



QLife Story

QLife provides anonymous LGBTIQ+ peer support and referral for people wanting to talk about sexuality, identity, gender, bodies, feelings or relationships.

QLife is Australia's only National LGBTIQ+ early intervention telephone and webchat peer support and referral service, addressing social isolation, discrimination, family and relationship issues, psychological distress, poor mental health and other social determinants of mental health and wellbeing.

QLife services are delivered by four LGBTIQ+ organisations, supported by LGBTIQ+ Health Australia. Our partner organisations are Switchboard in Victoria, Living Proud in WA, Diverse Voices in Queensland and Twenty10 (incorporating GLCS) in NSW.

The QLife partner services have many years' experience providing LGBTIQ+ peer telephone and community support, predating the establishment of the centralised model. Ten years marks the partnership and coming together to deliver a national service. Central to QLife is our commitment to honour and build upon that proud history of grassroots, community responses to the marginalisation, persecution, prosecution and discrimination of LGBTIQ+ people and communities.

QLife timeline

The first national conference of gay and lesbian telephone support services discussed the need for a national gay and lesbian telephone number.

• **2000**

**2003
-2006**

Telstra sponsorship established a national website, Gay and Lesbian Counselling and Community Services of Australia, and national 1800 number (1800 184 527) and an inaugural national Mardi Gras float to promote the number in 2003. This sponsorship ended in 2006, though the website was maintained locally for some years to follow and the 1800 number continued as the regional freecall number for several of QLife's partner sites' services.

National conference in Adelaide again discussed a coordinated, national service and potential options for federal funding.

• **2011**

2012

LGBTIQ+ Health Australia (previously the National LGBTI Health Alliance) established a working group that resulted in our successful tender for national teleweb funding.

QLife commenced operating, with LGBTIQ+ Health Australia as the contract holder, supporting five state partners:

- Twenty10 incorporating GLCS NSW (NSW)
- Gay and Lesbian Switchboard (VIC), now known as Switchboard
- Gay and Lesbian Welfare Association (QLD), now known as Diverse Voices
- Gay and Lesbian Community Services of WA, now known as Living Proud
- The Gay and Lesbian Counselling Service SA/NT (no longer a QLife partner).

• **2013**



QLife starts offering a webchat service, initially through Diverse Voices (Qld partner).

2014

**2015/
2016**

QLife launches online content:

- QGuides, resources for health professionals and service providers working with LGBTIQ+ people; and
- QLives, videos featuring real stories of people from LGBTIQ+ communities.

The marriage equality survey sees unprecedented demand for QLife's services.

2017

2019

- QLife starts training its workforce in LGBTIQ+-specific Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training (ASIST).
- QLife adopts peer support as its methodology, acknowledging its shared lived experience is the most important part of the support QLife can offer.

**2020-
2021**

The COVID-19 pandemic significantly increases demand for QLife, along with disrupting the ability to deliver services. QLife trials alternative offerings like SMS Daily Affirmations, and Online Support Groups (QHive- an initiative by Twenty10).

QLife is accredited against the National Safety and Quality Digital Mental Health Standards, improving the clinical & technical governance, model of care, and the way QLife partners with consumers.

2023

QProgram is launched as a pilot program, focused on better meeting the needs of service users who contact QLife regularly by connecting participants with a Specialist Peer Supporter who engages them in a partnership in developing a tailored support plan with continuity and outreach across a 3-month window.

The current QLife partners



LGBTIQ+ Health Australia (LHA) is the national peak health organisation in Australia for organisations and individuals that provide health-related programs, services and research focused on lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, queer/ questioning people and other sexuality, gender, and bodily diverse people and communities.

LHA recognises that people's genders, bodies, relationships, and sexualities affect their health and wellbeing in every domain of their life.

Originating out of community-based organisations with an HIV/AIDS focus, LHA is one of the first organisations of its kind in the world. LHA was formally launched at Australia's Parliament House in August 2007, originally called the LGBTI Health Alliance.

The story of Twenty10 (incorporating GLCS NSW) begins in 1970 with the Campaign Against Moral Persecution (CAMP NSW). Sydney in 1970 was very different to what we know and love today - it was still illegal to have homosexual relations in NSW and the rest of Australia and people could still be fired from their jobs for being LGBTIQA+. CAMP NSW was originally founded to challenge unjust laws and create a space for like-minded people to meet. Organised and run entirely by volunteers the "Phone-A-Friend" service was launched in April 1973, which then evolved into the Gay Counselling Service, and then the Gay and Lesbian Counselling Service of NSW (GLCS NSW). At the same time as this was happening, young people across New South Wales were coming to Sydney in droves to connect to community.

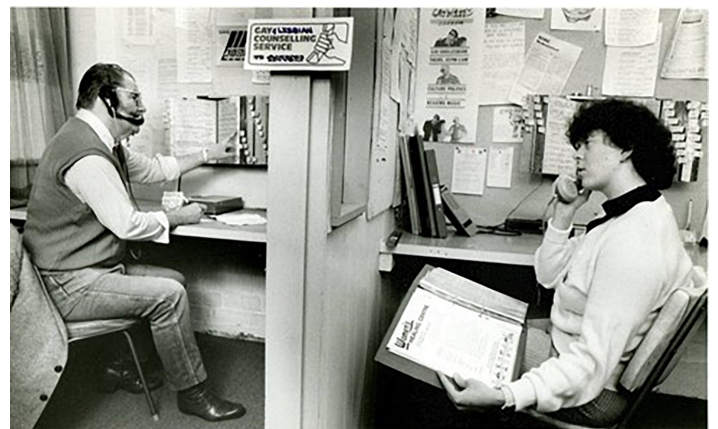
Twenty10 was founded in 1982 in Darlinghurst (the name comes from that postcode!) as a crisis refuge for these young people and at that time was described as "a project for gay kids". The first of its kind in Australia. Over time, Twenty10's services evolved into transitional housing, case management, counselling, and social support through Drop-In and groups.

In 2012 Twenty10 and GLCS NSW merged into one organisation, sharing resources and expertise to work towards people of all genders, sexualities, and/or intersex variations. Today, Twenty10 provides social support services to people ages 12 and up; transitional housing, case management and counselling for people ages 16 - 25; inclusivity training and consulting; as well as telephone and webchat counselling for people of all ages, QLife.

Twenty10 is proud to celebrate 50 years of continuous peer based support in NSW, from Phone-A-Friend in 1973 to today as the NSW state partner delivering telephone and webchat support for Qlife, and for Twenty10 - Australia's largest and longest running LGBTIQA+ youth support service.



Twenty10 crew at Sydney Mardi Gras, 2023.



Gay & Lesbian Counselling Service of NSW telephone counsellors in Sydney, early 1980s; photo courtesy of Twenty10 incorporating GLCS NSW and the personal archives of Peter Trebilco

DIVERSE VOICES



The CAMP Club (Campaign Against Moral Persecution) in Brisbane had offered a telephone contact line for a number of years to assist people to find like-minded others in ultra-conservative Queensland. By 1983, membership of the Club had declined considerably; in the midst of the Bjelke Peterson era there were rumblings from a number of welfare and community groups towards reform. The full impact of the AIDS crisis was yet to be felt, however its advent led to a greater coalescing of the various communities in Queensland's capital and it was only a short time before some passionate and committed activists devised the Homosexual Community Welfare Service (HCWS) in response to the gap left from the phone service at CAMP.

The local paper could not bring itself to have the words 'gay' or 'lesbian' printed in early advertisements for the peer-based volunteer counselling services, hence 'homosexual' was considered a catch-all term for those of us who lay outside the law and social palatability. In 1984 15 volunteers were trained to prepare them for the counselling lines. The course dealt with issues which, until then, many had not even considered or been aware of including gay and lesbian identity in the historical perspective, coming out, client and counselling issues, counselling skills.

Access to a telephone was organised through Rev. Ivor Holmans and the Metropolitan Community Church. There were 25 active counsellors by the end of 1986.

In those early days of the service, we functioned in an environment where gay sex was illegal and gay and lesbian communities had no recourse under anti-discrimination legislation (because Queensland had nothing of the kind until 1991). Funding was non-existent and the agency functioned on membership and donations from the Free Business Association to cover advertising costs.

Around 1990, the name changed to the Gay and Lesbian Welfare Association to reflect the emerging identity politics of the time.

By August 1991, GLWA had twenty-eight active counsellors, and a strong volunteer committee who helped coordinate the work.

Over the following decades, GLWA maintained a presence, always being peer-led and staffed. Members played an active role in writing submissions to Parliament around a Bill of Rights, as well as maintaining actions in support of expanding the rights of transgender people.

In September 2015, three years after registering as a charity and following 31 years' service to the diverse populations of Queensland, the organisation changed its name to better reflect the breadth of individuals we serve. Diverse Voices was born.

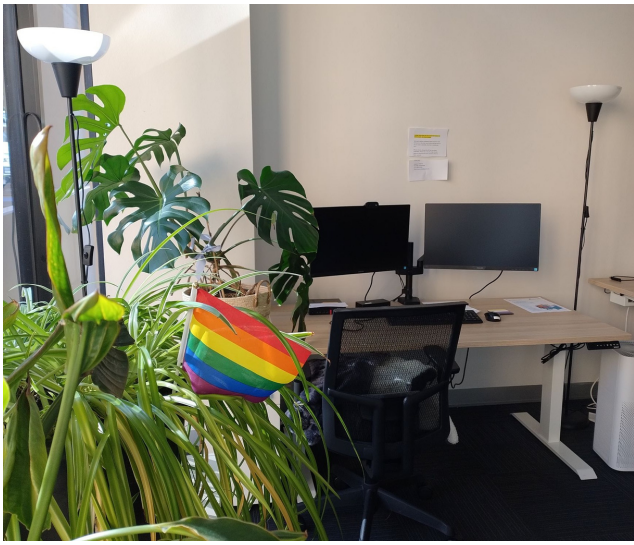


Above: DiVo phone room nostalgia
Below: The DiVo team at Pride 2013



Since QLife began in 2013, DiVo have celebrated some significant milestones:

- **2013** -We implemented the first web chat system which was adopted by QLife and rolled out across partner sites
- **2014**- GLWA launched the regional volunteer program- Reps in 6 locations across QLD that promoted QLife/GLWA and provided information on queer friendly services in their area
- **2015**- QLife obtained funding for the regional volunteer program and renamed it Connect and was rolled out across sites
- **2015**- Renaming of our organisation from The Gay and Lesbian Welfare Association to the more inclusive name that reflects the community in which we serve- Diverse Voices
- **2017**- Funding through Brisbane North PHN- Delivered ASIST and SafeTALK training to over 160 people across Meanjin/Brisbane
- **2022**- Team Leaders began working at DiVo
- **2022**-Launched a Community Engagement Volunteer Program
- **2023**- Moved offices, first time in our history that we aren't subletting with another organisation.



Switchboard phone room, Narrm/ Melbourne 2023



Switchboard continues to operate within the framework established in 1991 by its founders, a collective of motivated individuals who identified as LGBTIQA+. From their own life experiences, the founders identified the value of establishing a peer-based peer support service that could affirm the experiences of LGBTIQA+ people. Switchboard provides a range of services to the LGBTIQA+ communities of Victoria and beyond, some of our services like QLife are national and some are state based.

QLife is one of many programs of Switchboard, we also manage:

- Out and About program - a state-based community visitors scheme for older LGBTI people.
- Anti Racism program – The program aims to enhance understanding and build equity for LGBTIQA+ people who are People of Colour and People of Faith by working to make Switchboard an anti-racist organization and providing peer based programs by and for QTIBPOC people.
- Suicide prevention program – delivers training and community education, national Lived Experience network, runs LGBTIQA+ bereavement programs including an online drop-in group and the Charlee website.
- Rainbow Door – state based helpline specialising in Family Violence with case management options 7 days per week via phone, text or email 10am – 5pm
- Rainbow Families – state based, established 2006, joined Switchboard 2023. Connecting and supporting LGBTIQA+ parent, carers and their families. Supporting services to develop and deliver rainbow family-inclusive better practice across Victoria.
- Training – we also deliver fee for service training on a range of topics including LGBTIQA+ inclusive practice, recognising and responding to Family/Intimate Partner violence, how to talk about suicide safely, Peer support frameworks and working with Rainbow families.



Living Proud Incorporated is the new name for Gay & Lesbian Community Services of WA Inc (GLCS). GLCS grew out of the 'Campaign Against Moral Persecution (CAMP)' and 'Phone a Friend' and was formally established in 1974 as the Homosexual Counselling and Information Service of WA.

In 1984 the name was changed to the Gay Counselling Service of WA (Inc) and the organisation became an incorporated body. In keeping with worldwide trends to recognise the contribution and needs of women in the community, the name of the service was changed in 1990 to the Gay and Lesbian Counselling Service of WA (Inc). In 1999 the name was changed again to the Gay and Lesbian Community Services of WA (Inc) to reflect the wider range of services that GLCS provides.

The recent name change to Living Proud Inc aims to reflect a more contemporary and inclusive organisation which not only strives to improve the health and wellbeing of gay and lesbian people but also the bisexual, trans, intersex and other sexuality and gender diverse members of the community. Living Proud also reflects our aspiration for the LGBTI communities and our wellbeing. Living Proud has been providing support, information and resources to the Western Australian gay, lesbian, bisexual, trans and intersex community for over 40 years.

As WA's main LGBTI community service our focus is on providing essential services to the gay, lesbian, bisexual, trans and intersex communities, including our peer counselling phone line, health and wellbeing initiatives and community capacity building.

Living Proud offers a number of LGBTIQ+ awareness and ally-ship training options for professionals, organisations and corporates including face to face half day and full day training and e-learning modules, Queer and Accessible project, Mental Health commission grants and QLife all in order to improve accessibility for LGBTI people. Living Proud also has a successful history of running funded projects, often in partnership with other community groups.



Perth Pride Parade, 2018

CELEBRATING AND RECOGNISING 10 YEARS OF...

COMMUNITY

Uplifting the wellbeing of people who connect to QLife, whether a single session or more than once. The folks who reach out to QLife place their trust in the service. QLife is by community, for community.



GENEROSITY

Volunteers are the heart and soul of QLife. Some of the first telephone volunteers to start with QLife are still contributing today. Some have volunteered much longer with their local site pre-QLife. The embodiment of LGBTIQ+ communities continuing to show up for each other.



CONNECTION

QLife provides a way for anyone anywhere in so-called Australia to connect to community, access nonjudgmental and affirming peer support, despite geographical barriers



DIVERSE VOICES



GROWTH

We commit to honour and build on the proud history of grassroots, community responses to the marginalisation, persecution, prosecution and discrimination of LGBTIQ+ people and communities. Thank you to members of the LGBTIQ+ who have fought for our rights and thank you to those that continue to do so.



VISIBILITY

QLife is here because of LGBTIQ+ communities occupying spaces to support each other. Our communities are now being seen, and health needs are being addressed.



LIFE