

7 NOVEMBER 2019

**Supporting LGBTIQ communities to become smokefree
Quit Victoria, Thorne Harbour Health and Melbourne Queer Film Festival nominated for a
2019 VicHealth Award**

Quit Victoria, Thorne Harbour Health and Melbourne Queer Film Festival were today announced as a finalist in the VicHealth Awards, Preventing Tobacco Use category. The VicHealth Awards are the state's highest accolade for health promotion, celebrating organisations working to create a healthier Victoria.

The nomination acknowledged the work undertaken by Quit in partnership with Thorne Harbour Health and Melbourne Queer Film Festival in supporting LGBTIQ communities to become smokefree.

Quit Victoria Director Dr Sarah White said, "LGBTIQ communities are likely to experience a higher health, social and financial burden with smoking rates nearly three times higher than the national average. It was important that Quit partner with the LGBTIQ sector to start a conversation with the LGBTIQ community and ensure members who smoke are given the support they need to become smokefree".

One of the key outcomes has been to train Quitline counsellors to provide a safe and supportive service to LGBTIQ community members.

"The award nomination acknowledges the work of dedicated organisations promoting wellbeing in Victorian LGBTIQ communities. The awards recognise some of the most influential health promotion work being undertaken in Victoria. It's a privilege to be considered as part of that group," Dr Sarah White said.

Thorne Harbour Health Chief Executive Officer Simon Ruth was equally delighted with the nomination. "Thorne Harbour Health's partnership with Quit Victoria and Melbourne Queer Film Festival recognises a shared goal of reducing the impact of smoking in our communities. The initiative takes a comprehensive approach, including community engagement and co-design activities and service delivery change to ensure LGBTIQ community members get the support they need. The partnership demonstrates that with shared leadership and expertise, people can be supported to become smokefree."

Another key component of the initiative was to provide emerging creatives the opportunity to produce short films highlighting the impact of smoking on LGBTIQ communities and to create relevant messages to change attitudes to smoking.

Melbourne Queer Film Festival Chief Executive Officer Maxwell Gratton reflected on the collaboration that launched the unique short film competition Keep the Vibe Alive, which has continued for a second year running as [QuitFlicks](#). "It has been fantastic supporting emerging creatives to share the impact of smoking from the perspective of LGBTIQ communities and to give people the opportunity to have their work shown before every screening at the Melbourne Queer Film Festival."

More information about the 'Supporting LGBTIQ communities to become smokefree' initiative can be found in the VicHealth Awards Finalist Gallery [here](#).

For more quitting advice, visit quit.org.au or call the Quitline on 13 7848. Quit Specialists are trained to deliver smoking cessation advice to the LGBTIQ community in a culturally appropriate and accessible way.

Quit Victoria is a partnership between VicHealth, the State Government of Victoria and Cancer Council Victoria. For more information, visit: www.quit.org.au

Melbourne Queer Film Festival is Australia's oldest and largest LGBTIQ film festival and celebration of the moving image. For more information, visit: www.mqff.com.au

Thorne Harbour Health is a community controlled organisation, governed by our members, and working for our sex, sexuality and gender diverse communities. For more information, visit: <https://thorneharbour.org/>

If you would like to arrange an interview with one of the organisations' spokespeople, contact Maria Kambourakis on 0412 986 124.