

DIVERSITY INCLUSION BELONGING

CASE STUDY: More than a party - What Mardi Gras means to Western Sydney



Martin Silveira almost felt he had no choice but to become a social worker. The support of sexual health workers made a big difference in his life as he settled into his identity as a young gay man in the early 2000s.

“As a gay man I was acutely aware of what was happening in my community.” Martin said. “I felt a responsibility as a Spanish-speaking, gay, Uruguayan kid from south-west Sydney to give back.”

Martin joined Western Sydney Sexual Health Centre (WSSHC) two years ago. His role includes counselling, emotional support, psychosocial assessments and education, contact tracing, and supporting his clients – mostly men who have sex with men and sex workers – to access other services.

Martin said he has seen positive change in recent years however LGBTIQ+ people still experience higher rates of depression, anxiety, isolation, aggression and abuse, and the stigma around seeking and accessing health services.

“That’s why Mardi Gras is still important and so much more than just a party. It’s a wonderful way to show all Australians the tenacity, resilience and passion with which the LGBTIQ+ community has in overcoming challenges such as HIV, homophobia, transphobia and social inequality. I see the effects that rejection and isolation have on people’s health so there’s power in being a voice and showing people our lives.”

“Mardi Gras goes beyond colour and movement. It’s part of the work we are still doing in our daily lives for respect, acknowledgement and understanding.”