

Being a Fair Player: How Dentons Supported Sydney WorldPride 2023

By Elouise Casey

Over the weekends of 25 and 26 February and 4 and 5 March 2023, staff of Dentons joined lawyers from the Inner City Legal Centre (ICLC) and other volunteers at the official Sydney Mardi Gras and Sydney WorldPride 2023 parties. They were there not as party goers themselves, but to provide support to members of the LGBTQI+ community attending the events. The role of volunteers was to monitor the operations of police and provide legal information and support to people who had been searched or questioned by them.

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About Fair Play

The initiative, Fair Play (originally known as Project Blue), is run by the ICLC in partnership with ACON, Australia's largest sexuality and gender diverse community health organisation, and Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras. Fair Play aims to support the LGBTQI+ community by providing information about health, safety and legal issues to people attending Mardi Gras events, particularly in relation to police drug operations. For Dentons, a law firm that was awarded Small Employer of the Year for LGBTQI+ inclusion at the Australian Workplace Equality Index Awards in 2020, Fair Play clearly aligns with the firm's values.

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Denton's commitment to LGBTQI+ Inclusion

Dentons has long been committed to LGBTQI+ inclusion. “As a global law firm, our strength lies in the different perspectives and unique abilities of our employees, which is why inclusion and diversity forms a core part of our strategy and why we embrace all aspects of diversity”, says Dentons Australia Chair and Australasia Region CEO, Doug Stipanicev. At a global level, the firm was named one of the 2020 Top Global Employers for LGBTQI+ Employees by Stonewall and has received Gold accreditation for the third year in a row by the organisation. In Australia, Dentons launched the Trans and Gender Diverse Legal Service (TGDLS) in 2018 in partnership with the ICLC, a community legal centre based in Kings Cross, Sydney. The service is the first specialist legal service for the trans and gender diverse community in Australia.



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The Trans and Gender Diverse Legal Service

Since its launch, the TGDLS has provided much needed pro bono legal support and advice to trans and gender diverse people and their families. TGDLS clients can seek advice on a range of issues, including discrimination, criminal matters, family law matters, employment issues, change of name and gender

markers on identity documents, and medical treatment for minors. The purpose of the TGDLS is as much to provide a safe space for trans and gender diverse clients to access legal support (through an inclusive approach and an understanding of these clients’ unique needs) as it is to deliver quality legal advice.



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Sydney Mardi Gras and WorldPride

It is through its partnership with the ICLC that Dentons became involved in Fair Play. Dentons staff were invited to volunteer as 'Fair Players' to provide on-site assistance and support at the Sydney Mardi Gras and WorldPride parties. Staff also attended the follow-up legal clinics that were held in the weeks following the parties to provide legal advice and referrals to clients in need of support following an interaction with police.

Denton's partnership with ICLC is part of its broader national pro bono program. The firm instils in its lawyers the importance of using their legal skills to assist people, communities and organisations. In addition to supporting the TGDLS, the firm works with a range of community legal centres and not-for-profit organisations nationally to provide pro bono legal work across a range of clients and communities, including Indigenous organisations and communities, artists and art communities, migration and refugees, and not-for-profits.



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trans and gender diverse community (run in partnership with the Inner City Legal Centre). In addition to coordinating the service for Dentons, Elouise is a volunteer solicitor with the service, and is also a member of the steering committee for Dentons' LGBTQ+ network.

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