



Thursday 3 December 2020

We Stand Openly in Support and Solidarity with Black Lives Matter

Dear signatories,

On behalf of Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras, we acknowledge your open letter calling on the Board to stand in solidarity with Black Lives Matter, remove the NSW Police Force float and the NSW Corrective Services float from future Parades and take certain other actions in relation to the policing of our events.

We reaffirm our position that we stand openly in support and solidarity with the Black Lives Matter movement. Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras has previously affirmed this position by proudly promoting a number of events and articles about the movement on its social media.

However, it is our firm view that excluding groups or individuals who are Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex and Queer or our allies (LGBTIQ+) from Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras events based on their career, association, political affiliation or the banner they wish to march under does not align with our intrinsic, core value of inclusion. Nor do we believe exclusion is a useful or effective course of action for Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras to achieve social justice outcomes.

The Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras Parade has since 1978 and throughout its history of 42 years been a symbol of love and protest showing the world what we can achieve when we bring together our diverse community and work together.

We acknowledge the historic difficulties between the NSW Police, the LGBTIQ+ community and First Nations people as expressed in the open letter, particularly in light of the Black Lives Matter movement and international events in 2020.

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We also acknowledge the significant work that the LGBTIQ+ community, the NSW Police and Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras have undertaken to develop stronger relationships with our community throughout NSW through programs such as the Gay and Lesbian Liaison Officer (GLLO) program, the initial signing of the Mardi Gras Police Accord in 2014 and the apology to the 78ers by the NSW Police Commissioner in 2018.

As announced on 8 November 2020, our stated plan in the coming months is to welcome transparent consultation on the Mardi Gras Police Accord and our intention is to initiate a process of community review to update this agreement.

In light of issues raised through the Black Lives Matter movement, we are putting a specific emphasis on our First Nations people and LGBTIQ+ identifying people of colour, transgender and gender diverse people, and the broader LGBTIQ+ community, to speak directly with the NSW Police and Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras on the challenges they feel are yet to be overcome at our events and how we can address those challenges together.

We feel that through this inclusive process we can bring our community together, address concerns and work towards a more harmonious future.

Yours in solidarity,

Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras