

LGBTQIA OFFICER MID-REPORT

Written by Kate Mayer

In Semester one this year, I have focused mostly on the activism of the VU Pride team, as the 2017 president, I have lead the collective to many social and political events such as Mid Summa Pride March. This was a fantastic event that enabled us to celebrate as a collective in a supportive and safe environment. The day had a great turn out, bringing together groups from across Australia to appreciate the beauty in diversity and march proudly!

On the International Transgender Day of Visibility we ran a clothing swap event at Footscray Park! This event was about showing support and solidarity for all of the gender diverse students at Victoria University. The day was a total success, with lots of amazing donations and helpers facilitating a great day! We received a number of clothing donations, catering for all gender expressions and sizes. We were also able to distribute some binders, which are often very costly and difficult to source.

As the President, I have chaired regular executive meetings, within which, we can discuss future initiatives and events. We also ran our first ever open meeting! Here, we invited all students along to our meeting, to provide the opportunity to find more about Pride. This was a great opportunity to welcome so new people into the VU Pride community. I hope to run more open meetings in the future, to keep expanding our network and welcoming new students to get involved!

VU Pride ran a meditation session. The main focus of this was to provide an opportunity to de-stress and relax in a safe space. This event was very small, but was a success all the same. I think that taking the time to debrief with your team is an essential element of Vu pride. Further advertisement and marketing next term will hopefully connect us with the ally community, next semester!

As part of Pride week, VU Pride attended Maribyrnong City Council's Annual IDAHOBIT Flag raising. The Maribyrnong City Council have been very supportive of our group and I would love to work with them in the second half of the year! I am hoping to run a join event in the western suburbs to bring our networks together! In addition we also held a screening of the movie Moonlight. This was a very emotional movie choice, which enabled me to meet some new students and welcome them to Pride!

Another exciting event that we held this semester was Dollar Store Drag. I wanted to provide a fun opportunity for Victoria University students to completely be themselves without the fear of judgement



or embarrassment. Our Dollar Store Drag event took away the expectation of drag costumes having to be overly extravagant, and instead focussed on feeling comfortable in ourselves and having fun.

Gender neutral bathrooms has been an on-going mission for VUSU and VU Pride. After over 2 years of campaigning from the VUSU and VU Pride teams, I am very excited to say that we have been working closely with the facilities team at VU, and are looking at implementing gender neutral bathrooms and every VU campus! This is an amazing victory, as it will provide a safe space for all students to use. It is especially important that we reach out across the different sites, so that every student has an accessible bathroom that they feel comfortable using. We hope to see a gender neutral bathroom at Footscray Nicholson, St Albans, Sunshine and Werribee in the next few weeks. We also hope to find suitable facilities at the city campuses by the end of the year.

I have worked with VU Pride and VUSU over the last year to create a grant. It was very rewarding to be able to award the first 'VU Pride Scholarship' this semester. This followed a collaboration with the VUSU Vice President of Education to create and implement a policy for a new scholarship. The aim was to provide financial assistance to a Victoria University student who showed dedication and passion to the queer community.

Next semester, I aim to initiate some VUSU LGBTQIA+ Campaigns, such as education around LGBTQIA+ Issues and perhaps a 'pride guide' that will encompass a wealth of relevant LGBTQIA+ topics to be distributed to VU Students. I also aim to work with HYDE Magazine in doing a 'pride series' with VU Pride. The VU Pride Team are currently planning on running regular movie nights with queer themes, end of year event and some team bonding exercises!