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## **LGBTIQ+ Organisations express anger amid cuts to Out and About Program**

LGBTIQ organisations are disappointed to hear news this week that Switchboard Victoria’s ‘Out and About’ program is under threat due to Federal funding cuts. ‘Out and About’ is a vital peer service connecting lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or intersex (LGBTI) people across Victoria and aims to reduce social isolation and loneliness experienced by older members of LGBTIQ communities via a community visitors program.

Karen Field CEO of drummond street services/queerspace said, “...we are horrified to hear about funding cuts to Switchboard Victoria, who provide a crucial service to our isolated aged and aging members of the LGBTIQ+ communities. Switchboard’s funding should remain and Out and About should be fully funded so Switchboard Victoria can continue to support our LGBTIQ+ elders.

Karen continued, “For many older LGBTIQ+ people Out and About is their only crucial connection to community”

Sally Golder of Transgender Victoria agreed “Transgender Victoria expresses huge dismay at the cuts to funding to the Out and About program. Isolation is still a huge issue for trans and gender diverse people all around Australia and trans and gender diverse seniors are very much a part of this. Any reduction in support can only worsen the mental health of trans and gender diverse people – and the evidence shows that is already poor. Funding needs to be restored now.”

Rainbow Families representative Felicity Marlowe stated, “Any cuts to specialist LGBTIQ services like this can only mean our older and aged community members will not receive the culturally appropriate support they deserve. It is bitterly disappointing, and this funding decision must be overturned.”

Executive Officer from Housing for the Aged Action Group Fiona York, also viewed the cuts as counter-productive.

"We know as a 30-year serving housing justice organisation for older people that LGBTI elders face unique challenges which leave them socially isolated. Programs like Out and About are crucial to reducing impacts of marginalisation", Fiona said.