

Dear Secretariat

Thank you for the opportunity to provide feedback on the *Draft National Plan to End Violence against Women and Children 2022-2032*.

The next National Plan provides an historic opportunity for LGBTIQ people to be meaningfully included in the shared effort to end family, domestic and sexual violence.

We are pleased that the Draft National Plan commits to ending all forms of gender-based violence, including ensuring that LGBTIQ people of all genders are safe at home, work, school, in the community and online. However, we are concerned that recent leadership and action in this space has not been adequately reflected and included in the Draft National Plan.

The first National Plan provided the critical foundation necessary for Australia to become a leader in the global effort to end gender-based violence. However, this Plan (and associated Action Plans) did not provide the focus and action necessary to reduce the significant levels of violence experienced by LGBTIQ people in Australia.

Over the last 12 years, critical advancements have nevertheless been made through collective and collaborative effort. This has included:

- Advancements in research that have provided a clearer picture of prevalence and patterns of violence experienced by LGBTIQ communities
- Innovation in programs at state level addressing gaps in service systems and capacity to provide LGBTIQ-inclusive services
- Critical steps forward in understanding the drivers of family violence experienced by LGBTIQ communities

We have also witnessed the growing partnership between LGBTIQ organisations and the family violence and gender equity sectors, and a groundswell of support for a collaborative approach to ending violence against women and violence experienced by LGBTIQ communities. This is further evidenced in the diversity of organisations that have supported and endorsed this submission.

In particular, the shared and overlapping drivers of violence against women and LGBTIQ communities are clearly recognised in the latest edition of *Change the story*, and were identified as a priority for inquiry by the United Nations Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women in her [inaugural statement to the UN General Assembly](#).

It is critical that the next National Plan reflects and builds upon existing progress and outlines the next steps necessary to ending gender-based violence for everyone. The following recommendations provide the details necessary for achieving this.

Prevalence and patterns of violence

The National Plan must include existing knowledge about LGBTIQ experiences of violence, while recognising the need for more research to improve knowledge.

LGBTIQ people experience violence within their intimate partner relationships at similar levels to the rest of the population, with bisexual women and trans and gender diverse people reporting higher rates. LGBTIQ people also experience significant violence within their families of origin (particularly as children, young people and young adults). Alarming levels of sexual violence are reported by LGBTIQ communities, particularly trans and gender diverse people.

Much of this violence is perpetrated by cisgender men, and gendered dynamics also play out within LGBTIQ relationships – through exploitation of power imbalances, and the normalisation of masculinised cultures of aggression and violence. More research is needed to understand these dynamics and to target prevention and service responses.

Inclusion is critical to addressing the silencing of LGBTIQ experiences of intimate partner and family violence, as well as sexual violence.

See [Pride in Prevention](#), [Private Lives 3](#), [Victorian Population Health Survey](#) and [Trans and Gender Diverse Sexual Health Survey](#).

Drivers of violence

The National Plan must acknowledge the shared and overlapping drivers of violence against women and violence experienced by LGBTIQ communities.

The drivers of violence for LGBTIQ communities are rigid gender norms, as well as cisnormativity and heteronormativity – i.e. the ideas that ‘male’, ‘female’ and ‘heterosexual’ are the only ‘natural’ and ‘normal’ ways to be and that there is something wrong with bodies, identities and relationships that sit outside of these norms.

There is significant overlap between the drivers of violence against lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex and queer (LGBTIQ) people and the drivers of violence against women... In particular, rigid, binary and hierarchical constructions of sex, gender and sexuality, have a significant impact on the violence that women and LGBTIQ people and communities experience.

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Addressing homophobia is a vital part of dismantling harmful norms around masculinity and promoting greater choice and equality in terms of social roles and family structures.

Acknowledgement of the shared drivers of violence lays the basis for effective and mutually reinforcing work to prevent gender-based violence. A dedicated national framework for the prevention of LGBTIQ experiences of violence is a critical next step to guide practice, build shared understandings, and enable effective approaches and their evaluation.

See [Pride in Prevention](#) and [Change the story](#).

Focus Areas under the National Pillars

The National Plan must recognise the significant barriers to reporting and service access experienced by LGBTIQ communities.

This includes lack of individual and community recognition of experiences as violence, as well as hesitancy in reporting to police and exclusion experienced when accessing family, domestic and sexual violence services.

In line with an intersectional approach, it is important that work to address violence against LGBTIQ people is led by organisations and individuals within those communities, informed by specific and nuanced frameworks and gender transformative approaches, and includes actions to address the connections between relevant drivers, particularly the relationship between rigid gender roles, socially dominant forms of masculinity, heteronormativity, cisnormativity, and homophobia.

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The National Plan must recognise the role of LGBTIQ community-controlled services as well as the need for capacity-building of the broader service system to ensure affirmative and accessible services. LGBTIQ communities want access to both, and service systems must work together to meet the diverse needs of victim-survivors.

Recognition of barriers to reporting and service access is the first step to addressing the exclusion and marginalisation of LGBTIQ people experiencing violence.

See [Pride in Prevention](#) and [Private Lives 3](#).

Targets and outcomes

The National Plan must specifically commit to measuring and improving the experiences of LGBTIQ communities experiencing violence.

The lack of inclusion of LGBTIQ experiences within national surveys and service data reporting systems means that most proposed measures, indicators and targets in the National Plan do not capture LGBTIQ experiences.

While existing research strongly indicates the size and significance of the problem for LGBTIQ communities, gaps in research and data are a major barrier. Dedicated research and reform to survey instruments and data frameworks are required to even begin to track progress over time.

Significant investment for LGBTIQ communities across prevention, service capacity-building, research and data is required to ensure that the Outcomes Framework is relevant to achieving the stated Vision of the National Plan in terms of ending all forms of gender-based violence.

Explicit statements of commitment and practical actions are vital for LGBTIQ communities to both see themselves reflected in national policy, and to begin to trust that actions across the National Pillars will be meaningful for them into the future.

Terminology and definitions

The National Plan must include terminology and definitions that are inclusive and owned by the communities they seek to describe.

The National Plan clearly defines gender-based violence as inclusive of LGBTIQ people of all genders. This is vital and consistent with both contemporary international approaches, as well as the new edition of [Change the story](#).

The Glossary is also highlighted as a key part of the Plan. However, many of the definitions of gender in the Glossary are unnecessarily binary and use outdated language and understandings of sex and gender. In addition, the terms and definitions in the Glossary relevant to LGBTIQ communities are based on significantly outdated resources. All require significant revision and/or consultation with the communities they seek to define (particularly trans and gender diverse people and people with intersex variations).

Inclusive language reflects inclusive understandings, and LGBTIQ communities must be able to see themselves in the way they are described.

For information about the meaning behind the acronym LGBTIQ, as well as contemporary terms in usage, see Rainbow Health Australia's resource [What does LGBTIQ mean?](#), [Private Lives 3](#), [Writing Themselves in 4](#) and ACON's [Transhub](#) resources.

Thank you for again for the opportunity to support the development of the next National Plan.

Yours sincerely,



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Director, Rainbow Health Australia

The following organisations have supported and endorsed this submission:

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| A Gender Agenda | Meridian |
| ACON | National Women's Safety Alliance |
| Australian Federation of AIDS Organisations | Safe and Equal |
| Centre for Excellence in Child And Family Welfare | Safe Steps |
| Domestic Violence NSW | Star Health |
| Equality Australia | Switchboard |
| Full Stop Australia | Thorne Harbour Health |
| Gender Equity Victoria | WIRE |
| LGBTIQ+ Health Australia | Women's Health Victoria |
| Multicultural Centre for Women's Health | Women's Legal Services Victoria |
| | Zoe Belle Gender Collective |

