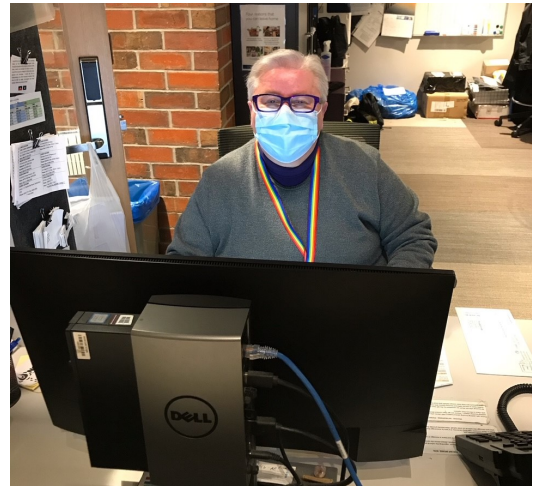


Jeanette

Ozanam House Community Volunteer

LGBTIQ Case Vignette



When I started volunteering at Ozanam Community Centre in the late 1990's I'd never shared that I was a lesbian. This was despite the fact that I had been out since the 70's with my family, workplace and community. Also I had been involved in gay politics both in Australia and England for many years. I had cared for men with AIDS through the Victorian Aids Council for many years and had never felt unsafe. But back then I didn't think revealing my sexuality at the Centre would be a positive thing.

But now, wow what a change! The first workshop I attended that Jac ran at the Centre really was fantastic. Though I was a bit surprised by some of the people's lack knowledge about the LGBTIQ community. The attendees were willing to listen, learn and ask questions. I had been involved in the LGBTIQ community for such a long time I had become insulated from the rest of the world in a funny sort of way.

Things are so different at the House now! All the positive signage, flags and celebrations have created such a huge change. Every time we celebrate significant days – like IDAHOBIT Day, Wear It Purple Day and International Trans Day – it makes such a difference to people's attitude. Just the fact that VincentCare has now participated in the Pride March fills my heart with joy.

So on the day that VincentCare was awarded the Rainbow Tick, it was fantastic. So much hard work was put into achieving it and it was such an honour.

I never feel anything other than worthy when I am volunteering at the house. It's fabulous to see such a broad range of LGBTIQ people there now and being so well supported. It is such a confirming and safe environment!

**Jeanette Epstein, *Community Volunteer (Receptionist)*
Ozanam House**