

# Whole of Government LGBTIQ Strategy

Submission – Carers Victoria  
JULY 2020

# Contents

1

LGBTIQ  
Carer Facts

2

Recommendations

4

How does the government  
ensure that carer services are  
LGBTIQ inclusive?

8

Recommendations for  
improving availability and  
access to appropriate respite  
for LGBTIQ Carers

9

How does the government  
better support LGBTIQ carers  
in the community?

10

Further organisational  
suggestions

## Introduction

Carers Victoria is proud to be making this contribution to the Victorian Whole of Government LGBTIQ Strategy (the Strategy). For many years, Carers Victoria has worked to ensure that our carer services are LGBTIQ inclusive and that LGBTIQ carers feel supported in the community. This has recently been recognised through Rainbow Tick accreditation.

The limited research that is available suggests that LGBTIQ people are more likely to be carers than non LGBTIQ people.<sup>1</sup> In a national survey of the health and wellbeing of 3,800 gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender Australians, more than one quarter of

respondents identified as carers.<sup>2</sup> Previous Carers Victoria research into the challenges LGBTIQ carers face compared to non-LGBTIQ carers suggests they are more likely to experience high rates of discrimination and victimisation, less likely to access any form of service and must manage heteronormative assumptions about their lives.<sup>3</sup> This can result in LGBTIQ carers seeking support late and through crisis.

LGBTIQ carers may not have family who can support them, so they rely on other community members, friends, or partners to provide informal respite.<sup>4</sup>

1 Karen Fredriksen-Goldsen, "Resilience and disparities among lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender older adults", in *Integrating lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender older adults into aging policy and practice*, ed. Robert Hudson (Washington: National Academy on an Aging Society, 2011), 3-7.

2 Willam Leonard et al., "Private Lives 2: The second national survey of the health and wellbeing of gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender (GLBT) Australians," *The Australian Research Centre in Sex, Health & Society Monograph Series*, no. 86 (2012), La Trobe University: Melbourne

3 Jennifer Martin, Meredith Butler, Anne Muldowney, and Gabriel Aleksandrs, "Impacts of regulatory processes on the experiences of carers of people in LGBTIQ communities living with mental illness or experiencing a mental health crisis," in *Social Science and Medicine* 230, (2019), 30-36.

4 Catherine Barrett and Pauline Cramer, "An extra degree of difficulty: An evidence-based resource exploring the experiences and needs of older LGBTIQ carers and the carers of older LGBTIQ people," *Australian Research Centre in Sex, Health and Society*, (Melbourne: La Trobe University, 2015)

# LGBTIQ Carer Facts

Many lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex and queer (LGBTIQ) people care for a partner, friend or family member. This may be someone living with a disability, mental health challenge, chronic or terminal illness or an older person. LGBTIQ carers and carers of LGBTIQ people need affordable inclusive services to support their caring role.



LGBTIQ carers have diverse experiences, religious, cultural and linguistic backgrounds and 'L-G-B-T-I-Q communities'.

LGBTIQ carers support family and friends with

**32%**

aged related needs

**16%**

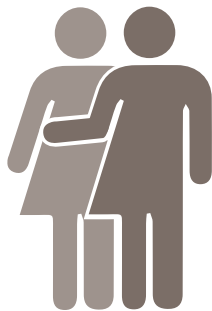
long term illness

**13%**

disability

**9%**

illness, accident or surgery



Between  
**15-30%**  
of LGBTIQ people are currently in caring roles



Around  
**33%**  
of LGBTIQ carers say being LGBTIQ affects how and when they access support services



## Recommendations

This submission contains detailed recommendations from research and consultations Carers Victoria has had with carers from LGBTIQ communities. The following comprise a summary of the most pertinent recommendations. Implementation of these recommendations would ensure that people from LGBTIQ communities feel safe in accessing carer service providers as well as increasing broader awareness of the needs and the supports available for carers in LGBTIQ communities.

**“We need inclusive and affirming services that value, celebrate and support LGBTIQ carer and carers of LGBTIQ people.”**



### RECOMMENDATION 1

Staff in carer service providers to receive training in LGBTIQ inclusion



### RECOMMENDATION 2

Carer services to employ LGBTIQ staff to work as advocates for LGBTIQ clients



### RECOMMENDATION 3

Facilitate new and support existing Carer Support groups for LGBTIQ carers



### RECOMMENDATION 4

Resources, funding and promotion provided to increase uptake of flexible respite in LGBTIQ communities



### RECOMMENDATION 5

Training to be provided to respite service providers on LGBTIQ inclusion



### RECOMMENDATION 6

Events created specifically for LGBTIQ carers



### RECOMMENDATION 7

Staff in LGBTIQ specific services to receive training on the experiences and needs of carers



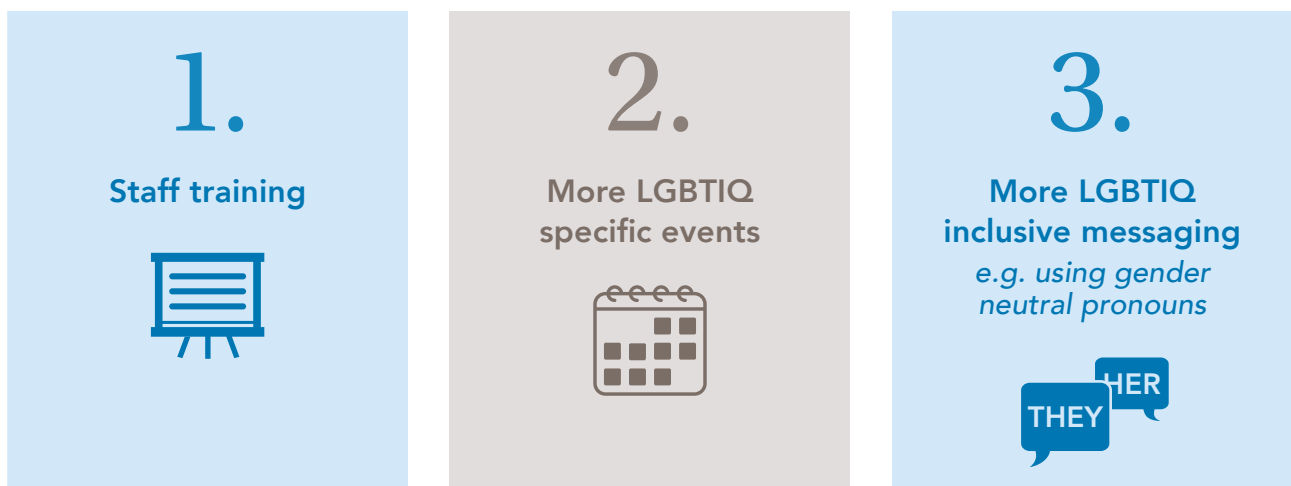
### RECOMMENDATION 8

Communications published to increase the awareness of carer services amongst LGBTIQ communities

# How does the government ensure that carer services are LGBTIQ inclusive?

In 2019 Carers Victoria conducted a series of consultations with LGBTIQ carers to learn about their experiences of accessing support from carer service providers and what carer services can do to ensure that they are demonstrating inclusive practice.

## THE MOST IMPORTANT MEASURES TOWARDS MAKING A SERVICE INCLUSIVE WERE RANKED AS BELOW:



LGBTIQ carers explained the extra burden of having to educate service providers on their own identities. Often services are segregated using a gender binary which exclude gender diverse carers who do not identify as male or female, or can exclude carers with 'non-normative' gender expression.

Stakeholders emphasised that the first point of contact to a service is often gendered which dissuades carers from accessing services at first contact. For example, intake forms only include options of male or female, respite services which are marketed for "husbands and wives" or activities which segregate based on gender such as Men's Sheds.

It was common that LGBTIQ carers experienced pressure to go "back in the closet" in order to safely access services. This presents a cycle of invisibility for LGBTIQ carers as services don't think they have LGBTIQ clients so make no effort to be inclusive, and LGBTIQ carers do not feel safe to come out.

The LGBTIQ carer consultations identified specific discrimination people within the LGBTIQ communities continue to face when accessing carer services. Most participants had stories of discrimination they had faced in their lives, which continue to influence whether or not they access services.

The mind map to the right provides an outline of all the content participants provided.



# What makes a service LGBTIQ inclusive?

## SERVICE DELIVERY

- › Flexible and adaptable service provision
- › LGBTIQ specific programs
- › Social connection with others in LGBTIQ community
- › LGBTIQ support groups

## PROCESSES

- › Having my identity reflected in documentation
- › Diverse gender pronoun options on forms
- › Confidentiality
- › Communicating cultural safety
- › Opportunities for feedback and positive action

## VISIBILITY

- › Displayed messages of inclusion
- › Rainbow flags, stickers and lanyards
- › Pronoun pins
- › Attending LGBTIQ events like Pride March
- › Active stances on LGBTIQ issues
- › Relevant promotion

## STAFF

- › Friendly and non-judgemental
- › Being celebrated and welcomed in all parts of my identity
- › Not assuming I'm heterosexual
- › 'Not phased' reactions to name /gender/pronouns
- › Staff who can advocate for me
- › Staff supported with ongoing training
- › Staff using empowering dialogue
- › Staff receiving information about transition that is positive and inclusive

The table below outlines detailed feedback received from participants and informs Carers Victoria's recommendations in this submission

## DETAILED FEEDBACK FROM CONSULTATION PARTICIPANTS

Barrier to access services	Required Action
Lack of understanding from staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>› Where practicable, have LGBTIQ workers providing specific LGBTIQ services e.g. LGBTIQ contract counsellors</li> <li>› Provide regular staff training and develop a training schedule for ongoing professional development</li> <li>› Language guides and scripts for staff</li> </ul>
Assumptions about sexuality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>› Provide training for staff in avoiding assumptions about relationships and the gender of a client's partner</li> <li>› Ensure inclusive intake processes (i.e. not asking about relationship status), documents, forms and communication collateral</li> </ul>
Assumptions about gender	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>› Provide pronoun training</li> <li>› Develop language guides for staff in order to avoid using gendered words</li> <li>› Provide trans and gender diverse training</li> <li>› Ensure inclusive intake processes occur</li> </ul>
Assumptions about intersex status	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>› Provide training for staff about heteronormativity, i.e. making assumptions based on normative ideas of 'male' and 'female' bodies</li> <li>› Provide intersex specific training</li> <li>› Ensure inclusive intake processes occur</li> </ul>
Ongoing discrimination	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>› Researching if referral services are inclusive before making referrals</li> <li>› Actively recruit for LGBTIQ inclusive employees, include inclusive statements in job advertisements</li> <li>› Employ specific LGBTIQ staff to work as advocates for LGBTIQ clients when navigating the system, educating colleagues and researching services to ensure referrals are inclusive</li> </ul>
Lack of knowledge of services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>› Advertise services to the LGBTIQ communities in specific publications</li> </ul>



Barrier to access services	Required Action
Lack of trust	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>› Ensure organisational representation at LGBTIQ events, such as Midsumma and Pride march</li> <li>› Develop and maintain LGBTIQ stakeholder relationships</li> <li>› Promote stories/case studies about LGBTIQ carers who access our services</li> <li>› Release statements of support regarding relevant issues</li> </ul>
Societal discrimination	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>› Issue advocacy statements on relevant LGBTIQ issues and topics</li> <li>› Present at conference representing LGBTIQ carer interests</li> <li>› Help other organisations in achieving Rainbow Tick accreditation</li> </ul>
Lack of cultural safety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>› Ensure all communications are inclusive e.g. diverse pronoun use in publications</li> </ul>
Lack of support from family and isolation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>› Define care relationships more flexibly to include and capture chosen family, housemates etc.</li> <li>› Systemic advocacy for increased funding and recognition</li> <li>› Attending LGBTIQ events to connect with communities</li> <li>› Facilitate new and support existing Carer Support groups for LGBTIQ carers</li> <li>› Hold events and social opportunities for LGBTIQ carers to connect</li> <li>› Deliver LGBTIQ education sessions on self-care</li> </ul>
Lack of visibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>› Ensure inclusive communications, including gender neutral language and pictures of same gender couples</li> <li>› Specific services for LGBTIQ carers to connect such as LGBTIQ support groups or LGBTIQ carer events</li> </ul>
Reluctance to access services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>› Provide additional support to navigate the system</li> <li>› Advertise more broadly in LGBTIQ publications, including definitions of 'carer'</li> </ul>

### RECOMMENDATION 1

Staff in carer service providers to receive training in LGBTIQ inclusion

### RECOMMENDATION 2

Carer services to employ LGBTIQ staff to work as advocates for LGBTIQ clients

### RECOMMENDATION 3

Facilitate new and support existing Carer Support groups for LGBTIQ carers

# Recommendations for improving availability and access to appropriate respite for LGBTIQ Carers

Respite is a term used which covers a range of supports offered to carers and people receiving care with the aim of supporting and sustaining the care relationship. However, respite is often misunderstood. The following recommendations were developed from research Carers Victoria undertook to find out what would be required for LGBTIQ carers to increase their use of respite services.

- › A campaign reframing 'respite' to help people understand the word and increase awareness of the range of services available.
- › More flexible respite options, for example:
  - program guidelines which include non-traditional forms of respite provided by LGBTIQ specific services
  - flexible intake procedures that allow chosen family and multiple partners to access services
  - pet friendly services
- › Recognition and specific inclusion of LGBTIQ carers in the development of any family and carer strategy, framework, program and service.

- › Peer support services for specific LGBTIQ groups, for example, intersex carers.
- › Training and resources for service provider staff including:
  - Why inclusive practice is important, and why it is not sufficient to treat LGBTIQ communities "like everyone else"
  - Definitions of the acronym (emphasis on trans, gender diverse and intersex)
  - Understanding that LGBTIQ communities are not a homogenous group including information on the difference between sex, gender and sexuality
  - Inclusive language training, including correct pronoun use
  - Guidelines on inclusive communications and intake processes
  - Guidelines on how to run inclusive services such as planned activity groups

## RECOMMENDATION 4

Resources, funding and promotion provided to increase uptake of flexible respite in LGBTIQ communities

## RECOMMENDATION 5

Training to be provided to respite service providers on LGBTIQ inclusion



## How does the government better support LGBTIQ carers in the community?

The top three suggestions raised in the consultations for supporting LGBTIQ carers in the community were:

1. Support groups for LGBTIQ carers
2. Events and social opportunities for LGBTIQ carers
3. LGBTIQ carer education sessions on self-care

### **RECOMMENDATION 6**

Events created specifically for LGBTIQ carers

Within the LGBTIQ community, experiences of social isolation are exacerbated by a lack of services catering to their specific needs or being non-inclusive in their service delivery. As stated previously, this increases experiences of discrimination and can delay LGBTIQ carers accessing services which in turn increases social isolation.

Peer support opportunities which cater specifically to LGBTIQ groups are an important means of building connections. It must be acknowledged that differences exist within the LGBTIQ community and they should not be conflated as one homogenous group.

Many members of LGBTIQ communities prefer to access support from LGBTIQ specific services. These services require training on the needs and experiences of carers to help them to identify and support carers who may be attending.

### **RECOMMENDATION 7**

Staff in LGBTIQ specific services to receive training on the experiences and needs of carers

### **RECOMMENDATION 8**

Communications published to increase the awareness of carer services amongst LGBTIQ communities



## Further organisational suggestions

- › More regional support
- › Need for broader advocacy for LGBTQ issues
- › Ensuring intersex is not left out
- › Specific LGBTQ support workers to help with navigating services
- › More communication about what services exist for the LGBTQ community
- › Importance of having staff who identify as LGBTQ to build trust
- › Avoid gendered activities and communications
- › Flexible services
- › Address fear of discrimination

**“Having a dedicated worker gives me opportunity to discuss any concerns. A go to person is paramount together with agencies to contact.”**

Implementation of our eight recommendations will ensure that people from LGBTIQ communities feel safe in accessing carer service providers, and increase awareness of the needs and the supports available for carers in LGBTIQ communities.

## For further information, please contact

**Scott Walker**  
Chief Executive Officer  
Carers Victoria

T: 03 9396 9509

M: 0414 225 096

E: [scott.walker@carersvictoria.org.au](mailto:scott.walker@carersvictoria.org.au)

Level 1, 37 Albert Street  
(PO Box 2204)  
Footscray VIC 3011

[www.carersvictoria.org.au](http://www.carersvictoria.org.au)

This submission was prepared  
by Carers Victoria's Policy Team

© Carers Victoria 2020

This work is copyright. Apart from any use as permitted  
under the Copyright Act 1968, all other rights are reserved.



Carers Victoria acknowledges the  
traditional owners of this land and pays  
respect to elders both past and present.