

Rainbow Futures WA surveyed almost 600 WA LGBTIQ+ community members and allies in 2024, who overwhelmingly reiterated that law reform is important to them and that government services are still in desperate need of improvement.

Our 2020 survey identified these same issues. At the time we concluded they could only be addressed by a comprehensive whole-of-government approach. Since then, huge strides have been made toward legislative change and work has progressed on a WA LGBTIQ+ Inclusion Strategy.

Law Reform: Alleviating Harm

Strong support remains for the government to work with LGBTIQ+ communities to urgently address the following policies, practices, and laws that cause us harm:

- Strengthening **anti-discrimination, hate speech and vilification laws** to protect all LGBTIQ+ people and remove exemptions for faith-based organisations
- Ending so-called "**conversion therapy**" and similar practices that seek to change or suppress sexual orientation or gender identity, ensuring support for survivors.
- Ensuring trans and gender diverse people can easily update their gender markers on official documents through **self-identification**.
- Prohibiting **deferrable medical interventions** performed on people born with intersex variations without their personal informed consent.
- Ensuring LGBTIQ+ people are not discriminated against in **surrogacy laws**.

A **community controlled and peer-led** approach must be prioritised in filling service gaps and supporting community members to navigate discriminatory systems. Policy changes and other initiatives must be viewed through an **intersectional** lens, with a commitment to building safe and supportive environments for everyone, including LGBTIQ+ people who are Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, people of colour and people with disability.

Service Improvement: Supporting Equity

Government services remain inconsistent in the provision of safe and adequate services for LGBTIQ+ communities. In particular, there is an urgent need for:

- Targeted mental health support, including peer support and mentoring services
- Accessible, affordable, and timely gender-affirming healthcare
- The reintroduction and ongoing funding of the Safe Schools Program
- LGBTIQ+ content in all fields of study, particularly in health and teaching
- Targeted housing and inclusive requirements for homelessness funding
- Initiatives that address the impacts of historical trauma for LGBTIQ+ older people
- Support for carers of LGBTIQ+ people who are often LGBTIQ+ themselves
- Inclusive, consistent and secure data collection
- Safe spaces and facilities, particularly in regional and remote areas
- Sexuality and relationship supports for people with disability

Key Issues

Many LGBTIQ+ Australians live happy and healthy lives. However, the LGBTIQ+ population is overrepresented among those with poorer mental health due to stigma, discrimination, abuse, violence, and exclusion.

Violence & Discrimination

Experiences of sexual abuse is common among bi+ women in relationships with men. GBQ+ men experience high rates of family violence, yet disclosure rates remain low. LGBTIQ+ people with experiences of sexual assault or discrimination are more likely to struggle with alcohol, particularly those with psychological distress or a history of homelessness. Racially minoritised LGBTIQ+ people are more likely to experience racism than gender or sexuality-based discrimination, highlighting the complexity of intersecting marginalisation.

Mental Health Disparities

Over 80% of young LGBTIQ+ people report suicidality or self-harm, yet more than a quarter have never accessed mental health support. Older LGBTI+ people most frequently experience higher levels of psychological distress and suicidality if they are trans and gender diverse or have recently experienced unfair treatment due to their sexuality and/or gender identity. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander LGBTIQ+ people experience even higher rates of psychological distress and may also be excluded from cultural practices.

Healthcare & Cultural Safety

Options for LGBTIQ+ inclusive mainstream healthcare services or peer-led services are limited. Only 1/3 of trans and gender diverse adults can easily access gender-affirming care, which significantly reduces distress and suicidal ideation. There remains a critical gap in culturally appropriate healthcare for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander LGBTIQ+ people, with trans and gender diverse youth reporting negative experiences at Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations and general health services.

Economic Disadvantage & Housing Insecurity

Trans and gender diverse, bi+, and disabled people, cisgender women, and those in non-metropolitan areas face economic disadvantage and limited opportunities. This is likely due to systemic discrimination impacting workforce participation. Homelessness is most common among trans and gender diverse people, bi+ people, and cisgender women, with key risk factors including disability, past violence, and struggles with alcohol.

Reference

Amos, N., Lim, G., Buckingham, P., Lin, A., Liddel-Hunt, S., Mooney-Somers, J., Bourne, A., on behalf of the Private Lives 3, Writing Themselves In 4, SWASH, Trans Pathways, Walkern Katatdjin, and Pride and Pandemic teams (2023). *Rainbow Realities: In-depth analyses of large-scale LGBTQ+ health and wellbeing data in Australia*. Melbourne, Australia: Australian Research Centre in Sex, Health and Society, La Trobe University