

Improving mental health for older LGBTI Australians

Created by the National Ageing Research Institute,
Australian Research Centre for Sex, Health and
Society at La Trobe University,
RMIT School of Mental Health

Funded by beyondblue



Project team & advisors

Advisory Committee

- Marie-Anne Schull – beyondblue
- Sally Goldner – Transgender Victoria
- Anneke Deutsch – Matrix Guild
- Sue Hendy – COTA
- Shelley Anderson – The Alfred
- Tony Briffa – Organisation Intersex International
- Jo Wasley – St Vincent's

La Trobe – Val's Café

- Catherine Barrett
- Caz Whyte

RMIT

- Phil Maude

NARI

- Briony Dow
- Jean Tinney
- Rachel Purchase (to June 2014)
- Melanie Joosten (from July 2014)

Summary

- Background
- Older LGBTI people – context
- Experiences of discrimination
- Important considerations for service providers

LGBTI

LGBTI stands for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex.

It is estimated that:

- 0.7 to 2.5 % of people identify as gay and lesbian
- 1.2 to 5.6 % of people identify as bisexual
- Up to 15 % of people surveyed in Australia reported some same sex experience or attraction.
- Approximately 0.3 % of the population identify as transgender.
- 0.05 to 4% of the population identify as intersex. Organisation Intersex International Australia recommend a figure of 1.7%.

Anxiety and depression

LGBT people have higher rates of depression and anxiety at all ages.

Research has shown:

- Depression, anxiety and substance abuse 1.5 more common for LGBT people.
- Lifelong prevalence of anxiety and depression 2–4 times more likely for gay men and lesbians.
- Older LGB people can be more anxious – particularly about the prospect of discrimination in aged care.

The study

- Aims
 - To explore the mental health experiences of older LGBTI people
 - To develop an education resource for students and aged care providers
- Interviewees -30 interviews, 14 gay men; 15 lesbians; 4 transgender; 1 hetero

Historical experiences of discrimination

- Criminalisation of homosexuality
- Legal discrimination against transgender people
- Violence and abuse
- Belief that homosexuality was morally wrong, abnormal and/or a mental illness
- Discrimination, including in workplace
- Rejection by family
- Rejection by religious institutions
- AIDS epidemic in the 1980s and associated loss and grief
- 'Normative' surgeries performed on intersex children

Contemporary experiences of discrimination

LGBTI people *fear* discrimination in aged care.

This means they often:

- Don't access or delay access to services
- When they do access services, they don't feel comfortable disclosing their sexuality, gender or intersex status.

Research shows that older LGBTI people do experience discrimination in aged care.

There is a need for LGBTI inclusive services for older people.

No Need to Straighten Up

Older LGBT people report living in fear of:

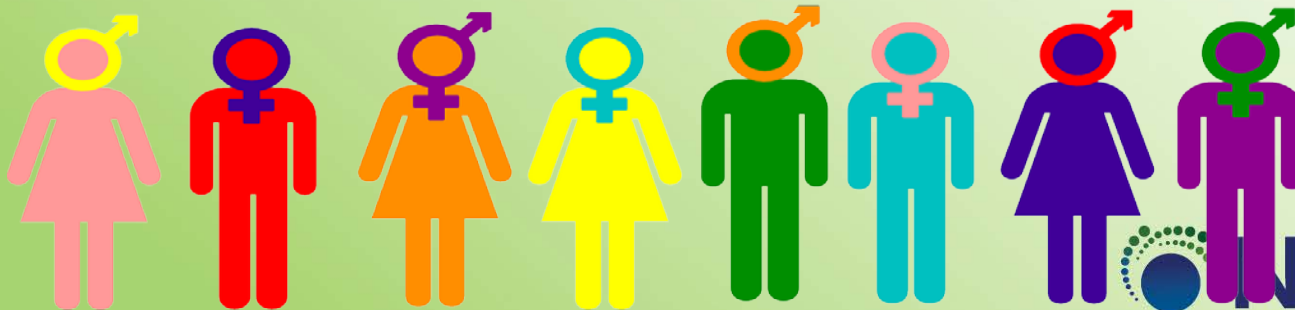
- ridicule
- bullying
- physical violence
- being outed
- losing the life they had built
- losing family
- people using their sexual orientation or gender identity against them.

History matters

- Awareness of historical experiences
- Hiding
- Fears of services
- Negotiating disclosure

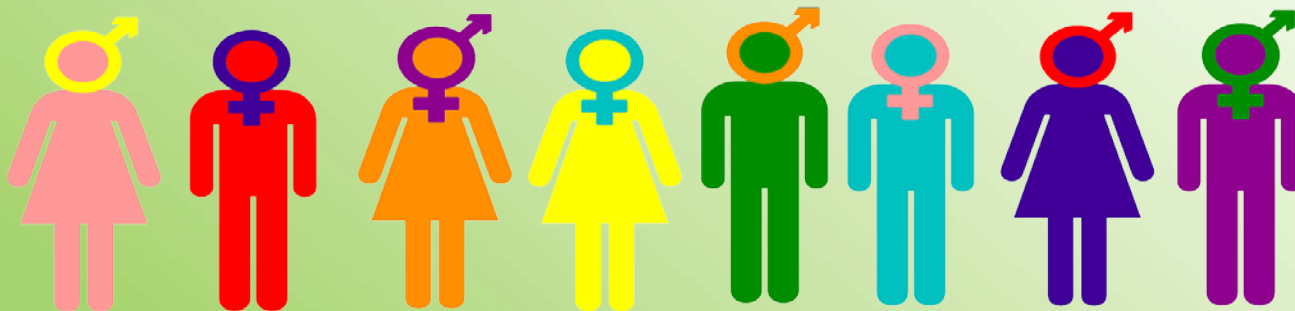
I have a friend who's a lesbian in a nursing home and she's afraid to admit that she's lesbian because of staff stigmatisation.

Trans woman, 65 years



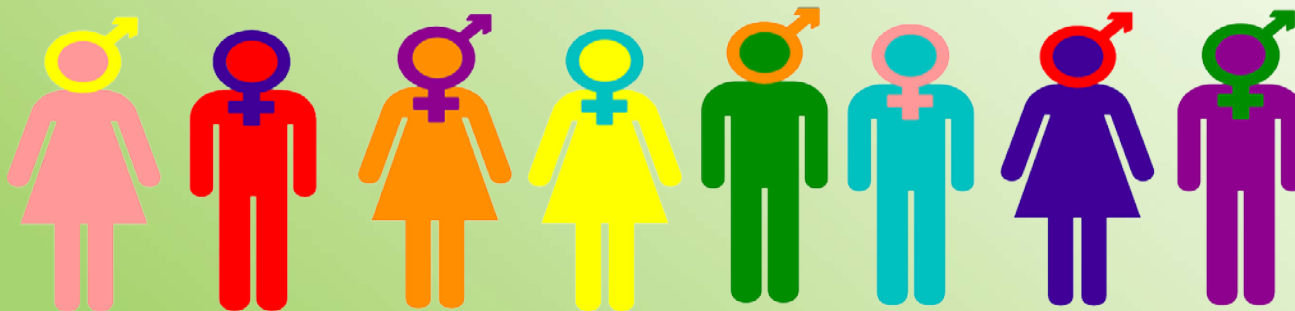
Health and wellbeing

- Depression and anxiety
- Individualised strategies
- Impact of living with serious illness, especially HIV

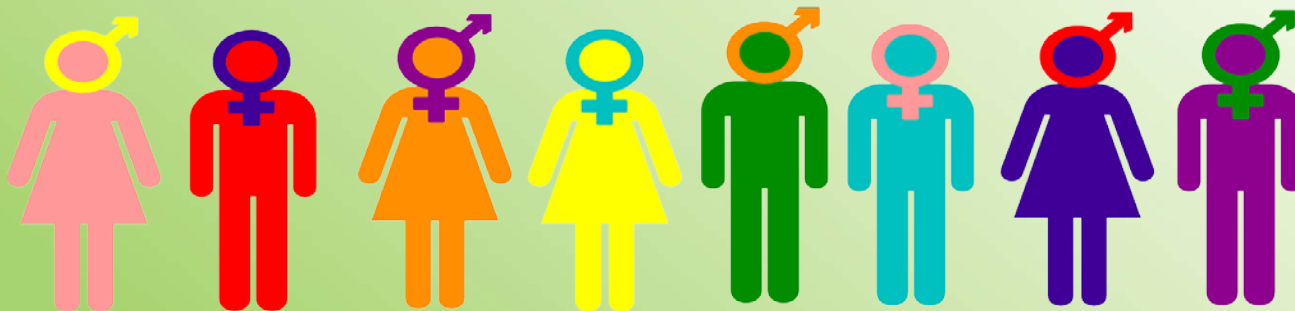


Strategies for service providers

- Respect
- Avoiding assumptions
- Individuality
- Relationship recognition



- A message of welcome
- Staff education

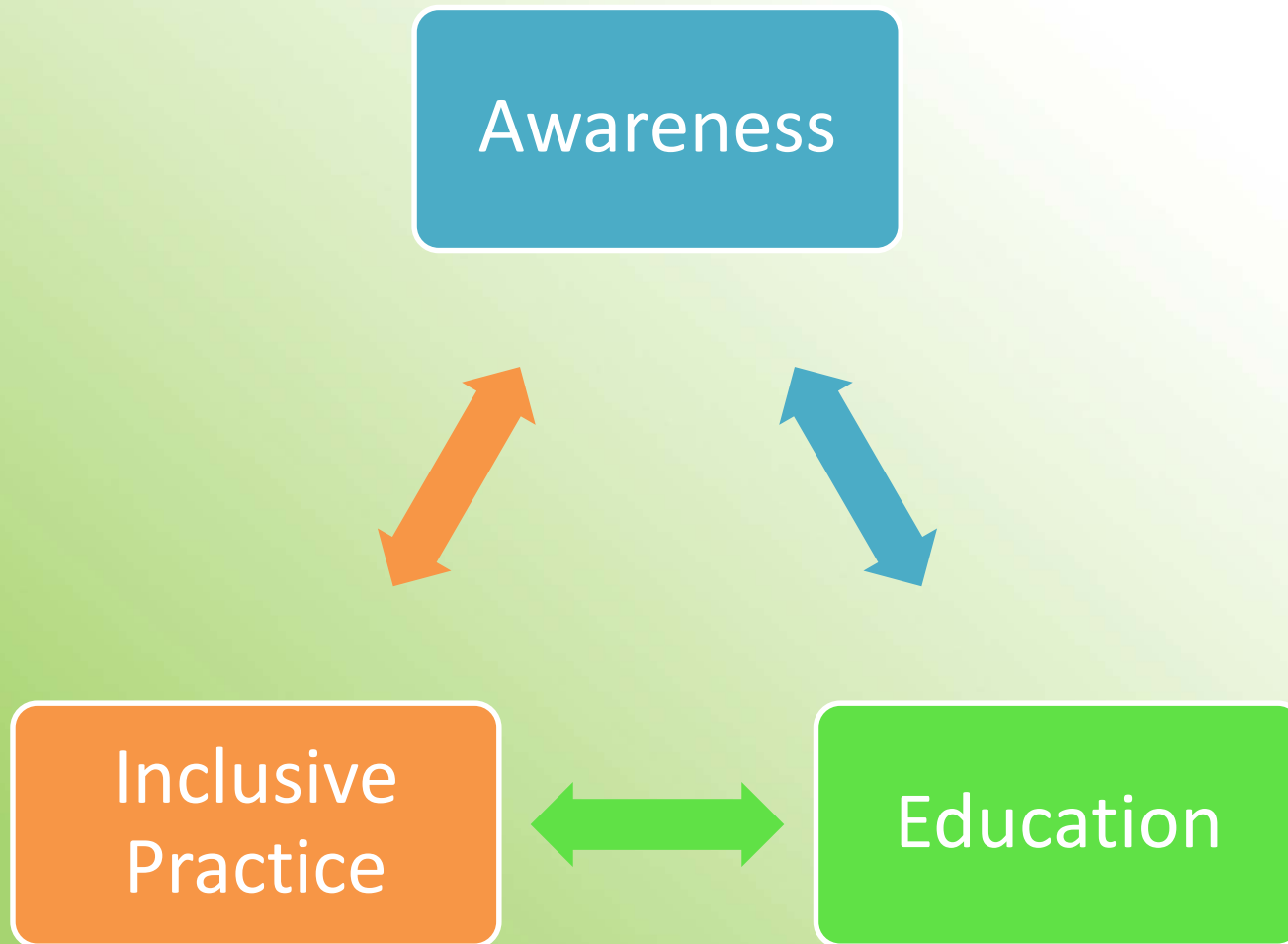


Making your organisation inclusive

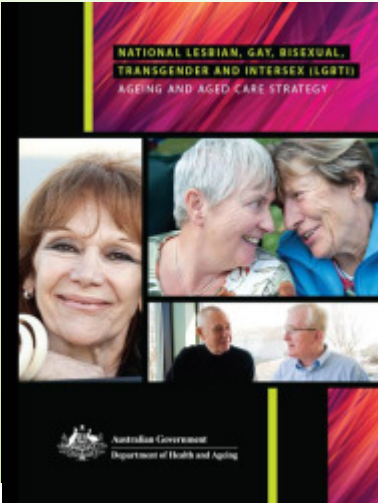
- Conduct an LGBTI inclusive practice audit
- Provide education to staff
- Promote your efforts to be LGBTI inclusive
- Use LGBTI inclusive language (eg. partner)



LGBTI inclusive service



Resources



Anxiety and depression

- Consider the mental health and wellbeing of your clients
- Encourage clients with low-mood to discuss this with their GP
- Suggest clients contact a mental health support service:
 - Beyondblue (1300 224 636 and online)
 - Qlife (1800 184 527 and online)
 - Lifeline (13 11 14 and online)
- Encourage clients to persevere with help-seeking.

Anxiety and depression

