

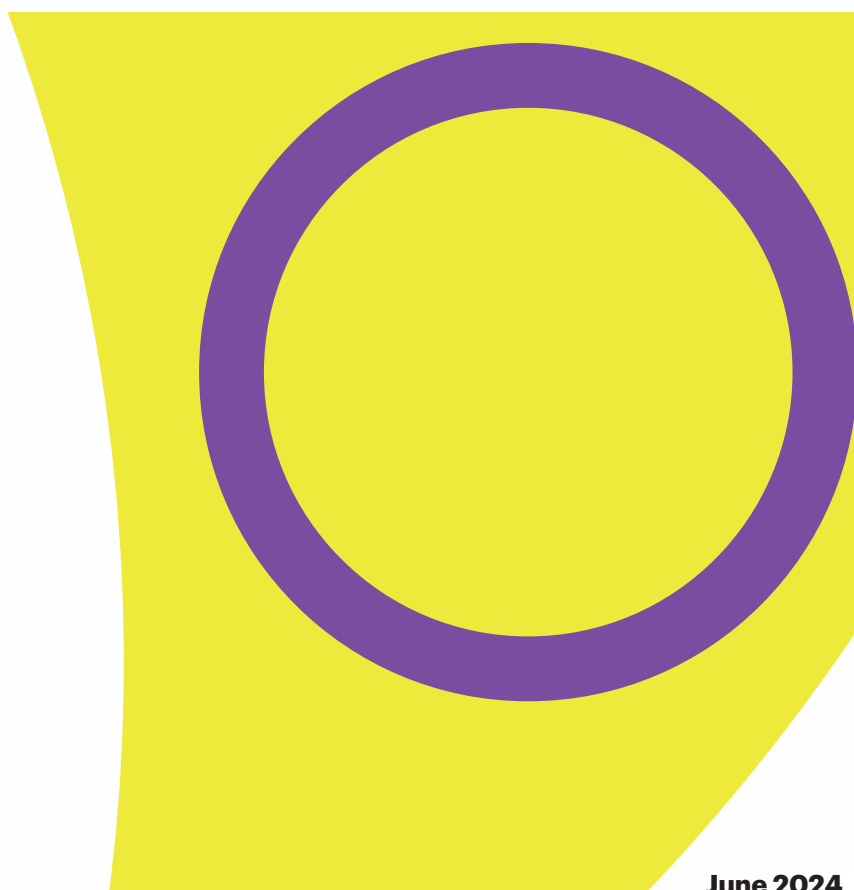
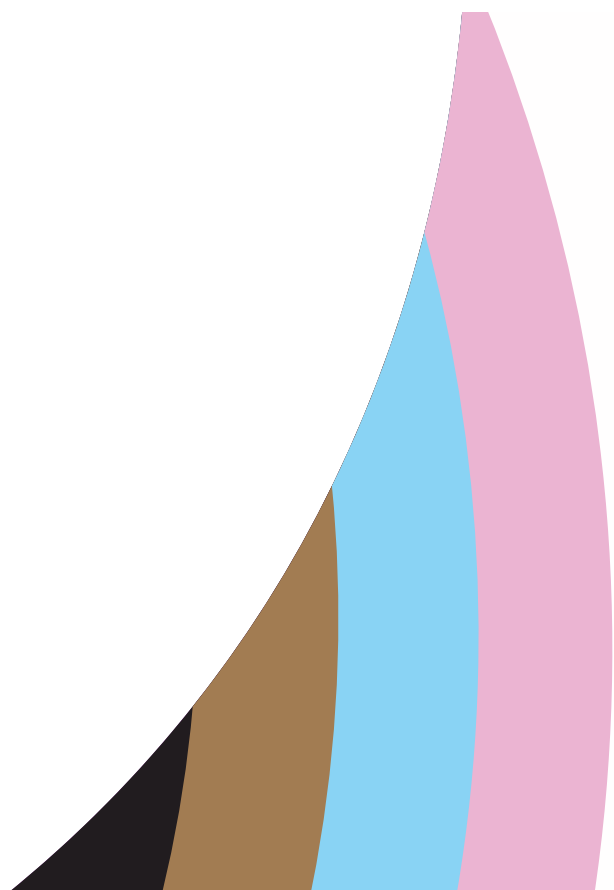


Happiness



Queensland
Government

**A report by the Queensland Council for LGBTI Health for the Happiness Project
2022-2024, with the Queensland Government Department of Health**



What are we talking about?

Opportunities

P 3

- Key Findings and Opportunities Identified
- Visuals and Diagrams Highlighting Opportunities

Where We Went

P 4

- Locations of Community Engagements
- Map of Queensland with Engagement Points

When Did This All Happen?

P 5

- Timeline of Events and Key Milestones
- Visual Representation of Important Dates

Our Communities

P 6

- Detailed Insights from Various LGBTIQ+SB Communities
- Community Challenges and Aspirations

Our People

P 7

- Stories and Experiences from Community Members
- Impacts on our communities

What Happened from There?

P 6

- Follow-Up Actions and Outcomes from Initial Engagements

Did We Get It Right?

P 8

- Findings from Initial Consultations
- Feedback from Community Members

Challenges

P 8

- Identified Challenges and Barriers
- Addressing Safety Concerns in Regional Areas

Gimuy, Cairns

P 9

- Detailed Look at Consultations in Cairns
- Visuals and Highlights

Bailai, Gurang, Gooreng Gooreng, and Taribelang Bunda Land, Gladstone

P 10

- Insights from Gladstone Consultations
- Community Stories and Feedback

Meanjin, Brisbane

P 11

- Highlights from Brisbane Engagements
- Community Contributions

What Else Did We Produce?

P 12

- Resources and Materials Created
- Distribution of Engagement Tools

Themes & Messaging

P 13

- Key Themes Identified (Acceptance, Connection, Visibility)
- Messaging Strategies and Community Feedback

Holiday Happiness

P 14

- Special Initiatives During Holiday Periods
- Examples and Stories

Social Media

P 15

- Online Engagement and Campaigns
- Visuals and Impact of Social Media Outreach

Creative

P 16

- Artistic Contributions and Graphic Representations
- Creative Elements of the Project

Champions for Happiness

P 17

- Concept of Peer Support and Community Engagement
- Detailed Framework and Implementation Strategy

Recommendations

P 18

- Future Steps and Strategic Recommendations
- Expanding Access to Affirming Healthcare and Supportive Services

Where to from Here?

P 18

- Next Phases and Ongoing Engagement Plans
- Ensuring Effectiveness in Future work

Acknowledgments & References

P 19

Opportunities

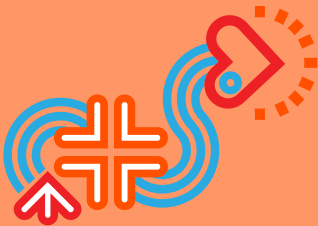
In 2022, The Queensland Council for LGBTI Health (QC), in collaboration with Queensland Health, embarked on an ambitious and vital community engagement initiative known as the Happiness Project. This project aims to address the significant mental health challenges faced by the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex, Queer, Sistergirl, and Brotherboy (LGBTIQ+SB) communities. Recognising the alarming rates of mental health distress and the over-representation of these communities in poor health outcomes, QC is committed to identifying and bridging the gaps that contribute to these disparities.

The Happiness Project's main goal is to engage directly with our LGBTIQ+SB communities across Queensland, listening to their experiences and understanding their unique needs and priorities. By fostering open dialogues, we aim to uncover the barriers that hinder access to essential mental health services and resources. Our goal is to ensure that every individual, regardless of their location or lifestyle, can live authentically and access the

support they need to achieve better mental health outcomes and overall happiness.

To date, we have conducted three significant community consultations, each serving as a cornerstone for our ongoing efforts. These consultations were held in Cairns, Gladstone, and Brisbane, allowing us to reach a diverse cross-section of the LGBTIQ+SB communities. Through these engagements, we have gathered invaluable insights into the specific challenges and aspirations of these communities, laying the groundwork for targeted interventions and support mechanisms.

As we continue this journey, QC remains dedicated to amplifying the voices of the LGBTIQ+SB communities, advocating for their needs, and collaborating with Queensland Health to implement meaningful changes. Together, we strive to create a more inclusive and supportive environment where everyone can thrive, regardless of their identity or circumstances.



CONNECTION SPACE. Creating space for people to come together, connect and share in a safe and supportive environment, free from judgment.



REGIONAL. Being deliberate in connecting with folk in all places, no matter where they live, visiting them in regional places and acknowledging their local needs and local solutions.



CONSULTATION. Having meaningful conversations with folk, meeting them where they're at and engaging them for embedded input.



OUR COMMUNITIES. Our communities are diverse and beautiful, with changing needs and shifting priorities, which we aim to grow alongside, led by, owned by and with.

Where we went



The 'Happiness Wall'

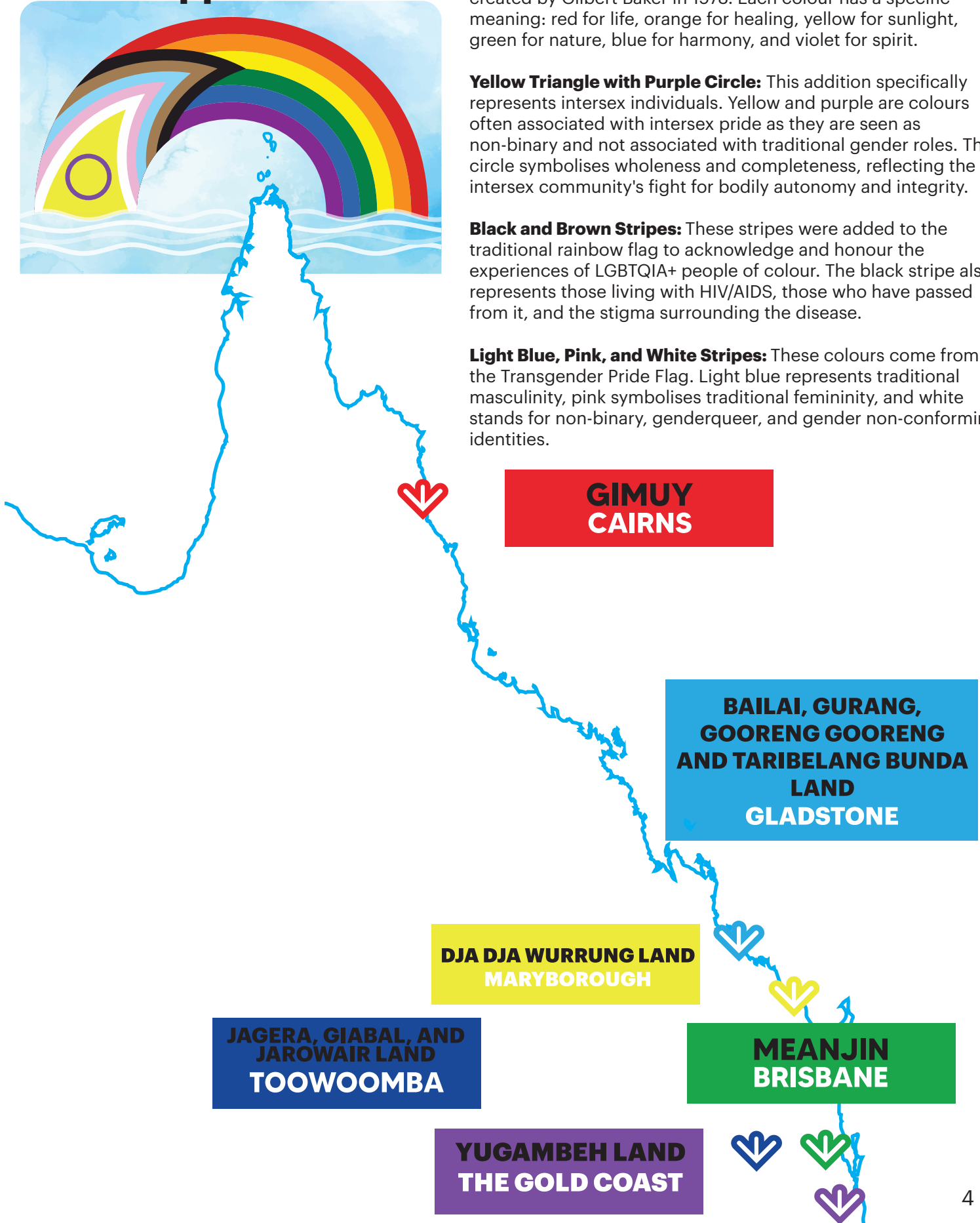


Original Rainbow Stripes: The original Rainbow Flag was created by Gilbert Baker in 1978. Each colour has a specific meaning: red for life, orange for healing, yellow for sunlight, green for nature, blue for harmony, and violet for spirit.

Yellow Triangle with Purple Circle: This addition specifically represents intersex individuals. Yellow and purple are colours often associated with intersex pride as they are seen as non-binary and not associated with traditional gender roles. The circle symbolises wholeness and completeness, reflecting the intersex community's fight for bodily autonomy and integrity.

Black and Brown Stripes: These stripes were added to the traditional rainbow flag to acknowledge and honour the experiences of LGBTQIA+ people of colour. The black stripe also represents those living with HIV/AIDS, those who have passed from it, and the stigma surrounding the disease.

Light Blue, Pink, and White Stripes: These colours come from the Transgender Pride Flag. Light blue represents traditional masculinity, pink symbolises traditional femininity, and white stands for non-binary, genderqueer, and gender non-conforming identities.



**GIMUY
CAIRNS**

**BAILAI, GURANG,
GOORENG GOORENG
AND TARIBELANG BUNDA
LAND
GLADSTONE**

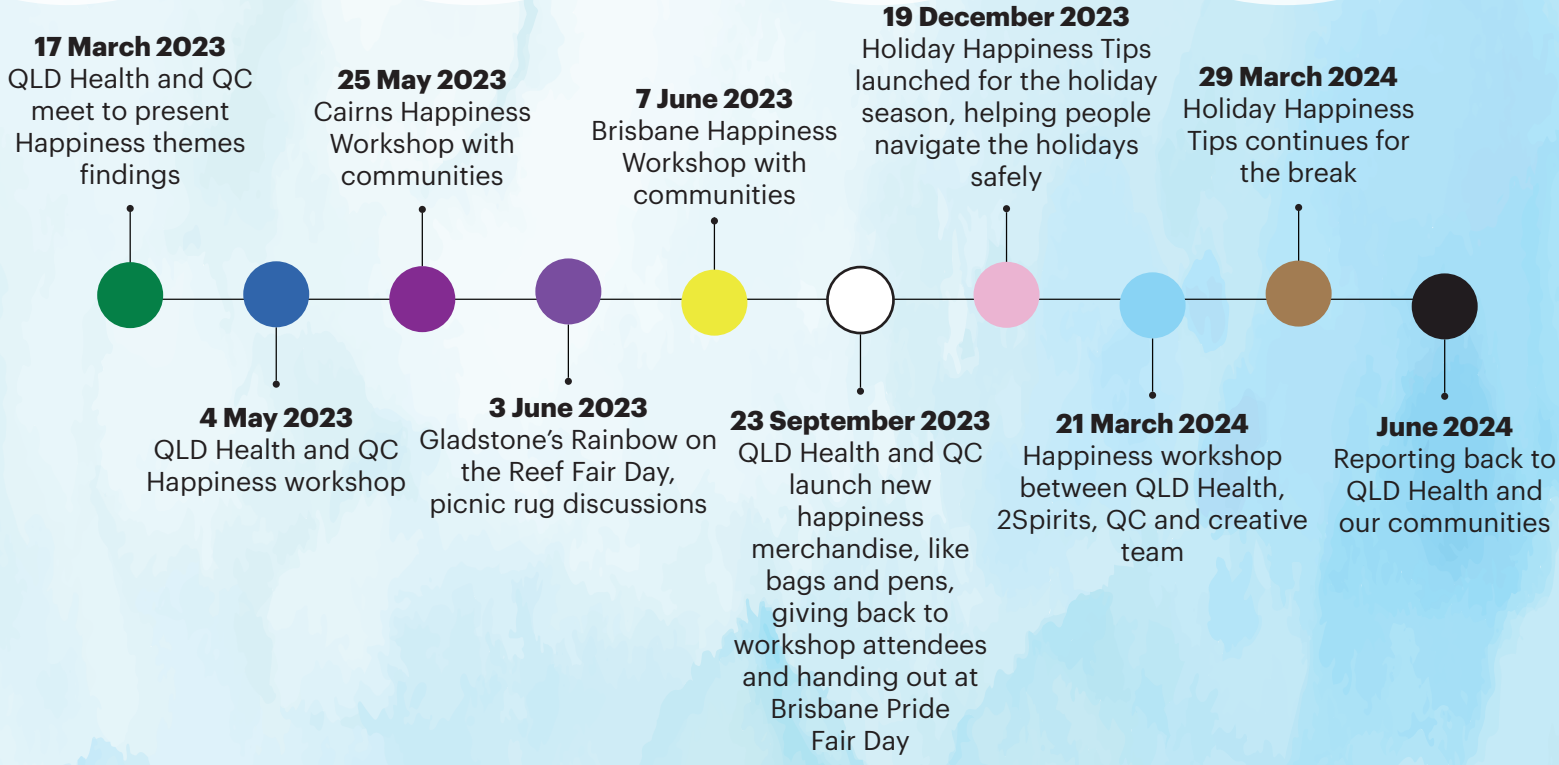
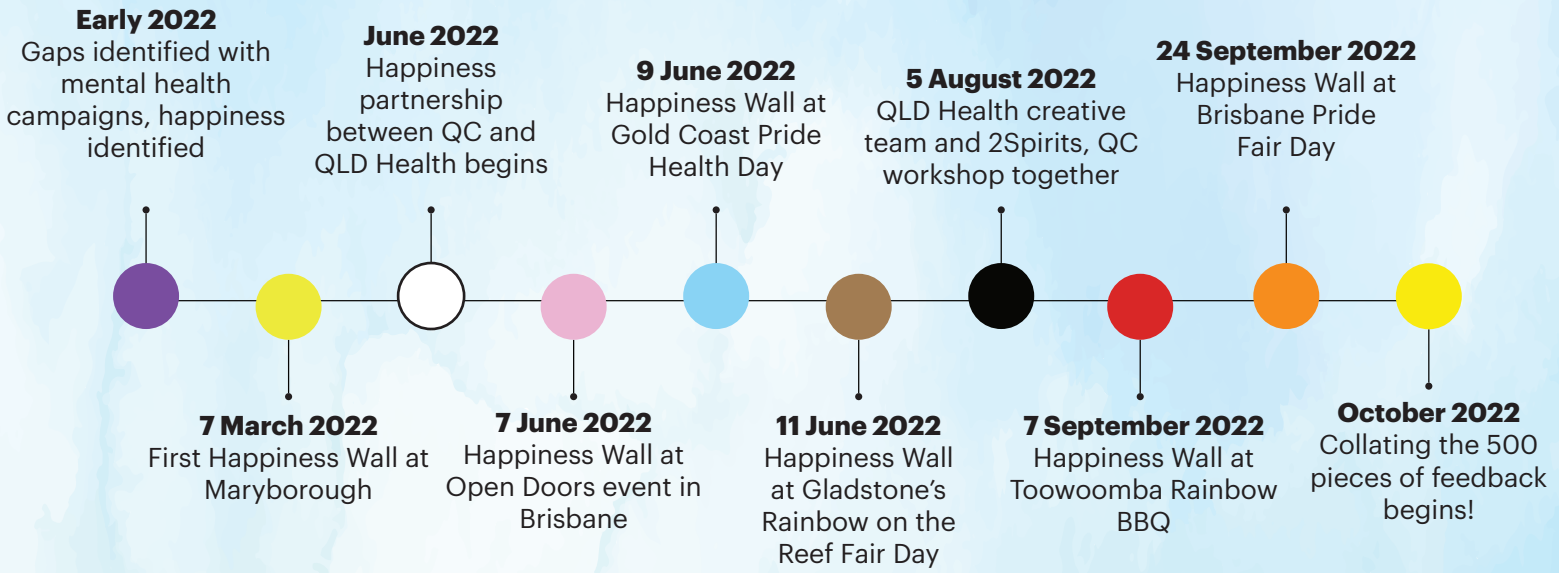
**DJA DJA WURRUNG LAND
MARYBOROUGH**

**JAGERA, GIABAL, AND
JAROWAIR LAND
TOOWOOMBA**

**MEANJIN
BRISBANE**

**YUGAMBEH LAND
THE GOLD COAST**

When did this all happen?



Our communities



We have identified a pressing need to partner with Queensland Health to prioritise the mental health of our LGBTIQ+SB communities. The statistics are alarming: over two-fifths of LGBTIQ+ people report having attempted suicide in the past 12 months, and more than half have experienced high or very high levels of psychological distress in the past four weeks [2. Private Lives 3 Study 2020; LaTrobe University]. For Trans, Gender-Diverse, and Non-Binary individuals, the outcomes are even more dire, with one in seven facing similar distress. These numbers starkly highlight the mental health crisis affecting our communities and reflect the experiences of many we engage with in our services and broader consultations.

Historically, our communities have endured discrimination and systemic oppression, which takes a severe toll on mental strength, leading to isolation and loneliness as individuals strive to live authentically. This often results in increased substance abuse, with LGBTIQ+ individuals being two to four times more likely to misuse alcohol and drugs [1. Private Lives 3 Study 2020; LaTrobe University]. Social isolation, exclusion, and discrimination contribute significantly to these poor mental health outcomes.

Consultations with our communities reveal that connection is key to improving mental health. Peer support, chosen families, and reconnecting with family and friends are vital for well-being. There is a clear need for more information on health and well-being, accessible services, and safe spaces for our communities to meet and support each other.

Our partnership with Queensland Health aims to identify and address the gaps in current mental health services for our LGBTIQ+SB communities. By regularly consulting our communities, we gain insights into their lived experiences and what truly works for their collective and individual happiness.

Through this collaboration, we seek to enhance access

to quality mental health care, particularly for LGBTIQ+ Sistergirl and Brotherboy individuals. Addressing the needs of our goal is to alleviate the trauma caused by societal rejection of our love, relationships, gender affirmation, gender expression, and diverse variations in sex characteristics. Together with Queensland Health, we aim to create a supportive environment where everyone in our community can thrive and find happiness.

We are excited to introduce "The Happiness Project," a dynamic initiative born from our collaboration with Queensland Health. This project centres around our innovative "Happiness Wall," where community members can share what makes them happy by writing their thoughts on cloud-shaped notes and placing them on the wall. The Happiness Wall will travel across the state as a community engagement tool, sparking conversations, bringing light and visibility to our experiences, and creating pathways to discuss and improve happiness within our communities.

Through The Happiness Project, we aim to connect with individuals from all walks of life, fostering a sense of belonging and support. This initiative underscores the importance of community connection, peer support, and safe spaces for enhancing mental health and overall well-being. By listening to and amplifying the voices of our LGBTIQ+SB communities, we can better understand their needs and work towards a collective and individual sense of happiness.

Our goal is to provide expanded access to mental health services tailored specifically to the unique challenges faced by our communities. We are committed to creating an environment where every individual can thrive by addressing these needs and bridging the gaps in existing services. The Happiness Project is a testament to our dedication to improving mental health outcomes and ensuring our communities are seen, heard, and supported.

What happened from there?

The Happiness Wall made impactful appearances at several key events across the state, including the Gold Coast Health Pride, Brisbane Pride Fair Day, Brisbane Open Doors Youth Service event, Maryborough Picnic, Gladstone Rainbow on the Reef Fair Day, and a Pride BBQ in Toowoomba. We received over 500 written responses from community members throughout these events, sharing their thoughts on what brings them happiness. From these heartfelt contributions, three main themes

emerged: acceptance, connection, and visibility. These themes underscore the fundamental needs and desires of our LGBTIQ+SB communities, highlighting the importance of feeling accepted, the value of forming meaningful connections, and the need for greater visibility. The Happiness Wall served as a powerful tool for engagement and conversation and provided valuable insights into the factors that contribute to the well-being and happiness of our diverse communities.

Our people



Our communities have shared that the layers of a person's relation to mental health and happiness are multifaceted, encompassing both internal and external factors. From the feedback gathered, it is clear that internal locus of control—such as self-acceptance, self-care, and strength—plays a crucial role in individual happiness. These internal elements provide a foundation for coping and thriving amidst challenges. Additionally, the world around individuals, including their environments at home, school, work, and public spaces, significantly impacts their well-being. Our communities emphasise the importance of acceptance, connection, and visibility within these external contexts. Friends, families, pets, and supportive allies are vital sources of love and belonging. Furthermore, visibility and safety are paramount, as they foster a sense of inclusion and reduce feelings of isolation. The Happiness Wall has highlighted these themes, revealing that a holistic approach, addressing both internal strengths and external supports, is essential for enhancing mental health and happiness within our LGBTIQ+SB communities.

Visibility and Acceptance:

"I love my dogs and my friends."

"My culture - Aboriginal - Proud - Happy - Strong Spirit Smiles."

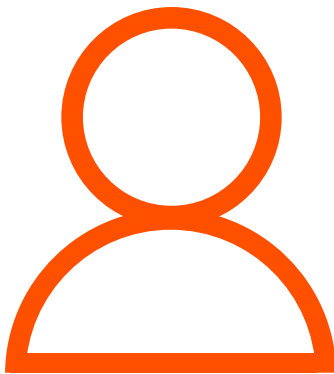
"Seeing how much more supportive of LGBTIQ+ rights QLD has become since my first Bris Pride in 2006."

Connection:

"Found family, good music, art, storytelling, colour, friendship."

"When I witness people leaning into their authenticity and allowing themselves to be seen."

"Sense of connection with friends and like-minded community."



Acceptance Themes

- Visibility
- Safety

Connection Themes

- Friends
- Families
- Allies
- Community
- Pets

Internal Locus of Control

- Mental health support
- Peer support
- Self-care
- Acceptance
- Encouragement
- Love
- Trust
- Work
- Belonging

External Environment

- Home
- School
- Work
- Public
- Services



Happiness Themes (Internal)

- Acceptance
- Connection
- Visibility

Who? (External)

- Friends
- Families
- Allies
- Communities
- Chosen families
- Significant others
- Pets

Places (External)

- School
- Work
- Public
- Services

Experiences (Internal and External)

- Social experiences
- Love experiences
- Work experiences
- Past trauma (past experiences)
- Belonging

From our consultations and the feedback from the Happiness Wall, we identified key themes crucial to the mental health and happiness of our LGBTIQ+SB communities: acceptance, connection, visibility, supportive environments, and relationships. We then took this information back to our communities to ensure we got it right.

Now, we move to Phase 2, engaging more closely with our LGBTIQ+SB communities to refine these insights and develop tailored strategies that effectively support their well-being. Our aim is to create more inclusive, supportive, and connected communities where everyone can thrive.

Did we get it right?

As we move into Phase 2 of our project, we are deepening our community consultations to better understand the mental health needs and happiness of our LGBTIQ+SB communities. In collaboration with Rachel Apelt, an artist from Artbalm, we have been capturing the creativity, words, images, and feedback of our community members on a unique graphic wall. This phase focuses on gathering personal stories of happy moments, challenges, barriers, and mental health journeys, not just for individuals, but also for their families, chosen families, and friends.

Before progressing to Phase 2, we checked back in with our communities to ensure we accurately captured their feedback from the initial consultations in Phase 1. This step was crucial to validate our findings and refine our approach based on their insights.

Our community consultations took us to Cairns, Brisbane, and Gladstone, where we engaged with members of our LGBTIQ+SB communities. In Cairns, we hosted a consultation with around 12 people, who shared their experiences and insights. Additionally, we attended different groups to check back in with priority populations such as youth at YETI's SSAYIT Youth Group in Cairns, which was a great picture drawing session about happiness!



In Brisbane, we gathered with approximately 20 participants, who contributed richly to our understanding of their mental health needs and the factors that influence their happiness. For Gladstone, we returned to the Rainbow on the Reef Fair Day, where we had wonderful conversations with attendees, amid a crowd of a couple of hundred people.

Rachel Apelt's graphic wall became a vibrant canvas for capturing the essence of these consultations. Through art, Rachel depicted the incredible stories, challenges, and triumphs shared by community members, providing a unique and engaging way to document and reflect on their experiences.

Challenges *"Don't say 'reach', it infers it's out of touch!"*

Despite the success of our consultations in Cairns and Brisbane, we faced challenges in Gladstone. We were unable to run a workshop in the same way due to local feedback indicating a lack of capacity and safety concerns for individuals being their authentic selves while entering and exiting venues. This was a poignant reminder that not all spaces are always safe for our LGBTIQ+SB communities, particularly in regional areas of Queensland. It underscores the need for continued efforts to create safe, inclusive environments where everyone can freely express their identities and experiences without fear.



Our Phase 2 consultations have provided invaluable insights into the diverse experiences and needs of our LGBTIQ+SB communities. By checking back in with participants from Phase 1, we ensured that our approach remains accurate and community-focused. Despite the challenges, we remain committed to engaging with our communities, understanding their stories, and working towards a future where all individuals can thrive in safe, supportive environments.

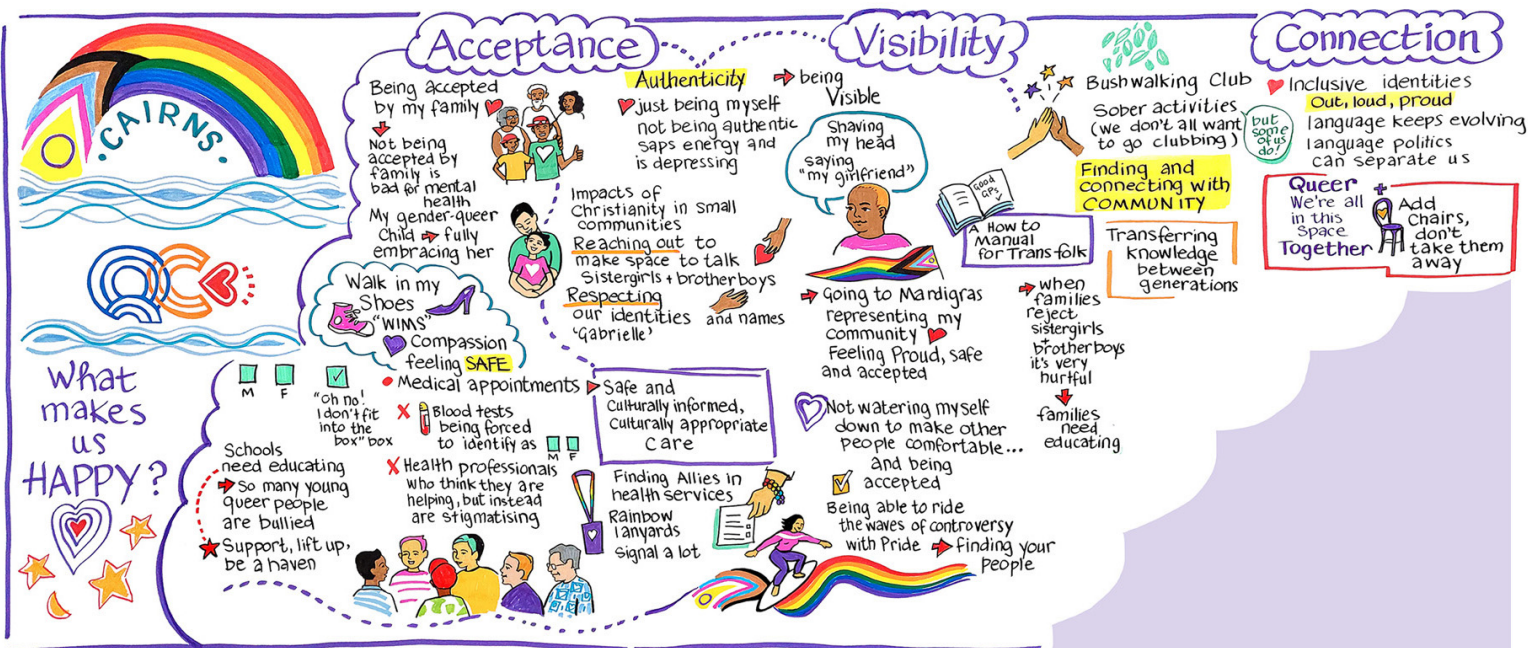
Gimuy, Cairns



A CLOSER LOOK



GRAPHIC RECORDING: RACHEL APELT 25-5-2023



Bailai, Gurang, Gooreng Gooreng and Taribelang Bunda Land, Gladstone



A CLOSER LOOK



We returned to Gladstone following the success of their first Rainbow on the Reef Pride Fair Day. This second visit was marked by a deeper connection with the community, as we once again laid out our picnic blanket and engaged in heartfelt conversations with local residents. The welcoming atmosphere allowed community members to express their happiness, strengths, and the unique challenges they face living in a regional town far from the city.

Through these discussions, we heard recurring themes

that mirrored the experiences of other communities we consulted with: the scarcity of affirming healthcare and services, and the struggles of being their authentic selves within the broader community. Despite these challenges, the sense of strength and determination among the people of Gladstone was palpable. Their stories underscored the ongoing need for inclusive, supportive environments and highlighted the importance of continuing our efforts to address these critical issues.

Meanjin, Brisbane

A CLOSER LOOK



Acceptance continued...

- ♥ family reassurance (+ adopted families) friends
- ♥ Workplace acceptance + reassurance
- Gender norms → shift towards Inclusion ♥
- ♥ Unisex toilets and inclusive facilities within public spaces
- ♥ Government decisions that support acceptance

Visibility continued...

- ♥ Compassion
- ♥ Social equity
- ♥ demarginalisation
- ♥ Advocacy for the unseen
- Fear → overcoming the fear in society
- Celebrating differences
- ♥ Being a Visible connector for the invisible
- ♥ Social Inclusion Vs Social exclusion

Connection continued...

- ♥ Connection overcomes separation, isolation, marginalisation
- ♥ engaging with people & their experiences
- ♥ Non-judgemental environments
- ♥ requires empathy
- ♥ You can feel connected when not physically together



Acceptance

- ♥ acceptance despite politics
- ♥ Acceptance of Self
- ♥ Non barriers
- ♥ Open arms acceptance of life
- ♥ recognition of Street people
- ♥ Gratitude for acceptance

- ♥ Problems, pain of others: being aware and supportive
- ♥ being aware of our projections

- ★ Language is so important labels → ask the person e.g. 'disability' / 'ability diverse'

Use the language I use

Being able to visibly express the gender I feel inside...

Helps me connect authentically

- # Let's talk Happy
- # ChooseHappiness
- # GlassHalf Full
- # Let's Get Happy
- # FindYourHappiness

Visibility

- ♥ Courage
- ♥ Being a beacon and showing Leadership
- ♥ Allies
- ♥ Seeing beyond → seeing the Whole Person
- ♥ Changing perspective in Self and others
- ♥ Power in Visibility across society goes 2 ways
- ♥ empowering social change

- ♥ with Language + Terminology
- ♥ Reclaim language & our Place in society

- ♥ Self Acceptance + tenacity Vs Shame + stigma

- ♥ Role models

Being Heard... Silence & seeing this in the other's eyes



Connection

- ♥ Intimacy + deeply knowing People
- ♥ familiarity + TRUST
- ♥ accepting boundaries
- ♥ Seeing people in-person as well as in other ways

- ♥ Shared vulnerability
- ♥ experiences
- ♥ Understanding

- ♥ Important with chosen family
- ♥ family
- ♥ partner... & Pets

- ♥ Time + space to connect with Self

- ♥ Authenticity: Self + others

- ♥ The importance of conduits → people can be connectors

- ♥ Social media Pros + Cons
- ♥ the right to be invisible
- ♥ Helps connect and can disconnect
- ♥ The right to choose to disconnect

Social acceptance facilitates Visibility facilitates connection



Happiness...

- ♥ a journey, not a destination
- ♥ being not having
- ♥ giving, more than receiving
- ♥ Purpose, meaning, having an impact for the good of our community
- ♥ the beauty of life



Over the Moon Happy

Happy memories from childhood

The journey to Self + happiness

Self acceptance

People Listening

What else did we produce?

At QC, our hearts swell with gratitude as we reflect on our partnership with Queensland Health. Together, we've developed a range of vibrant and meaningful goodies and resources, thoughtfully crafted to engage, uplift, and support our beloved LGBTIQ+SB communities. These items have become cherished symbols of our collective journey toward happiness and well-being.

Our colourful rainbow fans not only help our community members stay cool at Pride events but also serve as a joyful expression of their unique identities. The rainbow notebooks, adorned with the Happiness Wall, inspire individuals to capture their thoughts and reflections, fostering a personal journey toward greater mental health and happiness. Complementing these notebooks are our thoughtfully designed pens and postcards. These postcards provide a beautiful opportunity for people to articulate what happiness means to them, whether they choose to share these heartfelt sentiments with us or keep them as personal keepsakes.

Our stylish and practical tote bags have become a favourite among community members, ensuring that these resources can be carried with pride and convenience. Each item is a testament to our unwavering commitment to fostering joy, connection, and well-being within our communities.

We continue to distribute these lovingly curated goodies at events today, ever grateful for the steadfast support of Queensland Health. Their partnership has been instrumental in making these resources available and reinforcing our shared mission to create a more inclusive, supportive, and joyful environment for everyone. Thank you, Queensland Health, for helping us spread love, happiness, and pride throughout our communities.



Themes & Messaging

Our community consultations revealed several powerful themes and messages that resonate deeply within our LGBTIQ+SB communities, or as we liked to coin the terms, 'ingredients for happiness'. These themes form the foundation of our ongoing efforts to enhance mental health, well-being, and happiness across Queensland.

Key Themes

Acceptance:

Acceptance, both self-acceptance and societal acceptance, emerged as a vital ingredient for happiness. A participant shared, "My culture - Aboriginal - Proud - Happy - Strong Spirit Smiles," reflecting the profound impact of cultural pride and acceptance. Another noted, "Seeing how much more supportive of LGBTIQ+ rights QLD has become since my first Bris Pride in 2006," indicating the positive changes in societal attitudes over time.



Visibility:

Visibility is essential for fostering a sense of belonging and acceptance. Many community members emphasised the importance of being seen and recognised for who they truly are. For instance, one participant noted, "When I witness people leaning into their authenticity and allowing themselves to be seen." This theme highlights the need for inclusive spaces where individuals can express their identities openly and proudly.



Connection:

Connection with others, whether through friendships, family, or community, was a recurring theme. Statements like "Found family, good music, art, storytelling, colour, friendship" and "Sense of connection with friends and like-minded community" illustrate the importance of social bonds and support networks in fostering well-being. These connections provide emotional support, validation, and a sense of belonging.



Photos by Queensland Health

Holiday Happiness

Through our community consultations, our LGBTIQ+SB communities have shared valuable insights about their needs during challenging times, particularly during holiday periods. Holidays can often involve seeing families, feeling isolated, travelling, frequent changes in routines, and the stress of needing to explain oneself to others. To address these challenges and promote improved health and wellbeing, we have gathered a range of interconnected strategies.

One of the key recommendations is to reach out for support when feeling distressed or in need of someone to talk to. Engaging with friends, chosen families, and supportive family members can provide much-needed comfort and company. Additionally, services like 13YARN and QLife offer accessible helplines, creating safe spaces for conversations and advice. This social support network helps mitigate feelings of isolation and fosters a sense of belonging.

Setting personal boundaries is another crucial aspect of self-care during the holidays. LGBTIQ+ individuals often feel pressured to be constantly "on," but maintaining boundaries ensures safety, happiness, and health. By clearly communicating these boundaries to family members and adhering to them, individuals can navigate holiday interactions more comfortably and confidently.

In moments of stress or discomfort, taking a step back to breathe and gather one's thoughts is vital. Simple practices like mindfulness or taking a short walk can provide immediate relief and clarity. Having supportive

friends on standby for advice or a listening ear can further alleviate stress and reinforce a sense of community.

Connecting with supportive individuals, such as friends, groups, allies, and chosen families, offers an alternative to traditional family gatherings. Celebrating holidays with those who provide encouragement and love creates meaningful and joyful experiences, fostering a supportive and affirming environment.

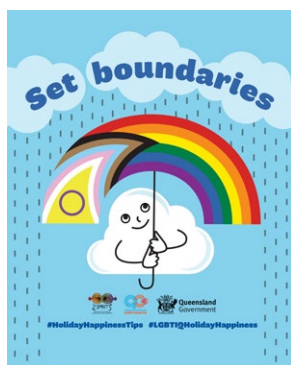
Exploring new skills, hobbies, or interests during the holidays can also enhance wellbeing. Engaging in local activities, visiting cultural sites, or volunteering can be fulfilling and provide a sense of purpose. These activities not only enrich personal experiences but also facilitate new social connections.

Lastly, taking time to treat oneself is essential for maintaining personal joy and relaxation. Whether through pampering activities like enjoying a relaxing bath or indulging in a special gift, prioritizing self-care helps recharge and rejuvenate. For those who prefer a quieter setting, curling up with a good book or movie offers a peaceful retreat from holiday hustle and bustle.

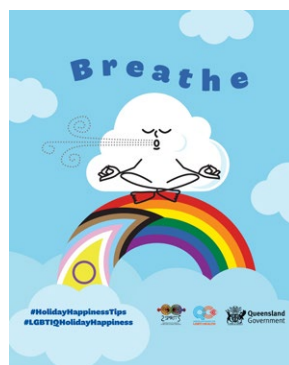
By integrating these strategies, our LGBTIQ+SB communities can navigate the holiday season with greater ease, fostering improved health and wellbeing. These interconnected approaches, rooted in community insights, aim to support individuals in finding happiness and comfort during this festive time.



Reach Out



Set Boundaries



Breathe



Connect



Discover Things To Do



Treat Yourself



Photo by Queensland Health

Social media



The social media performance of our holiday happiness tips, derived from identifying the need for support for our communities during holiday periods, showcases a significant reach and engagement across our platforms, such as Facebook and Instagram. Here's a detailed overview of the key metrics:

Reach and Impressions

The holiday happiness tips posts reached a substantial audience, with some posts achieving a reach of over around 1,000 unique viewers. For instance, one of the posts reached 939 people. Impressions, which indicate the total number of times the posts were displayed, also demonstrated high visibility, with impressions for some points being up to around 100 for the most successful posts.

Engagements

Engagements, which include actions like clicks, likes, comments, and shares, were notably high. For example, one post recorded 60 engagements, reflecting a strong level of interaction and interest from the audience.

Reactions

Reactions, primarily likes, were strong indicators of the positive reception of our posts. The highest number of reactions recorded for a single post was 34, with a total of around 600 for all the posts.

Comments and Shares

The posts also generated a healthy number of comments and shares. The most engaging post received 6 shares, with 55 shares altogether, extending the reach of our content. Comments were also substantial, with posts garnering 20 comments, providing a platform for users to express their thoughts and share personal experiences.

Summary of Key Metrics:

Reach: Posts reached 18,151 viewers.

Impressions: Posts achieved 19,047 impressions.

Engagements: The highest engagements recorded were 824.

Reactions (Likes): The most reactions for a single post were 34 likes.

Comments: Posts received up to 6 comments.

Shares: Posts were shared up to 6 times.

The overall performance highlights the effectiveness of our holiday happiness tips in engaging our LGBTQ+SB communities and addressing their needs during the holiday season. By focusing on these metrics, we can see that our content successfully resonated with and supported our audience.

Creative

Our partnership with Queensland Health has been a great creative experience blending creativity, community engagement, and a shared vision for mental health and happiness. Together, we embarked on a journey to produce a way for communities to come together and find out what would make them happy-improve their lives, including, does that mean resources? This led us to a vibrant mix of digital and print resources aimed at fostering well-being and pride within the LGBTIQ+ communities across Queensland. The collaborative process was not only about creating tangible items but also about capturing the essence of acceptance, connection, and visibility.

From the outset, our collaboration focused on inclusivity and representation. We engaged with various community members, including First Nations Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, to ensure that their voices and cultural symbols were integral to our project. This inclusive approach was evident in the diverse array of resources we developed, each thoughtfully designed to reflect the unique identities and experiences of our communities.

Our creative process began with extensive consultations and workshops, where ideas were exchanged, and themes of acceptance, connection, and visibility emerged. These themes guided the development of our resources, ensuring they resonated deeply with the community. The incorporation of the rainbow and First Nations flag colors into items such as happiness postcards was a deliberate effort to celebrate and honor these cultures.

The creation of our initial digital and print resources involved a blend of traditional and modern design techniques. We crafted colorful and meaningful items, including pens, tote bags, happiness postcards, and notebooks. Each item was meticulously designed to serve as a symbol of pride and joy, fostering a sense of belonging and happiness.

Our team's dedication and the invaluable support from Queensland Health played a crucial role in transforming our ideas into reality. The production of these resources was not just about physical items but about creating tools that could help individuals express their happiness and reflect on their journeys.

The vibrant rainbow notebooks and thoughtfully designed postcards quickly became favorites among community members. These items provided a tangible way for individuals to articulate what happiness meant to them and to share their personal reflections. The tote bags and pens, adorned with our collaborative designs, served as everyday reminders of the collective journey towards well-being.

At various events, including Pride celebrations and workshops, these resources were distributed, spreading joy and fostering connections. The response from the community has been overwhelmingly positive, with many expressing gratitude for the thoughtful and inclusive nature of the items.



Examples of some resources from the campaign, digital and print.

Champions for Happiness

The concept of Champions for Happiness emerged as a unique recommendation during our Happiness Project. These champions are envisioned as self-nominated individuals from within the LGBTIQ+SB communities who are passionate about fostering happiness, well-being, and peer support. This initiative aims to leverage the strengths and dedication of community members to create a more inclusive and supportive environment through acts of kindness, volunteer efforts, and peer-to-peer support.

Engaging and Empowering Champions

To ensure the effectiveness and sustainability of this initiative, this could best look like a structured engagement process for identifying and empowering Champions for Happiness. This process includes:

Self-Nomination and Community Endorsement:

Community members can self-nominate or be nominated by peers based on their commitment to supporting others and their desire to promote happiness within the community.

Skills Development and Training: Selected champions will undergo training to enhance their skills in providing peer support, understanding mental health issues, and navigating available resources. This training will focus on building empathy, effective communication, and crisis intervention skills.

Structured Support Systems: To provide a sound support framework, champions will have access to regular check-ins, mental health resources, and supervision. This ensures that they are well-supported in their roles and can effectively support others without becoming overwhelmed.

Acts of Kindness and Volunteering

Champions for Happiness will be encouraged to engage in various acts of kindness and volunteering activities, including:

Offering Emotional Support: Regularly checking in with community members, offering a listening ear, and providing reassurance and guidance.

Facilitating Access to Services: Helping individuals navigate mental health services, support groups, and other community resources.

Helping Create Safe Spaces: Organising meet-ups, social events, and support groups where individuals can connect and feel accepted.

Small Acts of Kindness: Simple gestures such as paying for someone's coffee, offering transportation to appointments, or assisting with daily tasks to alleviate stress and foster a sense of community.

Financial and Structural Support

To ensure the longevity and impact of the Champions for Happiness initiative, there could be the following supports:

Small Grants and Donations: Establishing a fund to provide financial support for champions' activities, enabling them to carry out acts of kindness and organise community events.

Recognition and Incentives: Acknowledging the contributions of champions through awards, public recognition, and incentives to motivate ongoing participation and engagement.

Collaborative Planning: Co-designing the initiative with LGBTIQ+SB communities to ensure it meets their needs and leverages their insights and expertise.

Wrap-Around Support

The goal is to create a wrap-around support system where both the givers (champions) and the recipients are well-supported. This includes:

Regular Feedback Loops: Establishing ways for champions and community members to provide feedback and share their experiences, ensuring continuous improvement of the initiative.

Community Networks: Tapping in to existing and possibly new networks among champions to foster peer support, share resources, and collaborate on larger community projects.

Supporting and Evaluating: Setting up ways to check the impact of the initiative, provide support and structure, and identify areas for improvement.

Moving Forward

The Champions for Happiness component represents a unique opportunity in building capacity of our communities and how we connect, helping improve the well-being and happiness of our LGBTIQ+SB communities. With more planning, investment, and co-designed strategies, this initiative has the potential to create a ripple effect of kindness, support, and connection throughout our communities.



Photo by Queensland Health

Recommendations

The richness and diversity of our LGBTIQ+SB communities across Queensland have been the cornerstone of this project. Through extensive consultations and the creative expression captured by artist Rachel Apelt, we have gathered profound insights into the lives, challenges, and aspirations of individuals from Cairns to Brisbane and Gladstone to Toowoomba. This project has highlighted the unique needs and strengths of our communities, emphasising the urgent need for affirming healthcare, supportive services, safe spaces, and continued connection. As we move forward, these findings will guide our efforts to create a more inclusive and supportive environment for all.

Recommendations for Future Work

Affirmative Healthcare

Expand Access to Affirming Healthcare: Increase the availability of healthcare providers trained in LGBTIQ+SB health issues. Ensure these services are accessible, particularly in regional and remote areas.

Improved healthcare Services: Develop and promote better options for mental and physical health support, making it easier for individuals to access care regardless of location.

Supportive Services

Increase Funding for Support Services: Secure additional funding to expand the reach and capacity of existing support services tailored to LGBTIQ+SB individuals.

Training and Education: Implement comprehensive training programs for healthcare providers, educators, and social service workers to improve their understanding and support of LGBTIQ+SB issues.

Safe Spaces

Create More Safe Spaces: Establish and maintain safe, inclusive physical spaces where LGBTIQ+SB individuals can gather, connect, and feel secure.

Enhance Safety Protocols: Work with local decision makers and organisations to ensure the safety and protection of LGBTIQ+SB individuals in public spaces.

Community Development

Local Community Initiatives: Support locally-led community initiatives that foster inclusion and support for LGBTIQ+SB individuals.

Community Leadership Programs: Develop programs to empower community members to become leaders and advocates within their local areas.

Resource Development

Digital Resources: Develop a comprehensive digital resource hub, including a dedicated website, that provides information, support, and connection points for LGBTIQ+SB individuals. Some great URLs were explored!

Resource Toolkits: Create social and emotional well-being toolkits tailored to the specific needs of different communities, co-designed with community members.

Continued Connection

Online Platforms: Utilise digital platforms to maintain and strengthen connections within the LGBTIQ+SB communities. Regularly update content to keep it relevant and engaging.

Support Networks: Establish and support locally-led support networks that provide ongoing connection and support for individuals in their communities.

The findings from our consultations have underscored the critical need for continued efforts to support the mental health, well-being, and happiness of our LGBTIQ+SB communities across Queensland. By building on these insights, we can develop affirmative healthcare services, create safe spaces, and foster community connections that enhance visibility and acceptance. Through dedicated efforts in resource development and the expansion of digital and locally-led support, we aim to create an environment where every individual can thrive. Together, we can ensure that the legacy of this project lives on, making a tangible difference in the lives of our communities now and into the future.

Where to from here?

From here, our journey continues with a commitment to re-visit and re-engage with our communities. Understanding that our communities are ever-evolving is key to ensuring that our efforts remain relevant and effective. By fostering an ongoing partnership, we aim to thrive as a whole community, addressing priority populations and bridging gaps and barriers to accessing healthcare and support. Driving change means drawing on the strengths and qualities of our incredibly diverse and beautiful LGBTIQ+SB communities. Together, with and for our communities, we will create a future where everyone can achieve acceptance, visibility, and happiness.



Acknowledgments & References

We acknowledge the support and strategic partnership with The Queensland Government and the Department of Health. Graphic recordings by Rachel Apelt, Artbalm, 2023. Copyright Queensland Council for LGBTI Health 2024.

Philadelphia's More Color More Pride campaign.

Images from Asset Library, Courtesy of Queensland Health.

Image from FreePik Company.

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We extend our deepest gratitude to each and every one of you who contributed to this project. Your openness, honesty, and willingness to share your stories have enriched this project beyond measure. Your insights, experiences, and feedback have provided invaluable content, and the legacy of this work will continue to resonate and inspire.

Thank you for your courage, your strength, and your commitment to making our communities better places for everyone. Your contributions are the foundation upon which we will continue to build a more inclusive, supportive, and understanding environment for all LGBTIQ+SB individuals.

This project is a testament to your strength and spirit, and we are honored to have had the opportunity to hear your voices and share your experiences. Together, we will continue to strive for a brighter, happier future for all.

With heartfelt thanks,

**Led by you.
Owned by you.
With you.**





Happiness



Queensland
Government

**A report by the Queensland Council for LGBTI Health for the Happiness Project
2022-2024, with the Queensland Government Department of Health**

