



South Australian Rainbow Advocacy Alliance
C/O SHINE SA, 64C Woodville Rd
Woodville South SA 5011
On Kurna land
E: info@saraa.org.au

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27 August 2024

The Hon. Dan Cregan MP
Minister for Police, Emergency Services and Correctional Services
48 Hutchinson Street
MOUNT BARKER SA 5251
CC: Grant Stevens, Commissioner of Police via Juliette Jones

Dear Minister Cregan,

RE: SAPOL response to anti-LGBTIQA+ protests

We are writing to express our deep concern and disappointment at SAPOL's handling of safety and protests at a recent 'Rainbow Storytime' event held in Salisbury on Monday the 15th July. We request to meet with you to discuss the necessary steps to improve safety for LGBTIQA+ community members and their supporters at future South Australian events.

On the 15th of July Salisbury Community Library hosted a 'Rainbow Storytime' event, organised as part of Libraries SA's 'Firstival'. As the peak body for LGBTIQA+ South Australians, SARAA received multiple reports of protestor harassment and intimidation from attendees and has witnessed extensive video footage of protest behaviour. Protests occurred for weeks prior to the event, and on the day. Children and their families were subjected to verbal abuse, derogatory remarks, and threatening behaviour. Caregivers, children and council staff were booed, followed, yelled at, and told they should be ashamed of themselves for attending. The event's storyteller was followed and verbally harassed, and protestors also made disparaging and unfounded comments to law enforcement officers, insinuating inappropriate behaviour.

Similar scenes played out at our community's Pride of the South March in 2023 and 2022 where a group of protesters, many who were present at the Salisbury library event, surrounded the event yelling abuse through a megaphone and verbally harassing and filming attendees, including minors. Events like this exist to be celebrations of diversity and our communities. For rainbow families, events like Salisbury's 'Rainbow Story Time' are crucial in allowing our children to meet peers, and to engage with literature that references families like theirs and people like them. Instead, the untamed presence of aggression from protestors made people and children feel vilified and unsafe, and some left before it began.

Whilst our community events have always been subjected to protest, we observe that the attendance and aggression is increasing. Footage from the Rainbow Story Time event shows that protest included members of far-right political organisation, National Socialist Network. We are deeply concerned that this group has begun to mobilise and target events for the LGBTIQA+ community, as they are known for their aggression and violent political motives.



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Despite recent legislative changes granting increased powers to manage protests and protect public gatherings, it is disheartening that these powers were not utilised to ensure the safety and well-being of the LGBTIQ+ families in attendance. We are unsure why SAPOL would allow for protestors to yell hate speech, to use inappropriate language and terminology, and to intimidate families who are attending a publicly funded children's event. The apparent prioritisation of protestors' rights over the safety and dignity of LGBTIQ+ individuals sends a distressing message about the enforcement of laws designed to protect marginalized communities. South Australia's current absence of specific vilification laws to safeguard LGBTIQ+ people only exacerbates this concern, leaving them vulnerable to targeted harassment and abuse.

Our organisation has worked extensively with SAPOL in the last 5 years, and we know that SAPOL has good intentions. However, our community does not currently feel we are a priority to law enforcement officers and patrols. We know people do not feel safe to report homophobia and transphobia, or to call police when they are in danger. The kind of policing that occurs at LGBTIQ+ events does nothing to dissuade these attitudes. Instead, we are hearing a dominant narrative that our community feels that there is a double standard in what kind of protesting is allowed, depending on the protest group.

Whilst SARAA firmly believes in the right to protest, we also believe that protests should not involve hate speech, vilification, threats, or for protests to occur at children's events in a way that threatens their safety. We also believe that council staff have the right to attend work without fear or threat to safety. We note there are precedents that have been introduced to ensure safety, such as the Safe Access Zones bill that was introduced in 2020, protecting people from harassment while accessing abortion services. We think it is a fundamental human right to be able to attend publically funded events that are inclusive of our families and staff without adults and children being scared and feeling unsafe.

In light of these distressing events, SARAA respectfully requests a meeting with you at your earliest convenience to discuss what steps can be taken to discuss the safety of rights of LGBTIQ+ communities at future events. It is crucial that our state takes concrete actions to protect the rights and safety of all its citizens, regardless of their sexual orientation or gender identity.

I appreciate your attention to this matter and look forward to your response. Please do not hesitate to contact via email or phone to arrange a suitable meeting time.

Varo they/them

Chair

SA Rainbow Advocacy Alliance (SARAA)

E: chair@saraa.org.au