

PRIDE EVENTS & FESTIVALS FUND

DRAG BINGO & COMEDY NIGHT

Background

Rural communities often lack dedicated LGBTQIA+ events, limiting access to safe and affirming spaces for LGBTQIA+SB individuals. This can contribute to reduced visibility and fewer opportunities for connection within local communities. Research shows that LGBTQIA+SB people in rural areas experience higher levels of social isolation and are at increased risk of mental health challenges.

In response to this identified need, Northern District Community Health's (NDCH), Health Promotion Team secured funding through the Pride Festivals and Events Fund to deliver three LGBTQIA+ inclusive events across the Gannawarra and Loddon regions.

EVENTS AIMS:

The aim of these events was to create safe, inclusive, and visible spaces for LGBTQIA+SB individuals and allies, while fostering connection, promoting acceptance, and strengthening community support networks within rural communities.

WHAT DID THE EVENTS DELIVER?

- Strong community engagement across three events:
 - Drag Bingo Night in Cohuna with approx. 130 attendees
 - Drag Bingo Night in Boort with approx. 74 attendees
 - Comedy Night in Kerang with approx. 80 attendees
- Activated and utilised key local venues:
 - The Big Cohuna Stockyard
 - Boort Memorial Hall
 - Glasshouse Kerang
- Increased social connection and inclusion through fun, accessible community events
- Supported local catering providers by sourcing food locally
- Generated income through ticket sales, contributing to event costs and reduced no shows
- Strengthened local economy by sourcing prizes from local businesses and accommodation, including: Cohuna Gateway to Gannawarra Visitor Centre, Flowers by Michelle, Cohuna Waterfront Caravan Park, Boort Lakes Holiday Park and Kerang Holiday Park.
- Created safe and welcoming spaces for diverse community members to connect and participate. While raising awareness of inclusive events in the community and supporting IDAHOBIT week.
- Promoted the Healthy Catering Guide through the comedy night by highlighting healthier drink choices and offering popcorn as a healthier snack alternative, demonstrating practical and achievable healthy catering swaps within a community event setting





WHAT DID THE EVENTS ACHIEVE?

- 36 survey responses from Cohuna event
- 20 survey responses from Boort event
- 9 survey responses from Kerang event plus undisclosed number of survey responses to the official survey promoted through the Pride Festivals Fund.
- 100% of survey respondents were very satisfied or satisfied with the drag bingo event
- 81% of survey respondents felt an increased sense of belonging in their community as a result of the drag bingo event
- 79% of respondents would like to see more events like this that promote diversity and inclusion within the community.
- 100% of survey respondents from the comedy night enjoyed the healthier food and drink options

Fantastic event should be more of them.

-Boort event

Brilliant, funny and great for the town.

-Boort event

Learning while having fun is great

-Kerang event

Good job & well done to NDCH Health promotion team. Food was lovely & tasty & fresh.

-Boort event

What a fabulous night I had the best time!

-Cohuna event

A wonderful night. Thanks so much!

-Kerang event

Great event. Thank you for fostering inclusiveness in our community.

-Cohuna event

This was a really fun and engaging event. Thank you for a wonderful evening of laughs!

-Boort event

A fantastic fun night which promoted inclusivity for all.

-Boort event

Was amazing to feel included and safe.

-Cohuna event

Venue was gorgeous, catering and atmosphere top notch, and Comedians were good.

-Kerang event



LEARNINGS FROM THE PRIDE EVENTS?

- A proportion of attendees were not aware the Comedy night was held in support of IDAHOBIT Day and had an LGBTQIA+SB inclusion focus. This highlights the need to ensure audiences understand the intent of the events and can fully engage with their inclusion and awareness objectives.
- Importance of securing clear written agreement with venues (e.g. The Stockyard) prior to event.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR PRIDE EVENTS?

- Strong appetite from the community for more events of this type, with many respondents expressing clear support for continued events
- Positive feedback indicating events were enjoyable, fun, and valuable for social connection and wellbeing
- Interest in repeat and expanded formats such as drag bingo, comedy nights, theatre, music events, queer film nights, brunches, and games nights
- Opportunity to build on successful events to increase awareness and participation now that audiences understand the format and experience
- Suggestion by an attendee to strengthen visibility of LGBTQIA+SB inclusion in the Gannawarra region, including use of rainbow symbols and clearer Pride messaging in public spaces
- Indications of demand for more regular Pride/social connection spaces, including informal or ongoing groups such as a queer social group
- Strong community willingness to support and attend future events, including "anything on our doorstep" and "happy to attend whatever you put on" responses
- Opportunity to continue using events as both social connection and education tools to help break down barriers and build inclusion