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## THE MAKING OF THE PRIDE CENTRE

### FOREWORD

The Hon. Michael Kirby AC CMG

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The Hon. Michael Kirby AC CMG and Rhonda Galbally AO

*From Michael Kirby – Patron of VPC*

It is fitting that Rhonda Galbally and I have joined together in this Foreword to applaud and welcome this book on how the Victorian Pride Centre (VPC) evolved and became a reality.

Rhonda and I have been partners in many organisations and good causes dating back to the 1980s. The focus has changed over the years. But it has always been concerned with honouring diversity; promoting equality; and providing remedies for those who have suffered disadvantages because of apparent differences from their fellow citizens. Now, we are joined together in this admirable new story of the VPC. The VPC is a precedent for others to follow.

The story of how the VPC came about is told here. Discrimination against Australians on the grounds of their sexual orientation and gender diversity has existed at least since the arrival of the convicts and the British settlements that accompanied them. Our First Nations people, before 1788, had no confirmed memory of prejudice and stigma on such grounds. Certainly, it was the British settlers and their rulers who brought with them prejudice, reinforced by the criminal law. It took nearly 200 years for the

criminal laws against queers to be abolished in our land. This happened in Victoria before being copied later in New South Wales.

It is not surprising that the moves to establish a Pride Centre worthy of its name, happened earlier in Victoria and before New South Wales and other States. This has been a repeated feature of Australian history. Victoria generally led the way because it normally hosted a more serious-minded community, leading the way so often towards reform and change. As Professor Geoffrey Blainey has explained, new community sporting initiatives in colonial times, normally began in Victoria. So did the early growth of the union and Labor movements. So did the fitful moves towards Federation. So did the first national Parliament. So did the struggles against military conscription. So, in due course, did community moves to collect and archive the history of the queer community in Australia. The creation of a Pride Centre to offer a welcoming space for the queer minority was therefore unsurprisingly, first undertaken in Victoria. Ultimately, it was in this serious corner of Australia that the VPC found supporters with a vision strong enough and practical wisdom strong enough to create the VPC.

Victoria and Melbourne are serious places. Whereas in Sydney, sybaritic habits commonly took precedence, in Victoria, the population, from earliest times, liked serious talk; energetic debate and reformist endeavour. The creation of the VPC must be seen against this national background. It is only in 2022 that a queer museum, “Qtopia” – such a Sydney title - was born.

Because my mother was born in Berwick, Victoria, it is possible that I was called upon to associate myself with VPC as a Patron in the mistaken belief

that such a serious person as I must surely be Victorian. I readily agreed. Coming to know the Centre and the community supporters who translated the idea into bricks and mortar, I was proud to join in this book's felicitations to mark this achievement. Especially because the VPC has renewed my friendship with Rhonda Galbally and the many admirable Founders of VPC. It provides the inspiration and stimulus for Sydney's Qtopia project. Doubtless, following the Victorian innovation in this matter, as in so many others, Australians elsewhere will ultimately ensure that everywhere in our country, queer and straight people can learn about this refuge and meeting place. And thereby learn from each other.

Future generations will look back, seriously, and reflect on the injustices inflicted on queer people in earlier, but also in present times, and on minorities other than queers. From inter-action and education in this way, copying the Victorian example, our country will come to acknowledge its past and build a friendlier present and a better future for all people. No exceptions.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Rhonda Galbally', written in a cursive style.

*From Rhonda Galbally - Ambassador of VPC*

*[To be completed]*