



Submission to the Australian Human Rights Commission - National Project Mapping Threats to trans and gender diverse human right in Australia. May 2024.

Rainbow Community Angels welcomes the opportunity to respond to the Australian Human Rights Commission's national project mapping threats to trans and gender diverse (TGD) human rights in Australia.

Our submission focus on the anti-trans movement, dis-and mis information and far right extremism specifically and the conflation, deliberate or otherwise, of anti-drag agitation with anti-trans protests.

We showcase the phenomenon of online threats made to venue, library and council staff and performers related to both rainbow (family) and drag storytime leading to increased cancellation and risk and the actions of Rainbow Community Angels to reduce cancellations and mitigate risk by collaborating with events under threat to ensure they proceed.

We also have collected evidence from councils and library staff where they have seen an increase in hate filled and anti-trans commentary on library Drag or Rainbow Storytime social media posts.

As we lead into IDAHOBIT on May 17 2024, and with June Pride Month just around the corner, it is very clear that many libraries, councils and youth groups have not programmed events with the potential to alert the far-right extremists that a storytime or youth event is occurring – if it is programmed the language is euphemists or , in some cases, the promotion is “underground”, only available to those already connected to their local playgroup or library.

RAINBOW COMMUNITY ANGELS

Established in May 2023, Rainbow Community Angels is a peer and community-led safety initiative that:

- **Trains and empowers LGBTIQ+ people and allies** to stand together in solidarity for LGBTIQ+ inclusion and affirmation in their local communities.
- **Enhances community safety by engaging in non-violent community actions** to support events like Drag Storytime, Rainbow Families Storytime, LGBTIQ+ youth events and other social events.
- **Is a visible and vibrant, friendly and fun presence** while actively shielding and protecting community members from hate and vilification while we celebrate queer joy together.

Rainbow Community Angels was initially funded through a crowdfund campaign held in May 2023 in addition to the generosity of Switchboard Victoria and in-kind support from Thorne Harbour Health.

Since May 2023 over 150 Angels have been trained at 10 training workshops across Victoria, in Footscray and Northcote, to Beechworth and Wangaratta. Angels have danced and sung outside over 25 events across Victoria including coordination of three Pop-Up Drag Storytimes where these events had been cancelled, and in front of protesters who turned up at Eltham last year and more recently in Daylesford.

Rainbow Families and LGBTIQ+ young people deserve to have safe and equitable access to civic activities such as a storytime at the local library or a pool night at the local recreation centre or a youth event like a formal or music festival.



In a playbook straight for the US, and closely followed by the UK, we have seen local and national campaigns by far-right extremists to eliminate cultural activities and acceptance by the “mainstream” of trans young people and rainbow families and working nefariously to influence negative attitudes towards law reforms by questioning the appropriateness or efficacy of gender affirming or trans health care, among other things such as birth certificate.

Over the past 12 months we have:

- Anti-trans mobilisation including anti-drag activities as well as related harassment of rainbow families playgroups.
- Observations of increased dis- and misinformation and the impacts on the TGD communities.
- Examples of non-personal information relating to online abuse of venue, council or library staff as well as vile vilification and harassment of drag performers.

There is an ongoing and compounded impact on the mental health and wellbeing rainbow families and impact their participation in civic life as a rainbow family. The potential of increased rates of social isolation is real. We hear from parents and carers who are terrified of attending a local event in case they are faced by a neo nazi or someone who yells abuse at their kids. For trans and gender diverse parents, coparents and carers the fear for their own safety has increased, especially when as a new parents you may already feel isolated and vulnerable.

For young people, there is an Impact on mental health – potentially leading to social isolation, with the potential to lead to increase in suicidality and deliberate self-injury.

ANTI-RAINBOW FAMILIES HATE

The re-invigoration of the “save the children” rhetoric means we are noticing an increase in anti-rainbow families tropes such as “Every child needs a mother and a father”, “they” are indoctrinating children to think “being gay is ok” and a general vibe of queers should not have or be near children as they are groomers or paedophiles.

It is also clear that there is a growing interest in campaigning against bodily autonomy and reproductive freedoms for LGBTIQA+ people, including access to IVF or surrogacy for example.

In addition to an increase of anti-trans hate, we are starting to see rainbow families playgroups some under attack – once last year when the Mickleham rainbow families playgroup was targeted because it offered a diverse book reading event and recently in April this year, when a new playgroup started in Lower Plenty, just north-east of Melbourne.

The anti-drag movement is aligned with the anti-trans movement and coalesces around the conservative and religious nationalism fueled by white supremacy – that families must only include a married mother and father, for children to thrive. The trans and gender diverse communities, including TGD parents and carers, uphold the status quo.



THE FAR RIGHT EXTREMISTS

We have noted an increase in several groups and types of people feeling emboldened to make anti-trans, anti-drag and anti-rainbow families and anti-LGBTIQA comments on social media.

We observe that within the far-right extremism groups most noted for being anti-drag, drag is used as the trojan horse of being anti-trans, anti-bodily autonomy, anti-rainbow families and anti-reproductive rights.

Rainbow Community Angels coordinates intelligence gathering from supporters as well as sourcing information from online anti-fascist groups.

The following groups have been active in targeting events that the Angels have been asked to protect. We highlight these groups specifically because many online comments have been attributed to Telegram sites, Twitter accounts, Facebook accounts or similar using the names of these groups or where messages are sent via social media platforms where names can be traced directly to these groups, among others.

These include but are not limited to:

Individuals in public office: Senator Ralph Babet, councillors from local councils in [REDACTED] and other LGA's. Screenshots can be supplied on request.

Stand in the Park – usually regional groups related tangentially anti-lockdown measures. A local group was active in targeting the Shepparton Library Drag Storytime during November 2023 – participating in three car convoys in the town prior to the event. Drag storytime was cancelled but a Pop-Up Storytime was held with local community and Rainbow Community Angels.

Screenshots can be supplied on request.

The National Socialist Network – a neo-nazi group led by [REDACTED] notably attended "Let Women Speak" event on steps of Victorian Parliament on March 18, 2023. Their involvement in anti-trans events in Victoria have been minimal but likely more focussed on recruitment. Online neo-nazis such as [REDACTED] continue to post anti-trans and anti-drag posts, aiming to influence others to call for cancellations.

Through our intelligence work we track and monitor the following groups closely:

My Place

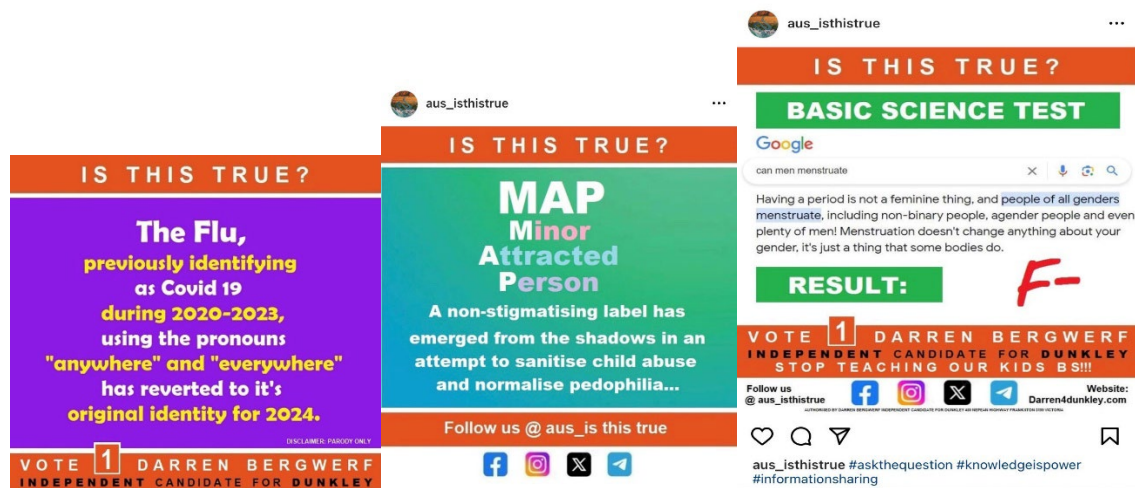
Group established in response to Covid19 health and safety measures introduced by the state government. Veneer of community and wellbeing group (diagnolism) but [REDACTED] [REDACTED] Protested the Eltham Library Drag Storytime event on Wednesday 17 May 2023.

Fig 1: My Place and associates at Eltham Library, Wednesday 17 May 2023 including Randall Ceetoo from My Place Greensborough and



Darren Bergwerf – My Place Founder.

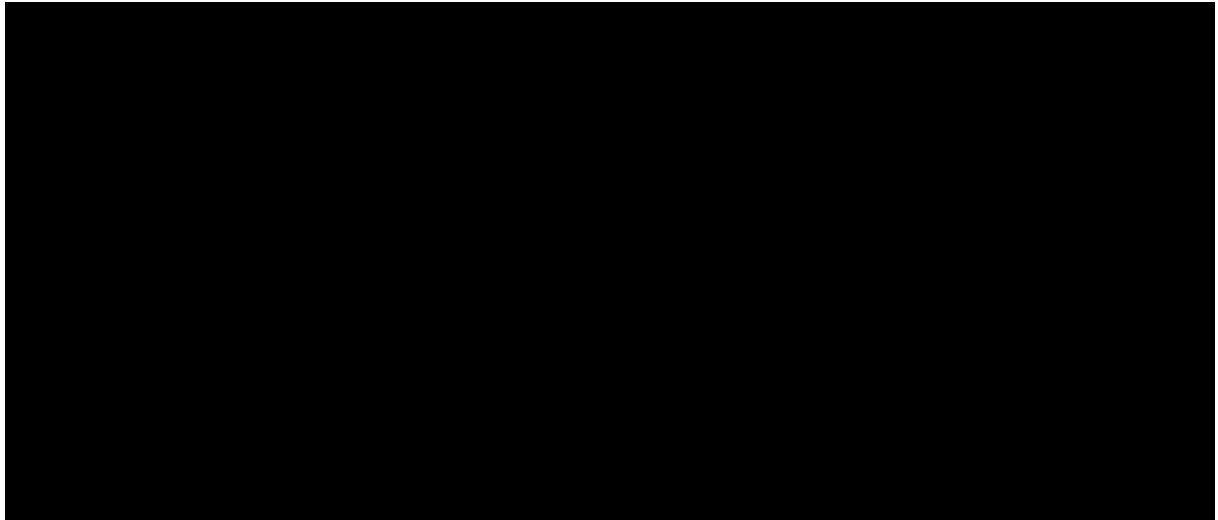
Fig 2: Instagram tiles used for his failed Dunkley campaign. Screenshot on January 30, 2024.



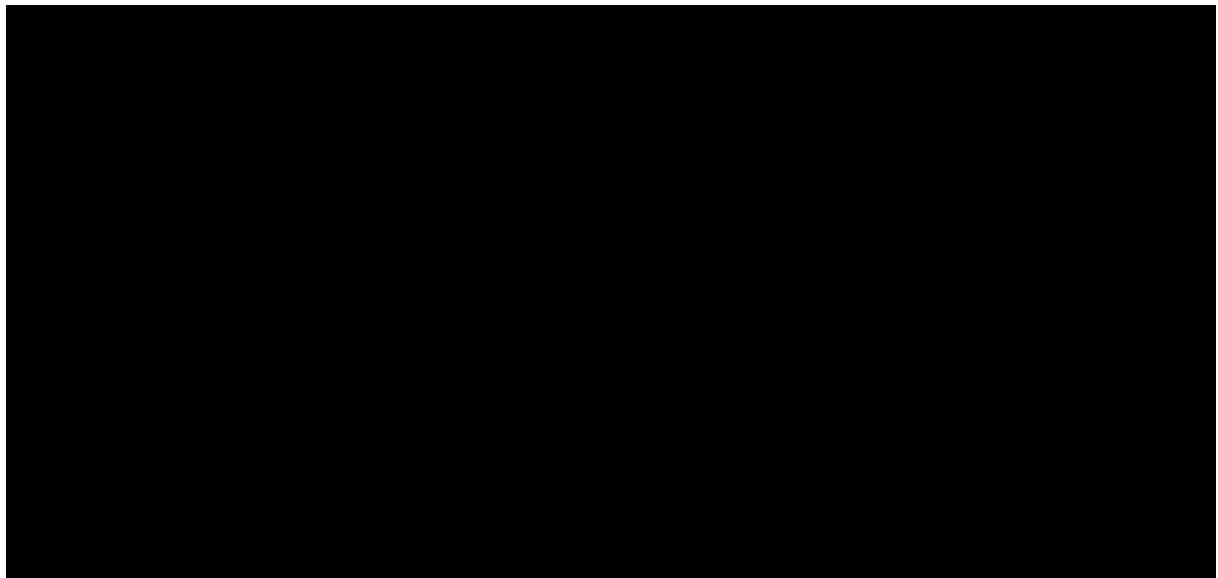


Leave Our Kids Alone

Online via FB and website with some actions outside the Education Department. Craig Cole is the organiser - he coordinated 4 people to attend the Chillout Drag Storytime at Hepburn Library (Daylesford, VIC) on Saturday 9 March 2024.



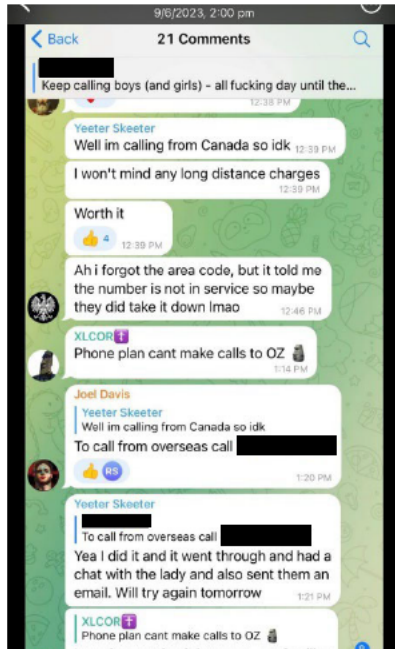
ABOVE: Craig and his four friends – He live streamed the whole event but did not show the Rainbow Community Angels once. BELOW: Rainbow Community Angels outside the Hepburn Library taken at the same time.





– neo nazi located in Sydney NSW.

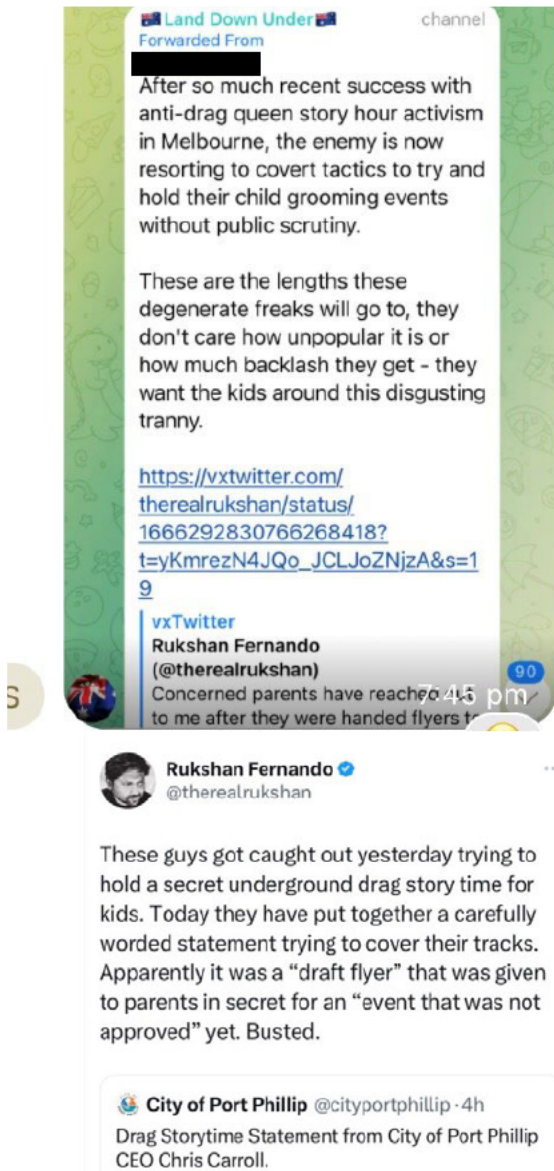
Perpetual agitator of Victorian based events.



This Telegram posts refer to the Wangaratta Rainbow Youth Formal that was eventually cancelled due to threats in June 2023.

Note call made from Canada. We have seen others from the UK and US.

And XYZ news post at the bottom – neo nazi online publication now folded.



These posts refers to the St Kilda Library Drag Storytime that was targeted and cancelled by the Council – May 2024.

The Rukshan post refers to a flyer shown to families at the Port Melbourne storytime the week prior to the proposed Drag Storytime. This is the “covert tactic” referred to.

It was photographed by one parent who then sent it to Rukshan.

Rainbow Community Angels held a Pop Up Drag Storytime outside the St Kilda Town Hall on the same day/time as the cancelled event.