

# LGBTIQ – housing journeys

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LGBTIQ+ Housing Journeys:

**Transforming mainstream services:  
Progress, challenges, and the LGBTIQ+  
Inclusive Practice Guide for  
Homelessness and Housing Sectors in  
Australia.**

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# 1. Background

- › Significant work on LGBTIQ+ homelessness internationally.
- › Important early research and advocacy in Australia (VIC, NSW, QLD, WA)<sup>1</sup>.
- › Evidence:
  - › Heightened risk factors linked to structural drivers (stigma, discrimination, minority stress)
  - › Specific needs (e.g. safety, health), barriers, and invisibility<sup>3</sup>
  - › Intersectional approach
  - › Lack of understanding, training, and specialised responses
  - › Specific guidance needed.

<sup>1</sup> E.g. Bletsas & Oakley (2013); Desmond (2008); Hillier et al. (1997); Irwin et al. (1997); Maberley & Coffey (2005); PICYS (2002); Twenty10 (2007).

<sup>2</sup> McNair, Andrews, Parkinson & Dempsey (2017: 41).

<sup>3</sup> Abramovich (2016).



***“I would much prefer to sleep on the street than go to a homeless shelter”***

— Interview participant<sup>2</sup>

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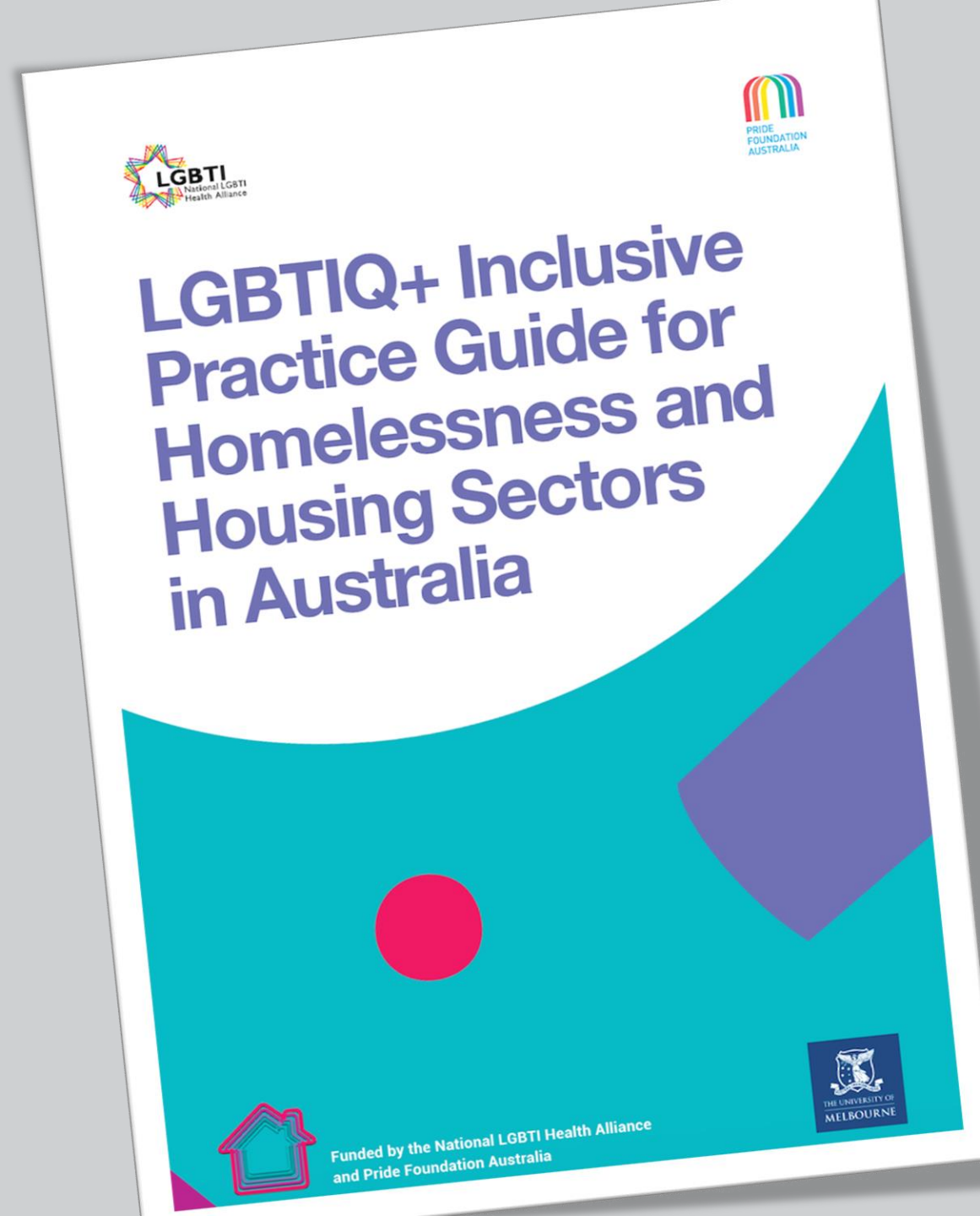
## 2. Overview of the guide

*“The following guide is a rich resource that will enable the sectors to upskill and be more confident in working with our communities. They will assist in working towards our ultimate goal – that wherever our communities access services, there are no wrong doors and that every service is culturally safe”<sup>4</sup>*

- › Online, PDF, and factsheets
- › <http://www.lgbtihomeless.org.au/lgbtiq-inclusive-practice-guide/>

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

<sup>4</sup> Forward by Nicky Bath (Andrews & McNair, 2020: 4).



This guide was developed through consultation with two reference groups spanning all states and territories, including experts within the LGBTIQ+ community, and experts from the housing and homelessness sectors. The depth and reach of this guide attests to the great wealth of knowledge, expertise, and commitment among the 48 people who contributed. The authors sincerely appreciate the significant contribution and support of every person involved. Those who wished to be acknowledged are listed below.

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In addition to the generous input from those on our reference groups, the framework has been informed by the Rainbow Tick Standards for LGBTI-inclusive practice established by GLHV@ARCSHS in Victoria, and other best practice models and reports from Australia and overseas. We would like to acknowledge, furthermore, that this guide has benefitted from the input of many workshop participants at the 2017 Victorian Homelessness Conference, the 2017 YACVic Conference, and the national Health in Difference Conference in 2018.

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## Guide Expert Reference Group Members:



# SECTION 1

				
Disclosure and confidentiality	Respectful communication	Cultural safety	Discrimination and harassment	Specific support, referral, and advocacy

*Summary*

*How*

*Examples*

*Why*

## Scripts that workers can adapt



"It is really important for us to collect good information about the people that need services like ours. Part of that includes representing the different experiences and needs you have, and the communities or populations you are part of. We are a service that is inclusive of LGBTIQ+ people, so it is important for us to reflect this when collecting information. These are some questions that help us show that."

"We know that everyone is different, so I'm going to ask a few questions about how you identify, such as your cultural background and sexual orientation. You don't have to answer these questions if you don't want to, and I want you to know that we keep this information confidential and only ask to ensure that we can be respectful of who you are."

"The staff at this service have been trained in the importance of confidentiality, and not revealing personal or private information about clients to other services without permission, unless there is a legal obligation to do so. Please let me know if there are people or agencies that you would prefer not to know about your gender identity, intersex variation, or sexual orientation, or if there is a particular way you would like to be known to others."

"Thank you for letting me know that. It is helpful so that I can provide the best service."

## Giving directions to the toilets



"We have gender-specific toilets on the left, and an all genders toilet on the right that is also wheelchair accessible".

"The toilets are located at the back of the building. All of our toilets are gender-inclusive".

## Navigating safety and accommodation with a gender diverse person



"You let me know that you are gender diverse. You might be aware that all of our crisis accommodation options in the area are binary gender specific. Can we talk about which option would work best for you (for instance, a male only or female only facility), and if there is anything else you might need to feel supported?"

Note that this should be discussed in a confidential setting and consider a thorough risk assessment.

## Providing specific support



### Some examples might include supporting LGBTIQ+ people to:

Engage mainstream services that can provide PrEP or PEP for HIV prevention<sup>17</sup> without being judged or poorly treated;

Access specific health care, such as hormones and surgery, to medically affirm their gender or manage an intersex variation;

Refuse medical interventions if they prefer;

Change their identity documentation to affirm their gender;

Find LGBTIQ+ friendly legal services;

Find Facebook groups specifically for LGBTIQ+ people seeking housing in the private rental market;

Find churches, religious organisations, faith-affiliated support and advocacy groups;

Find counselling and groups where families can get support (for example, PFLAG);

Find support groups for international students;

Find support groups for refugees;

Find bisexual support groups;

Find other support groups for gender identities similar to their own;

Find a range of supports in their local area, or other regions, online, or on the phone as required;

Have a gender-affirmation plan in their school or workplace;

Develop a safety plan for disclosing to family or community members, or navigating confidentiality and anonymity concerns, if desired, and

Find social, legal, and financial support for victims of family violence or intimate partner violence.

# SECTION 2

				
Organisational policies	Procedures and facilities	Consumer participation	Staff training	Data capture and storage

*Summary*

*How*

*Examples*

*Why*



## Consumer participation



A new crisis accommodation facility was being developed. In order to hear what might work best for LGBTIQ+ people with a range of experiences, a large roundtable was held. People who attended were reimbursed for their time. A survey was also conducted. By engaging LGBTIQ+ community organisations and people with lived experience of homelessness in this discussion, the service was able to gain a more informed view about what organisational change was needed and how best to support LGBTIQ+ clients within the new development.

Based on example from VincentCare

## Interview questions including multiple marginal identities



"What barriers might a person who identifies as [identity/experience] face in accessing a Specialist Homelessness Service?"

"Many different people access [organisation]. Tell me about a situation when you worked effectively with a person who had a previous experience of discrimination (for example, on the basis of gender, sexuality, race, ethnicity, Indigeneity, or disability), how did you build trust and rapport?"

What to look for:

- Awareness and understanding of specific experiences of discrimination;
- Able to identify barriers to service and access. For example, discrimination, misgendering, facilities, previous experiences of harassment or violence;
- Non-judgemental approach, and
- Acknowledgement of the importance of respectful communication, confidentiality, cultural safety, privacy, and appropriate referrals.

Adapted from Launch Housing

## Code of conduct



"Employees must at all times maintain a respectful and appropriate relationship with all clients of this service. They shall deliver quality, inclusive services, regardless of the Resident's gender identity, age, ethnicity, cultural background, disability, religion, sexual orientation and/or professional background.

Discrimination, harassment, any displays of homophobia, biphobia, transphobia and/or bullying of any kind, will not be tolerated within the workplace, and will be dealt with through the performance management and/or existing disciplinary system. Our aim is always the delivery of inclusive and respectful care and services, to all, including people from the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, gender diverse and intersex (LGBTI) communities".

Adapted from the Lifeview Code of Conduct.

## Inclusive data collection



### Sensitive data systems and response options

- Ensure data is gathered in a way that respects confidentiality, and that the individual understands how and when information could be shared with other services (Irlam 2012).
- Provide training for service delivery staff in how to ask questions sensitively, and in a way that reassures the person that information is being collected to provide the best service.
- Ensure data is stored that reflects the person's name and gender that they identify with.
- Forms and data entry fields should include a range of options and cultural variations, as well as a "prefer to self-describe" free text box. This applies to sexual orientation, gender, pronouns, titles, and relationships.

- Include intersex variation as a separate question, include a description when asking, and do not conflate with sexual orientation or gender.
- Include "prefer not to say" and "don't know" response options.
- Advocate for change where prescribed databases are not inclusive.

### Identifying trends

- Give staff the opportunity to provide feedback during supervision about any issues arising in data capture.
- Monitor data capture over time to ensure quality, accuracy, and inclusiveness of fields.
- Identify and report trends, and implement improvement plans in response to changes over time.

## Whole-of-organisation training



Family Access Network (FAN) provides a range of support, such as transitional housing and referrals, for young people at risk of homelessness in Victoria, including those who identify as LGBTIQ+. LGBTIQ+ training continues to be a core competency requirement for staff at all levels within the organisation, and an integral part of orientation and recruitment processes. Training is guided by an overarching LGBTIQ Portfolio, and trends arising in LGBTIQ-specific data captured by this service (for example, increasing numbers of trans clients accessing the service prompted whole-of-organisation trans-focused staff training).

# 3. Where are we now?



# Further Reading

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# Thank you

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