

I wish to offer my support for the Lesbian Action Group's exemption application to host single-sex lesbian events. As a sexual minority, there are limited opportunities (online or in person) for lesbians to meet in public free from male harassment or sexual advances. Numerous mixed-sex events already exist for the LGBTQ community. As a lesbian, I am not comfortable in romantic settings where males are present - this is innate to my sexual orientation, and the sexual orientation of other lesbians. There are numerous mixed-sex events in Victoria (and across the country); it is reasonable to provide some single-sex events for lesbians who wish to meet only with other same-sex attracted women, given this is who their sexual orientation is towards.

I support the Lesbian Action Group's exemption application and believe this is similar to other single-sex exemptions, such as have been granted to female gyms, men's clubs, and religious groups. Denying this application will legally force lesbians into mixed-sex events, which is discriminatory to our sexual orientation, given we are exclusively attracted to other females.

Please consider that homophobia and sexism are rife within other parts of the 'rainbow alphabet' as well as general society. We only ask for the option to meet with other lesbians, free from discrimination and those who are not part of our minority sexual orientation.

As a lesbian in my 20s, I have been deprived of finding, meeting and connecting with other lesbians for the purpose of romance and friendship in single-sex spaces. Exclusively same-sex attracted females, or female homosexuals, have an experience that is distinct and different from other members of LGBTQ. A transwoman who has been raised and lived as a heterosexual male, regardless of their current life experience and identity, has a distinct experience from female homosexuals. Internalised and externalised homophobia, in addition to lifelong discrimination on the basis of female sex, creates unique experiences and even trauma warranting protected single-sex spaces and the ability to meet and connect. We are already isolated and discriminated against in both our public and private lives on the basis of dual discrimination; sex and sexual orientation.

I support LGBTQ spaces existing - however, this is already almost all of them. When I have attended mixed-sex LGBTQ spaces in the past, myself and lesbian friends have been harassed, disbelieved as lesbians, and hit on by males. This is uncomfortable and sometimes threatening. There is no public reprieve from this in existing public spaces. AHRC's preliminary hearing states that sex is protected under the SDA; failing to provide protections to a group suggests otherwise. If both females and males are protected under the category "female sex", sex is no longer a protected attribute and is rendered meaningless. Sex was protected due to the lifelong oppression and discrimination the female sex - of which lesbians are included - experiences. CEDAW was ratified in an attempt to address this discrimination unique to the female sex.

That trans-only spaces exist without any concern for "cis" lesbian inclusion shows the hypocritical prioritising of other groups over lesbians - including by the major LGBTQ organisations who opposed LAG. AHRC agreeing with this stance evidences how low the priority of lesbian views and feelings are around our own spaces, events, and cultural practices.