

IBM Australia partners with Australia's first Pride Centre to connect LGBTIQ community in Australia

Melbourne, Australia - 17 Jun 2019: IBM Australia has given a boost to Australia's LGBTIQ community today as it cements a unique partnership with the Victorian Pride Centre (VPC) – Australia's first pride centre and the largest in South East Asia - as Founding Principal Partner.

The three-year partnership will see IBM contribute to the ongoing sustainability of the VPC, allowing the organisations housed within the centre to focus on delivering their services to the community.

Speaking at the signing of the agreement at Victorian Parliament House earlier today, the Hon. Martin Foley, Minister for Equality, Mental Health and Creative Industries said "Equality is not negotiable in Victoria. Victoria's LGBTIQ community has a lot to be proud of and I congratulate everyone who has worked hard to make Australia's first Pride Centre a reality. It is terrific to see that IBM will be an active partner, providing support to our LGBTIQ groups who will be calling the Pride Centre home."

Stretched across 6,000 square metres, the VPC will soon be home to up to eight major LGBTIQ community organisations and will support over 40 smaller community groups. It will provide unprecedented access to technology, resources and shared learning opportunities – for the benefit of this and future LGBTIQ generations and their allies.

From the outset, IBM's contribution will extend beyond financial support, helping to sustain the community's first co-working space on level one of the VPC supporting beneficiaries such as the Australian GLBTIQ Multicultural Council (AGMC), Minus 18 youth group, sporting and family support groups – and many more.

"Fostering inclusion and diversity is non-negotiable in modern day Australia. In fact, increasing diversity in the workplace has a direct effect on an organisation's bottom line and can boost a city's competitive advantage far beyond innovation and skills," said Harriet Green, Chairman and CEO, IBM Asia Pacific.

"However, it's important to remember that diversity is not just a metric to be strived for. Diversity and inclusion is about concrete policies and steps you take. IBM has been protecting employees against discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation since 1984, added gender identity and expression in 2002, introduced an 8-Bar Rainbow logo in 2017 and launched the LGBT+ Ally Championship Badge programme in 2018. The partnership with VPC announced today is yet another step we are proud to undertake."

While Australia ranks high on the list of LGBTIQ inclusive countries, Jude Munro AO, Chair of the Victorian Pride Centre, says the partnership with IBM will unlock a range of benefits.

"Up until now, many LGBTIQ groups and organisations have worked in isolation, competing for resources and support year on year," said Ms Munro.

"Part of our vision for the Pride Centre is to connect people and organisations and enable collaborative ways of working. This new partnership with IBM will connect the sector with a global leader in technology and provide access to a shared space conducive to business efficiency and cooperation," she added.

Importantly, the state-of-the-art technology will connect people living outside of Melbourne into forums, workshops and presentations conducted on site.

Utilising IBM's expertise in IT infrastructure and software development, the VPC will be better able to facilitate connections and shared learning opportunities between its beneficiaries. It will also be better positioned to leverage a range of tools and resources into the future, including emerging technologies such as AI and Cloud.

"Ever since we introduced the first Equal Opportunity Letter in the USA in 1953 we have remained committed to ensuring we continue to lead the way for equality of all in business and beyond," said Harriet Green.

The VPC expects to welcome up to 500,000 members of the LGBTIQ community and its allies per year, upon its projected opening in late 2020.

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About IBM

For more than 106 years, IBM has helped change how the world works by building smarter businesses -from clocks, calculators and typewriters through to today's AI, Cloud, Blockchain and Quantum computing platforms. Established in 1932 - alongside the Sydney Harbour Bridge - IBM has had a proud 87-year history in Australia making significant investments to advance the country's innovation, global competitiveness and community well-being.

About the Victorian Pride Centre

The Victorian Pride Centre is a unique initiative that celebrates, bolsters and protects equality, diversity and inclusion. It is set to forge a new chapter in the narrative of Australian Pride by bringing the LGBTIQ community together in a single and powerful space. It will be home to practical and supportive services as well as being an international tourist destination. The Victorian Pride Centre Ltd is a not-for-profit organisation structured as a company limited by guarantee

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