

LGBTIQ+ HOMELESSNESS POSITION STATEMENT



Background

The links between mental health and homelessness are well known and these issues have significant impacts on LGBTIQ+ people. We also know there is a lack of supported accommodation and recovery options which address the high levels of distress among people with complex needs and who have lived experience of intersectional identities (e.g. diverse sexual/gender/race/culture and faith identities).

drummond street's queerspace acknowledge and welcome emerging initiatives that aim to improve access to housing/homelessness services specifically for LGBTIQ+ communities. However, **responding to the most at risk remains difficult due to:**

- Accessing multiple services to meet complex health and housing needs.
- Comorbidities not being assessed or responded to by single issue services (e.g. partner violence alongside mental illness and extreme social isolation).
- Impacts of behaviour and attitudes among other service users in mainstream settings (including violence and abuse in bed-based services)
- Insufficient availability of housing options generally.
- Poor help seeking experiences of, or poor homelessness sector responses to sexually or gender diverse populations ().
- Historic and current trauma experiences resulting in fears of mainstream services (e.g. institutional abuse)

Young trans and gender diverse clients (TGD) who are in (or recently left) the out of home care system, who have histories of family violence and/or complex trauma are particularly vulnerable. These young people have numerous needs and risks to both their physical and mental health. This in turn delays or hinders access to other supports.

Services that those most at risk may need simultaneously can include:

- Acute and sub-acute mental health systems
- Alcohol and other drug support/recovery systems,
- Intimate Partner and Family Violence services (IPFV)
- Family support and relationships services
- Youth services
- Disability services
- Legal Services

The Experience of LGBTIQ+ at Risk of Homelessness

People from LGBTIQ+ communities escaping IPV require supported short-term refuge options that address disconnection from both their family of origin (where this is appropriate); and, disconnection from LGBTIQ+ communities alongside support addressing the impacts of complex trauma they may struggle with (1).

The following issues were identified by our client data:

- 23% of LGBTIQ+ clients who were experiencing (or at risk of) of homelessness had a risk alert for suicide.
- 43% of clients experiencing or at risk of homelessness were also experiencing family violence.
- Rates of self-harm and suicide risk alerts for LGBTIQ+ clients who were experiencing (or at risk of) homelessness was double that of clients without a homelessness risk or experience.

drummond street's queerspace support numerous people from LGBTIQ+ communities who experience complex poor mental health issues but are not eligible for the National Disability Insurance Scheme. Many approach emergency departments and acute mental health services only to be released back to short term homelessness services or unsafe home environments with limited supports for mental health recovery.

Improving outcomes for LGBTIQ+ people experiencing (or at risk of) homelessness

Sustainable long-term solutions are required to address the over-representation of LGBTIQ+ Victorian's among the homeless and rough sleeping populations. Additionally, services should be resourced through innovative funding models that provide the right services at the right time for the clients with the most complex need. These services should minimise burdens on any one system (e.g. mental health); and reflect and respond to the breadth of service demand and access points across multiple health and human service systems.

Recommendation for Response: Government explore innovative funding models and invest in cross-sector approaches (e.g. across housing/homelessness, AOD and mental health, child protection and family violence) to address unstable housing and homelessness among those most at risk within LGBTIQ+ populations.

Recommendation for Response: Government work directly with LGBTIQ+ services to develop initiatives and services responses who:

- Currently co-design and co-produce services with LGBTIQ+ communities
- Currently deliver services to those LGBTIQ+ people most at risk, and;
- Demonstrate established capacity to collect reportable disaggregated outcome data on each cohort that make up the different needs across the LGBTIQ+ spectrum.

Recommendation in Prevention: Government fund specialist parenting and family support services for LGBTIQ+ communities and increase the resilience of families where members are 'coming out' or going through the process of affirming their gender identity.

¹ Aleksandrs, G., 2019 'From the Personal to the Policy', (pgs. 23- 25) in Parity May 2019 Issue: Homelessness: Diversity and Inclusion, Vol 32 (Issue 3)