions to promote equality and social justice.

Niamh Joyce (she/they)

Niamh Joyce is a solicitor at the Inner City Legal Centre and runs the Trans and Gender Diverse Legal Service (TGDLS). The TGDLS provides free legal assistance to trans, gender diverse and intersex people across NSW in a variety of legal areas.

Niamh is committed to justice and advocacy for their LGBTQIA+ community, migrant and displaced communities, sex workers and people living with HIV.

Noushin Barghi (she/her)

Noushin Barghi is a multi-talented millennial with qualifications in Community Development and Graphic Design. If you're trying to track her down, you'll likely find her immersed in the middle of the data gap tunnel, only emerging when she has something valuable to contribute. Over the past four years, she has worked at Wyndham City Council to shape locally-led social and economic inclusion solutions and design accessible online experiences to share government services. On the way back to the tunnel, Noushin rests up with FDPN to be her whole self and amplify the voices of LGBTIQ+ people in forced displacement. She doesn't strive for the light at the end of the tunnel but for no data gap tunnel at all.

Paige Matthews (she/her)

Paige Matthews is a Transfeminist, human rights defender for the Trans community, activist and campaigner for the rights of trans people, expert on issues of forced displacement due to violence and forced migration, representative for the LGTBI community of Honduras.

Parissa Bozorg (she/her)

Parissa works as part of the STARTTS LGBTIQ+ Project, drawing on her background in law, social work, and policy. At the centre of her work is a deep belief in finding moments of light and hope—even in complex and challenging contexts. Her career has taken her across grassroots initiatives and NGOs in Turkey, Lebanon, Tanzania, and Australia. Throughout, Parissa has remained grounded in her passion for social justice and her commitment to advocacy that is led by, and for, the communities she's honoured to work alongside.

Percy Gurtler (they/them)

Percy is a white settler PhD candidate at La Trobe University. Their research examines experiences of conversion practices in multicultural and multifaith communities in Australia. Percy has advocated for many years for a ban against conversion practices in Victoria and other Australian states. They are passionate about the intersection of queer identity and religion and challenging the dominance of Western narratives of queer identity.

Rami Elghattis (he/him)

Rami Elghattis is a Palestinian activist and son of Nakba survivors. Rami was born in the middle east and moved to Australia in 2011. He has been actively involved in the pro-Palestinian movement

in Australia over the last 10 years.

Renee Dixon (they/them)

Dr. Renee Dixon (they/them) is a human rights advocate, researcher, and policy expert focused on LGBTIQ+ forced displacement. They are the co-founder and Executive Director of the Forcibly Displaced People Network (FDPN). Renee has played a key role in changing the language and policy approach to LGBTIQ+ displacement in Australia and has led high-level advocacy for targeted protection and supports for LGBTIQ+ displaced communities. Renee also serves on multiple national and international advisory boards, shaping policy and inclusion efforts.

Ruth McNair AM (she/her)

Dr Ruth McNair AM is Chairperson of Pride Foundation Australia, a national philanthropic organisation for LGBTIQ+ people. She works in a social change model of philanthropy advocating for systemic change to reduce the structural inequalities that damage LGBTIQ+ lives. She became a Member of the Order of Australia in 2019 for significant service to medicine and as an advocate for the LGBTI community.

Saina Avesta (she/her)

Originally from Iran, Saina lived as an asylum seeker in Türkiye for 7 years before arriving in Brisbane, Australia, on a humanitarian visa in 2021. She serves as a Peer Leader and Coordinator of Third Queer Culture (TQC), a Brisbane-based peer support group for LGBTIQ+ refugees and people seeking safety. She has a background in social work and community development and is a Training Officer at QPASTT, an organisation dedicated to supporting forcibly displaced people with experiences of past trauma.

Sasja Sijdek (she/her)

Sasja Sijdek is an indigenous Singaporean TWOC activist based in Naarm/Melbourne. As a co-founder of Trans Sisters United, she fights violence against trans women and women. She also co-founded Queer Muslim Naarm, organising inclusive Iftar events to support queer Muslims rights. Sasja has contributed to several notable publications, including "Nothing To Hide - Voices of Trans & Gender Diverse Australia", "Transgender Australia A History Since 1910", and "Foreground: Portraits of Older Transgender and Gender Diverse People". She hosts a television show, "Trans Fabulous" on Channel 31, as well as a radio show, "Queering The Air" on 3CR.

Shubha Kayastha (she/they)

Shubha is a queer feminist activist from an Indigenous Newa community, originally from

Nepal and currently based in Melbourne, Australia. They have over 15 years of experience working and volunteering in national, regional and global organisations, working in the intersection of gender, sexual and reproductive health rights, sexuality, disability and technology. They are a PhD student at the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology (RMIT). Prior to this, they co-founded and served as Executive Director for Body & Data, a feminist digital rights organisation based in Nepal.

Shutong (Ash) Chen (she/they)

Shutong (Ash) Chen is a PhD Candidate at the University of New South Wales. Their research examines the civic participation of Chinese queer diasporas in transnational queer activism in Australia. As an advocate and scholar, Chen is committed to fostering cross-cultural dialogue and community empowerment through research and grassroots engagement.

Tamara Megaw (she/her)

Tamara Megaw has a Master of Arts in Development Studies (Critical Social Policy) from the International Institute for Social Studies in the Hague, Netherlands. She has 12 years' experience in International Development practice, training, evaluation and research. She now works at the University for Technology Sydney's Institute for Sustainable Futures on research addressing effectiveness of development aid and gender and social inclusion in the Asia-Pacific region. She is currently a PhD candidate at University of Sydney researching community-led protection approaches for forcibly displaced sexual and gender minorities in Southeast Asia.

Taya Ketelaar-Jones (she/they)

Taya is a queer lawyer and PhD candidate based in Nipaluna/Hobart, Lutruwita/Tasmania, with extensive research and practice experience in refugee and immigration law. Taya is currently undertaking a PhD in Law at the University of Tasmania, focusing on developing solutions to forced migration. Taya was previously employed as a Senior Lawyer at the Tasmanian Refugee Legal Service where they specialised in asylum claims based on sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, and sex characteristics.

Tina Dixon (she/her)

Dr. Tina Dixon is an early career academic, advocate, and social policy professional with experience in advancing LGBTIQ+ equality, refugee protection, and responses to gender-based violence. Tina's doctoral research focused on the lived experiences of queer and trans refugee women exploring narratives surrounding their

displacement and continuation of violence. Her research has contributed overlooked realities of queer displacement into trauma theory, gender studies, refugee studies, and queer theory. Together with Dr Renee Dixon, Tina co-founded the Forcibly Displaced People Network.

Thuy-Vi Huynh (she/they)

Thuy-Vi is a queer, Vietnamese-Australian, diasporic organiser whose identity shapes their work in intersectional and community-led spaces. She brings a values-led, trauma-informed approach to advocacy - rooted in collective care, safety, and belonging for SOGIESC communities. With a deep commitment to creating spaces beyond what SOGIESC communities have historically been afforded, a better world, for her, looks like softness - not just survival. Co-creating it alongside queer forcibly displaced people is one of her greatest privileges. Thuy-Vi is a project officer at FDPN.

Victoria (she/they)

Victoria is a Brazilian transgender woman and proud member of the LGBTIQ+ refugee community in Australia. She relocated to Sydney in 2019, fleeing one of the most dangerous countries in the world for LGBTIQ+ people. Her lived experience of persecution and displacement has become the

foundation for her deep commitment to community, inclusion, and justice. Victoria is actively involved in the STARTTS LGBTIQ+ Walk on Walk Strong Project, where she contributes as a group facilitator supporting others navigating similar journeys.

Walk on Walk Strong

Walk On Walk Strong is a group of people who have come to Australia to find refuge. They come from different countries, ethnicities, faiths, education, abilities, languages, sexual orientations, gender identities, families, and relationships. Walk On Walk Strong run peer-led psychosocial support groups, train intentional inclusive practice workshops for settlement, multicultural, interpreter and LGBTIQ+ services, and create resources to support LGBTIQ+ people with refugee and asylum-seeking backgrounds.

Xin Hu (they/them)

Xin Hu originally came to Australia as a queer backpacker and became a queer international student. Xin completed their social work study at Monash University and worked with LGBTIQ+ communities in the fields of mental health, suicide prevention and AOD. Their major research interests lie in the area of intersectionality, multiculturalism, gender and sexuality, and mental health.

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