



2021
POLICY PRIORITIES



ACKNOWLEDGEMENT STATEMENT

LGBTIQ+ Health Australia acknowledges the Traditional Owners of country throughout Australia, their diversity, histories and knowledge and their continuing connections to land and community. We pay our respects to all Australian Indigenous Peoples and their cultures, and to Elders of past, present and future generations.



“It is time for the lives of LGBTIQ+ people to be valued and for our health needs to be taken seriously. There is no more time to waste on political and ideological differences - we need to work together to reduce health disparities which cause harm to our communities each and every day.

There needs to be an urgent, whole-of-government response nationally that is coordinated with the states and territories, and includes well-resourced LGBTIQ+ community-controlled health organisations, to address the health and wellbeing needs of LGBTIQ+ communities.”

Nicky Bath – CEO

LGBTIQ+ Health Australia



QLife Support

If needed, QLife provides free, anonymous, LGBTI peer-support and referral, 3pm-midnight every day, phone 1800 184 527 or chat qlife.org.au.



41.9%
of LGBTQ people had considered attempting suicide in the previous 12 months.¹

74.8% had considered attempting suicide at some point during their lives.¹



39.5%
reported experiencing social exclusion,

34.6%
verbal abuse

11.8%
sexual assault

3.6%
harassment such as being spat at or offensive gestures

3.9% physically attacked or assaulted with a weapon due to their sexual orientation or gender identity in the past 12 months.²



60% of intersex people reported having had medical treatment interventions related to their intersex variation,

66% reported they had experienced discrimination on the basis of their intersex variation from strangers.³



41.7% of LGBTQ reported having ever been in an intimate relationship where they felt they were abused in some way by their partner/s. **38.5%** reported ever feeling abused by a family member.⁴

Illicit drug use in the last 12 months was more common among people who identified as homosexual or bisexual



36%
homosexual or bisexual⁵



16.1%
heterosexual people⁵



42% of 16 to 24 years old lesbian, bisexual and/or queer women smoked⁶

1. Hill, A. O., Bourne, A., McNair, R., Carman, M. & Lyons, A. (2020). Private Lives 3: The health and wellbeing of LGBTIQ people in Australia. ARCSHS Monograph Series No. 122. Melbourne, Australia: Australian Research Centre in Sex, Health and Society, La Trobe University

2. Ibid

3. Jones, T., Hart, B., Carpenter, M., Ansara, G., Leonard, W., and Lucke, J. (2016). Intersex: Stories and Statistics from Australia. Cambridge, UK: Open Book Publishers. <http://dx.doi.org/10.11647/OBP.0089>

4. Hill et al. (2020).

5. AIHW (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare) (2020). National Drug Strategy

Household Survey 2019. Drug statistics series no. 32. Cat. no. PHE 270. Canberra: AIHW

6. Mooney-Somers, J., Deacon, RM., Scott, P., Price, K., Parkhill, N. (2018). Women in contact with the Sydney LGBTQ communities: Report of the SWASH Lesbian, Bisexual and Queer Women's Health Survey 2014, 2016, 2018 Sydney: Sydney Health Ethics, University of Sydney.

LGBTIQ+ people have demonstrated considerable resilience in looking after themselves and their communities despite adversity. Many live healthy and happy lives, contributing to their families, local communities, workplaces and society as a whole. Nevertheless, an overwhelming amount of research evidence has consistently shown that LGBTIQ+ people experience significant health disparities compared to the general population. These poorer health outcomes can be attributed to the impact of Minority Stress - the chronic stressors that LGBTIQ+ people are uniquely exposed because of sexuality, gender and bodily diversity being socially stigmatised. This includes discrimination, social exclusion, harassment and physical violence.

LGBTIQ+ Health Australia, along with its members, will continue to advocate strongly for policy reform and investment that is urgently required to ensure that our communities' health and wellbeing needs are met.

ABOUT LGBTIQ+ HEALTH AUSTRALIA

LGBTIQ+ Health Australia (LHA) is the national peak organisation working to promote the health and wellbeing of LGBTIQ+ people and communities. LHA is uniquely placed with a diverse membership that spans across states and territories, and includes LGBTIQ+ community-controlled health organisations, LGBTIQ+ community groups and state and territory peak bodies, service providers, researchers, and individuals. LHA is strategically positioned to provide a national focus to improving the health and wellbeing of LGBTIQ+ people through policy, advocacy, representation, research evidence, and capacity building across all of the health portfolios that are of significance to our communities. We recognise that people's genders, bodies, relationships, and sexualities affect their health and wellbeing in every domain of their life.

Together we can achieve healthy LGBTIQ+ and other sexuality, gender, and bodily diverse people and communities throughout Australia and the world, free from stigma and discrimination.

ABOUT 2021 POLICY PRIORITIES

Despite recent legislative reform and advances in the human rights of LGBTIQ+ people, the health disparities that LGBTIQ+ people experience remain unchanged or continue to decline. LGBTIQ+ people are rightly identified as a priority population in a range of existing national health and wellbeing strategies, however there is currently a lack of national coordination of goals and targets.

It is widely recognised that at the national and jurisdictional level, LGBTIQ+ health has been and continues to be underfunded and under resourced. Despite evidence of best practice showing that many health interventions and programs are best delivered by people and communities with lived experience, investment in LGBTIQ+ people's health is often funnelled into larger mainstream organisations at the cost of community-controlled health organisations who are best placed to deliver inclusive and culturally safe care to LGBTIQ+ people.

LGBTIQ+ Health Australia's 2021 Policy Priorities aims to achieve a stronger platform to undertake advocacy, drive national reform to improve the health and wellbeing outcomes for LGBTIQ+ people and communities across Australia. It outlines 8 Priority Areas with specific policy recommendations to address these ongoing issues. This document applies an intersectional lens to the health and wellbeing needs of LGBTIQ+ people, which is fundamental to designing and implementing effective programs to improve overall health outcomes.

POLICY PRIORITY AREAS

National coordination: Sustainable resourcing of LGBTIQ+ Health Australia in the form of peak funding to increase capacity for research and development, strengthen national coordination of policy and research, and increase LGBTIQ+ membership and sector development.

- LGBTIQ+ Health Australia is funded to better execute its peak role and engage at the national level to improve the broad health outcomes for LGBTIQ+ communities.

Better data and research: Greater coordination of LGBTIQ+ health research, with use of the new Australian Bureau of Statistics 2020 Standard on Sex, Gender, Variations in Sex Characteristics, and Sexual Orientation Variables across government and non-government health and wellbeing sector datasets and all research.

- Investment in greater coordination of research and an in-depth analysis of existing data sets and research nationally and jurisdictionally.
- Investment in embedding the Australian Bureau of Statistics 2020 Standard on Sex, Gender, Variations in Sex Characteristics, and Sexual Orientation Variables across government and non-government health and wellbeing sector data sets.
- The inclusion of questions on gender identity, sexual orientation, and intersex status in the national census.



A National LGBTIQ+ health and wellbeing action plan: Translation of national priorities and strategies into a practical and funded 10-year National LGBTIQ+ Health and Wellbeing Action Plan, finalised with input by LGBTIQ+ stakeholders.

- Develop and implement a 10-year National LGBTIQ+ Health and Wellbeing Action Plan that includes benchmarks and targets to monitor progress in addressing health disparities and reducing inequities experienced by LGBTIQ+ Australians. This will include a national forum of stakeholders to review existing research evidence and government policy commitments to develop recommendations on priority actions and ensure sound investment which will yield the best outcomes.



Strong, resilient LGBTIQ+ community-controlled health organisations: Increased investment in LGBTIQ+ community-controlled health organisations to enhance capacity, meet demand and expand geographical reach, including targeted new funding for priority areas.

- LGBTIQ+ community-controlled health organisations
 - Increased investment in LGBTIQ+ community-controlled health organisations to enhance capacity, meet demand and expand geographical reach.
- Primary Health Networks
 - Increased investment in PHNs to be directed into LGBTIQ+ community-controlled health organisations to increase their capacity to deliver targeted health programs and build the capacity of the primary care sector to work in a culturally competent way.
 - Mandatory inclusion of LGBTIQ+ people in all needs assessments.
 - Commissioning approaches are inclusive of LGBTIQ+ community-controlled health organisations.
- Intersex organisations



- Funding support for Intersex Human Rights Australia to facilitate systemic advocacy on intersex issues.
- Funding support for Intersex Peer Support Australia to facilitate independent access to counselling and peer support for intersex individuals and their families.
- Funding to explore the establishment of an independent, human rights-based oversight mechanism to determine individual cases involving people born with intersex variations who are unable to consent to treatment.
- Rainbow Families
 - Funding for Rainbow Families to better enable them to operate at the national level and work with relevant federal government agencies, to reduce the disadvantage of LGBTIQ+ families across Australia.



Crisis intervention for mental health and suicide prevention: A whole-of-government, integrated national approach to planning and service delivery for LGBTIQ+ communities, including education campaigns to reduce stigma and discrimination.

- Invest in education campaigns that promote the inclusion of LGBTIQ+ people in society more broadly, and further embrace diversity and to ensure full inclusivity of all groups, particularly LGBTIQ people with disabilities, LGBTIQ people from multifaith and culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds and LGBTIQ people from Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander backgrounds, Brotherboys and Sistergirls.
- Invest in evidence-based promotion, prevention and early intervention initiatives and primary mental health care supporting the prevention, early detection and treatment of mental health problems experienced by LGBTIQ+ people and communities.
- Increased investment in tailored mental health and suicide prevention initiatives, including both clinical and community-based support, to build the capacity and resilience of LGBTIQ+ communities.
- Increase investment to QLife to ensure appropriate coverage across all jurisdictions and to meet new challenges of more complex contacts.
- Investment in establishing a National Suicide Prevention Office with a funded portfolio to address LGBTIQ+ suicide prevention.



Health and wellbeing for our elders: Ensuring access, equity and inclusion for LGBTI elders, including implementation of relevant recommendations from the Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety.

- Investment to ensure LGBTI-specific recommendations in the Royal Commission into Aged Care's final report are funded appropriately.
- Establish and support LGBTI CVS schemes in areas where they currently do not exist, delivered by LGBTIQ+ health organisations, who have the most expertise in providing culturally competent programs.

Increased participation for people with disability: Investment to increase capacity of the disability sector to work with LGBTIQ+ people with disability.

- Investment to enable projects like Employable Q, which provides resources to promote the inclusion of LGBTIQ+ people with disability in the workplace, to be able to increase the economic participation of LGBTIQ+ people with disability.
- Investment in a 3–5-year commitment to increase capacity of the disability sector to work with LGBTIQ+ people with disability.





Targeted action on other health and wellbeing disparities: Recognising specific current needs, priority focus will also be given to action to address disparities for Intersex people, trans and gender diverse people, and those affected by intimate partner and family violence and sexual assault, alcohol and other drugs, and conversion practices.

- LGBTIQ+ Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, Brotherboys and Sistergirls
 - Investment in health programs and services that are culturally safe for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander LGBTIQ+ people, Brotherboys and Sistergirls.
- Intersex health and wellbeing
 - Prohibit as a criminal act the deferrable medical interventions that alter the sex characteristics of infants and children without their fully informed consent.
 - It is mandatory for individuals to give freely given and fully informed consent to medical interventions, and for individuals and families/caregivers to have independent access to funded counselling as well as independent and affirmative peer support.
 - Establish an independent, human rights-based oversight body or mechanism to determine individual cases involving people born with variations in sex characteristics. This body would bring together clinicians, human rights and child rights experts, and representatives from intersex-led organisations.
 - Require mandatory ongoing training and education of health, welfare and allied professional in issues relating to intersex bodies, including human rights issues. Intersex community organisations are best placed to undertake this work.
- Trans and gender diverse health and wellbeing
 - National standards of care, for the care and treatment of trans and gender diverse people across the lifespan, that are founded on evidence, human rights and community perspectives.
 - Conduct an audit and review to clearly identify gaps in best practice affirmative care to ensure trans and gender diverse young people have access to and consistency of gender affirming care within and across jurisdictions.
 - Cover gender-affirming healthcare under Medicare and the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS).
 - The Pharmaceutical Benefits Advisory Committee provide an exemption for trans men and non-binary people assigned female, to remove restrictions on accessing testosterone under the PBS.
- Cancer and cancer care
 - Investment for specific services to provide cancer screening services to LGBTIQ+ people.
- Intimate partner and family violence
 - Funding to develop nationally consistent, regular and targeted education and training within mainstream services and police, including in relation to the nature, features and dynamics of intimate partner violence and its particular impact on those from LGBTIQ+ communities.
 - Fund a national forum to undertake a review of best practice models for intimate partner and family violence among LGBTIQ+ communities to inform a whole system and government response.
- Alcohol and other drugs
 - Designated, sustainable funding for LGBTIQ+ community-controlled health organisations to provide direct service provision, harm reduction and health promotion programs.
 - Designated funding to train existing alcohol and other drugs services to work with LGBTIQ+ communities to ensure “no wrong door” approach to service access.
 - Fund a national targeted alcohol and other drug use awareness and education campaign.

