

MEDIA RELEASE



VICTORIAN SPORTING CEOs UNITE TO MAKE A “PLEDGE OF PRIDE”

For the very first time, CEOs of Victorian, team-based sporting organisations will stand together to make a “Pledge of Pride”.

The Pledge of Pride, an initiative of [Pride Cup Australia](#), demonstrates a sport’s commitment to welcoming all athletes, employees and volunteers, regardless of their sexuality or gender identity.

On Tuesday 26 February, Pride Cup Australia and VicHealth will also launch the official Pride Cup Handbook, designed with the support of the Victorian government, St Kilda FC and NAB.

The Pride Cup Handbook is a resource designed to help sporting organisations and clubs create successful, inclusive and meaningful LGBTI+ inclusion events by providing case studies, tips and real-life scenarios.

In 2019, there are more than 30 sporting clubs registered with Pride Cup Australia to run their own events, while Hockey Victoria have announced they will host a Pride Cup round in place of their existing [“Fair Go” round](#) to celebrate LGBTIQ inclusiveness on a large scale.

Daniel Mioni, an LGBTIQ hockey player, said he welcomed the initiative because for men, “playing sport has been seen as a heterosexual masculine thing”.

“Many LGBTIQ people still feel uneasy about playing in sport, with the perception that it’s not for them,” said Mr Mioni.

Mr Mioni added that his club had previously taken part in an anti-homophobia, transphobia and biphobia [initiative](#), which had helped him talk to teammates about their use of language and his sexuality.

“One of my teammates [recently] said ‘that’s so gay’ to our opponents in a game, and I said, ‘don’t use gay as a negative term’. He apologised and said it was a slip up. I think Pride Cup is all about enabling athletes and staff to have those conversations.”

Hockey Victoria CEO Andrew Skillern emphasized that it was important LGBTIQ people feel safe playing hockey – and that the benefits of sport are accessible to all.

“Hockey Victoria and our community has been a strong advocate for celebrating sexual and gender diversity for close to a decade. The collaboration with other codes is vital to ensure we all show what can be done by celebrating diversity together.”

James Lolicato, Pride Cup Australia co-founder, said having state sporting organisations sign on to the Pledge of Pride showed the initiative had gone from strength to strength.

“The first Pride Cup was held in a small, local footy club, to show support for a much-loved teammate and friend, who also happened to be gay,” Mr Lolicato said.



MEDIA RELEASE

“Since then, Pride Cups have been held in all corners of Victoria and beyond, with sporting clubs standing together proudly to say to the LGBTIQ community, ‘you are welcome here’.

“The Handbook builds on this momentum, and is an essential tool for sporting clubs to access all of the ‘how to’ information to host a Pride Cup event, whether big or small.”

VicHealth CEO Jerril Rechter said providing the Handbook to sporting clubs would make it easier for clubs and codes to host their own Pride Cup events.

“We are proud to partner with Pride Cup because we know that inclusion is fundamental to good health and wellbeing for everyone,” Ms Rechter said.

“That a sense of exclusion – from sport or society generally – has contributed to LGBTIQ+ people having some of the poorest mental health outcomes in Australia.

“We want to build a sports community in which LGBTIQ+ players and fans feel safe, respected and included – anytime, anywhere. We strongly encourage all sports clubs that want send a message of inclusion to their community to host a Pride Cup.”

NOTES FOR EDITORS:

[Research](#) shows that: 80% of Australians have experienced or witnessed homophobia in sport, including slurs such as ‘faggot’ or ‘dyke’; 75% believe openly gay spectators would not be safe at a sporting event, and; 87% of young gay men and 75% of young gay women remain in the closet while playing sport.

Pride Cup Australia supports sporting clubs to theme a match around celebrating diversity and inclusion of LGBTIQ people in their sport. The first Pride Cup was played in 2014 as a game of Australian rules football. Since then, Pride Cups have been held across a number of states and other codes including: tennis, water polo and hockey, while roller derby, cricket and softball have recently signed on.

The Handbook is available via download from Pride Cup website – www.pridecup.org.au

Pledge of Pride and Handbook launch event

Where: Cricket Victoria, Junction oval, St Kilda (Please note: There is no parking available at Junction oval, please use public transport or on-street parking)

When: Tuesday 26th February 9am arrival for 9.30am start (estimated to take no more than two hours)

In attendance will be CEO of St Kilda FC, Matt Finnis, as well as CEOs of hockey, dodgeball, tennis, cricket, rugby, netball, gymnastics, football (soccer), basketball, Australian rules football and lacrosse. They are joined by the Commissioner for gender and sexuality, Ro Allen, VicHealth Executive Manager of Programs Kirstan Corben, and Pride Cup’s James Lolicato and Kara Montoneri.

The event will be MCd by openly gay footballer, Jason Ball.

Speakers will include Andrew Ingleton (CEO, Cricket Vic) Belinda Kleverlaan (Acting CEO, Tennis Vic) Andrew Skillern (CEO, Hockey Vic) and Kirstan Corben.

MEDIA RELEASE



Case studies and interviews with Pride Cup Australia and VicHealth spokespeople available on request.

Media contacts:

Pride Cup Australia: James Lolicato on 0450 082 230 or James@pridecup.org.au

VicHealth: Kate O'Halloran on 0403 497 945 or ohalloran.kate3@gmail.com