

Pride Game:

What we learned from the 2016 St Kilda FC campaign



“
We want the LGBTIQ community to feel welcome and safe at AFL games and free to be themselves – this goes to the heart of our club’s ‘How I want to be’ spirit.”

– Matt Finnis, CEO, St Kilda Football Club

In August 2016 the St Kilda Football Club held the first ever elite level AFL Pride Game to promote lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex and queer (LGBTIQ) inclusion. It was the culmination of more than two years of planning and engagement by the St Kilda Football Club with their staff, players, members and fans, and the wider LGBTIQ community. The campaign was supported by advertising and social media campaigns.*

The process was a positive experience for both the St Kilda FC and the LGBTIQ communities, resulting in small but significant attitudinal changes. These included an increase in the level of awareness by non-LGBTIQ attendees of the ill effects of discrimination, and a stronger feeling of inclusion by LGBTIQ attendees.

The Centre of Sport and Social Impact at La Trobe University evaluated the impact of the Pride Game by conducting:

- A pre- and post-game survey (primarily distributed through Facebook) with more than 3750 respondents, including 800 self-identified LGBTIQ people.
- Post-game interviews with 11 staff members and 6 LGBTIQ organisation representatives.

* Based on the quantity of exposure they had to the Pride campaign through advertising, social media and Pride Game attendance, survey respondents were segmented onto three groups: high exposure (10-15 points), some exposure (5-9 points) and little to no exposure (0-4 points).

Before the Pride Game

Quantifying the problem

A pre-game survey of 673 people who identified as LGBTIQ revealed:



Thought that AFL games are NOT a safe place for LGBTIQ people

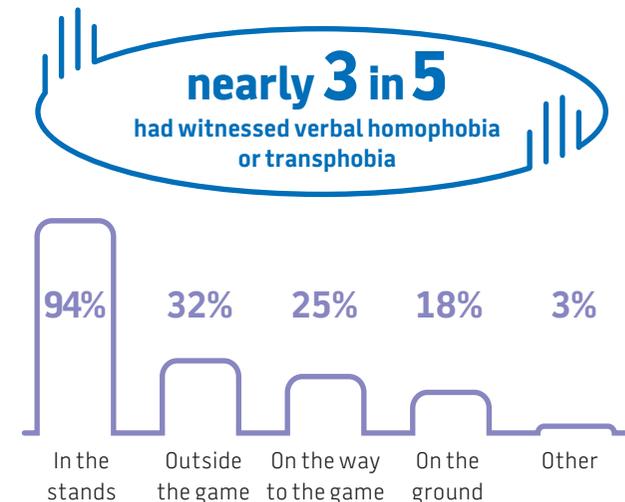


Thought that AFL games are NOT a welcoming place for LGBTIQ people



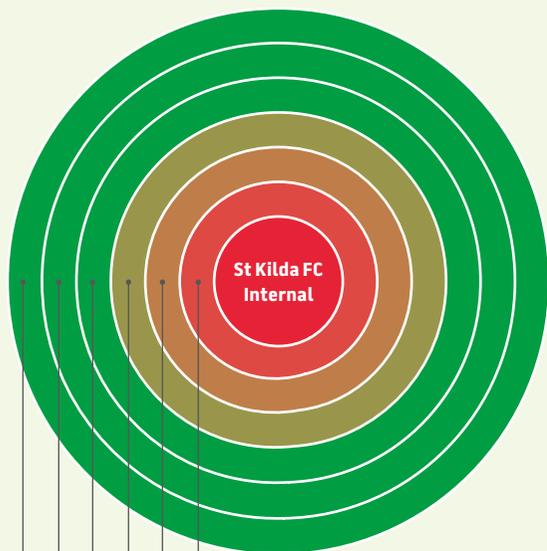
Thought that AFL games are NOT an inclusive place for LGBTIQ people

Of those who had attended an AFL game:



Change from the inside out

For more than two years St Kilda FC championed change from the inside out. This work paid off with preliminary data indicating that the greatest impact so far has been with St Kilda FC internal staff, players and St Kilda members and fans.



- St Kilda FC fans/members
- Sydney FC fans
- AFL fans
- VFL/grassroots AFL
- Other football leagues
- Sport

■ Green shows potential reach but actual research is yet to be determined

After the Pride Game

For LGBTIQ people – a positive experience

When attendees who had self-identified as LGBTIQ were asked to indicate how much they agreed or disagreed with the three statements below, all felt their experience had been positive.

(Scale: 0 being strongly disagree, 10 being strongly agree)



The Pride Game was a safe place for LGBTIQ people



The Pride Game was an inclusive place for LGBTIQ people



The Pride Game was a welcoming place for LGBTIQ people

For non-LGBTIQ people – a change in understanding

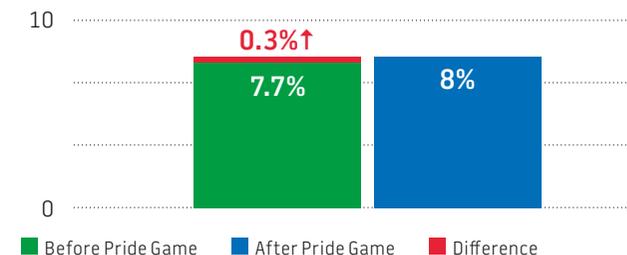
After the Pride Game, the level of agreement with the statement 'LGBTIQ people are more likely to experience depression and anxiety than the rest of the community' had increased to 8.0 out of 10 compared to before (7.7 out of 10). This represents a small, but statistically significant change (0.3) in the level of agreement.

For those who had been highly exposed to the Pride campaign through advertising, social media and Pride Game attendance, the change in level of agreement was greater (0.5) when comparing before and after the Pride Game.

(Scale: 0 being strongly disagree, 10 being strongly agree)

Change in level of agreement

LGBTIQ people are more likely to experience depression and anxiety than the rest of the community



“
I’ve seen the impact a Pride Game has had in my local community; it has changed the culture of clubs and created a safer, more inclusive environment for all players and supporters.”

– Jason Ball, Pride Cup founder

For non-LGBTIQ people – a change in intention to act

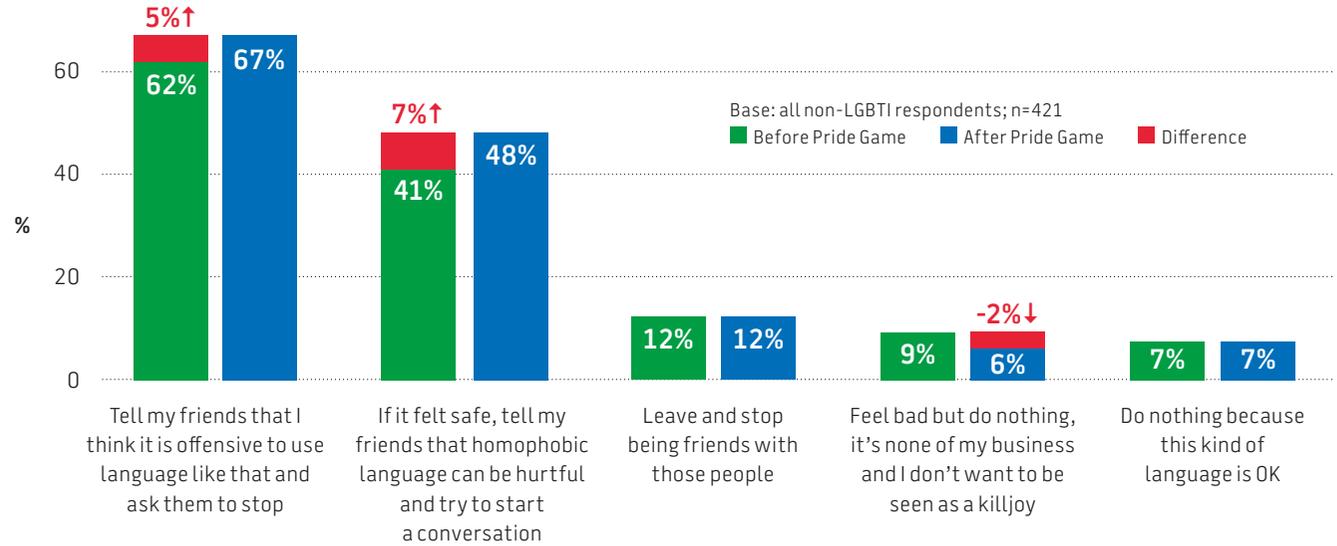
Compared to responses before the Pride Game, small but statistically significant changes were seen afterwards in the way people intended to act in response to homophobic behaviour.

The proportion of respondents who indicated they would be more likely to intervene in some way (see right) was significantly higher for those who had been highly exposed to the Pride campaign.

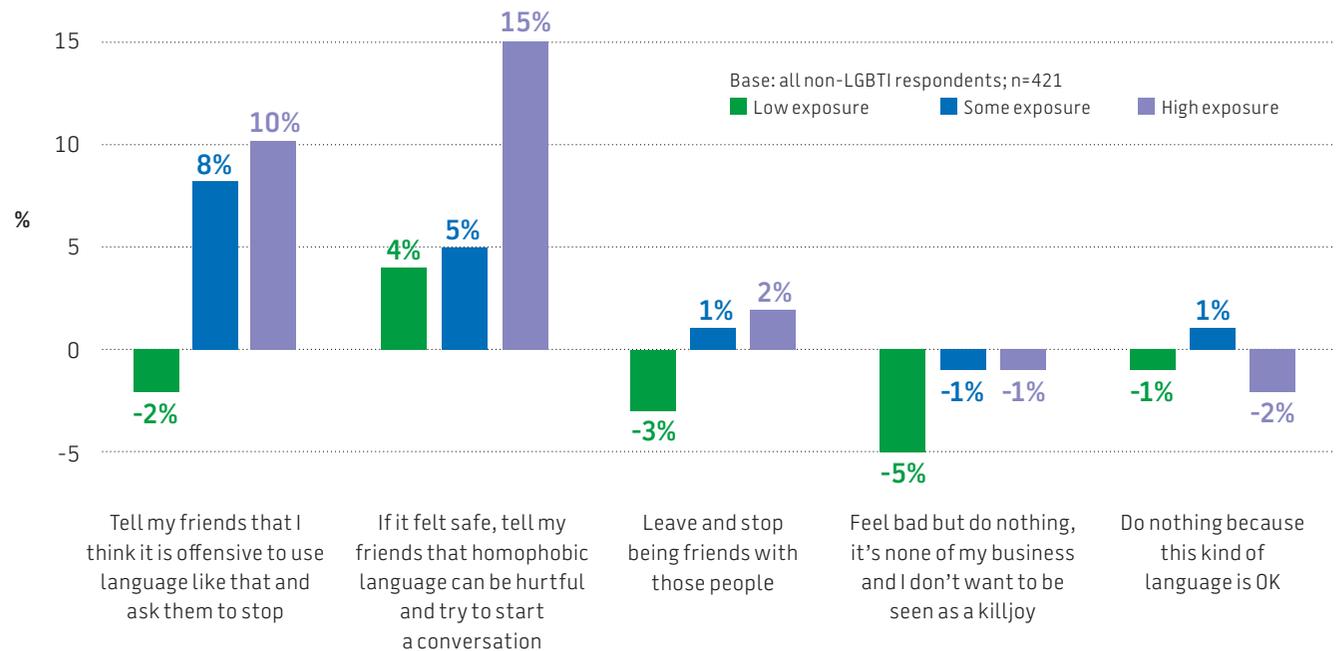
“
The Pride Game sends a message to young LGBTIQ people that they are welcome and safe in this sport. That diversity is cause for celebration, not disrespect or exclusion.”

– Jerril Rechter, CEO VicHealth

If I was with friends who use language such as ‘he’s such a poofter’ or ‘she’s just a bull-dyke’, I would...



Difference before and after by amount of exposure



The process and the lessons learned

The Pride Game was a positive experience for both the St Kilda FC and the LGBTIQ communities. The process undertaken stands as a model of good practice that other AFL clubs (at all levels) should emulate in the future.

How St Kilda FC worked to create lasting change:

- For more than two years St Kilda FC worked through a process of change management to overcome a range of barriers with education around diversity.
- The Club brought employees, members, volunteers and fans on the journey to inclusion which has been an important part of their success.
- Tokenism was avoided, in part because the Pride Game has been part of a journey rather than a one-off event.

“
Pride Game was a great start...but LGBTIQ inclusion needs to become normalised across a wider spectrum – via the AFL clubs – in order to achieve broader societal change.”

– Ro Allen, Victorian Gender and Sexuality Commissioner

Lessons learned

- A clear change management process is important to bring club personnel, members and fans on the journey to inclusion and diversity, and is essential for other clubs seeking to adapt the model themselves.
- Long term commitment is required: creating sport-wide impact with one-off initiatives is less likely to be successful. Significant changes require time.
- The highly exposed audience (St Kilda FC fans/members) returned very high levels of agreement across all survey statements, compared to AFL fans more broadly, who had not been exposed.
- It is important to recognise the potential for unintended harm to LGBTIQ community by inadvertently presenting them as victims.

Homophobia has an extremely serious impact on mental wellbeing. A growing body of research has shown that sport is not a welcoming place for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex and queer (LGBTIQ) people. Many LGBTIQ people who do play sport report the need to be ‘in the closet’ in order to do so.^{1,2}

The mental health impact of this kind of discrimination and exclusion include higher rates of depression, anxiety, drug and alcohol abuse and attempted suicide.³

Key statistics

Homophobia in sport statistics²

- 80% of all participants, and 82% of LGBTIQ participants reported witnessing or experiencing homophobia in sport.
- 78% of participants believe an openly LGBTIQ spectator would not be safe at a sporting event.

Mental health impacts of homophobia

- Rates of suicide attempts of same-sex attracted Australians are nearly 14 times higher than their heterosexual peers.⁴
- LGBTIQ people are three times more likely to experience mood disorders.⁴
- Around 60 per cent of same-sex attracted and gender questioning young people reported experiencing verbal abuse because of their sexuality, while 18 per cent reported experiencing physical abuse.⁵

¹ Symons, C, Borkoles, E, Anderson, M, Polman, R 2014, *The Equal Play Study: The impact of homophobic bullying during sport and physical education participation on same-sex attracted and gender-diverse young Australians' depression and anxiety levels*, March 2014, Institute for Sport, Exercise and Active Living at Victoria University, viewed 20 January 2017 www.beyondblue.org.au/docs/default-source/research-project-files/bw0255.pdf?sfvrsn=2

² Dennison, E, Kitchen, A 2015, *Out on the Fields: The first international study on homophobia in sport*, Australian Sports Commission, Federation of Gay Games, viewed 18 January 2017 www.outonthefields.com

³ Hillier, L, Jones, T, Monagle, M, Overton, N, Gahan, L, Blackman, J, Mitchell, A 2010, *Writing Themselves in 3: The third national study on the sexual health and wellbeing of same sex attracted and gender questioning young people*, Melbourne, Australian Research Centre in Sex, Health and Society, La Trobe University, viewed 18 January 2017, www.latrobe.edu.au/arcshs/downloads/arcshs-research-publications/WTi3.pdf

⁴ Rosenstreich, G 2013, *LGBTI People mental health and suicide. Revised 2nd Edition*. National LGBTI Health Alliance Sydney, viewed 24 May 2017 www.beyondblue.org.au/docs/default-source/default-document-library/bw0258-lgbti-mental-health-and-suicide-2013-2nd-edition.pdf?sfvrsn=2

⁵ *Face the Facts: Lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans and intersex people*, Australian Human Rights Commission 2014, viewed 24 May 2017 www.humanrights.gov.au/sites/default/files/FTFLGBTI.pdf

