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## Online discussions on same-sex marriage to be monitored

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A team of Queensland volunteers will scour neo-Nazi and other far-right or anti-gay web forums to monitor conversation around same-sex marriage and report those who overstep legal boundaries during the postal survey period.

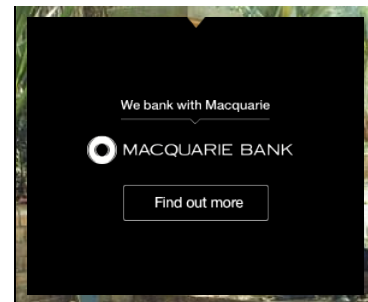
The LGBTI Legal Service will run a project named Like Love, involving training and co-ordinating volunteers to monitor online forums, media and posters to ensure accountability where unlawful vilification may have occurred.



The Like Love project will run during the same-sex marriage postal vote over the next two months. Photo: AAP

The Australian Bureau of Statistics' same-sex marriage postal survey began arriving in letterboxes this week, with the result to be published in mid-November.

LGBTI Legal Service president Matilda Alexander said vilification had increased on social media and in posters and there was a need to educate the community that certain forms of speech were unlawful hate speech, not justified by freedom of speech provisions.



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"I think having a postal vote makes people feel like their homophobia is legitimised and they have a right to say whatever they want to say about LGBTI people - that's not the case under the law," she said.

A team of volunteers will be trained before monitoring "No" vote websites, neo-Nazi and extreme right wing and anti-Same Schools pages to ensure they were not breaking the law.



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Ms Alexander said it was allowable to have a civil debate about whether or not you support gay marriage.

"You could say 'I don't support gay marriage because I don't think that gay people should be allowed to get married' but you can't say 'It's because they're all paedophiles' because that's the type of speech that incites people to hate a group of people on the basis of sexuality," she said.

"The test is whether it incites hatred and ridicule which is quite a severe test. it's not just any old comments that will incite hatred."

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The information will be compiled and sent to the Anti-Discrimination Commission Queensland for investigation.

Last month, [hurtful posters attacking LGBTIQ families](#) were plastered around West End.

The community fought back and defaced the posters by ripping them down, drawing over and shredding them.

The federal government has also [introduced laws protecting Australians](#) who felt vilified, intimidated or threatened by another person's conduct during the same-sex marriage campaign, with civil penalties of up to \$12,600.

It applied to advertising, leaflet materials and behaviour.

Under the Queensland Anti-Discrimination Act, there were already prohibitions designed to protect people from vilification.



LGBTI Legal Service president Matilda Alexander said there was a difference between expressing your opinion on same-sex marriage and unlawfully vilifying people. Photo: Supplied

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The Queensland government has announced an extra \$7000 for the Like Love project during the postal survey.

The funding comes from a contingency fund that was set aside to assist legal services responding to emerging community legal needs.

Queensland Attorney-General Yvette D'Ath said the LGBTI Legal Service expected there to be an increased demand for legal assistance during the postal survey.

"The Palaszczuk government is committed to ensuring Queenslanders have the help they need during this crucial time of the marriage survey, and we want to support the LGBTI community as much as possible," she said.

Last month, Queensland Health announced [\\$338,000 for four non-government organisations](#) to protect the mental health of LGBTIQ community members during the postal survey.

The volunteer-run LGBTI Legal Service [received government funding](#) for the first time in April - \$406,000 over the next three years.

If people spot questionable content, the LGBTI Legal Service has asked they take a screen shot and visit [www.lgbtilegalservice.org](http://www.lgbtilegalservice.org).

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