

MELBOURNE HEALTH

# Supporting LGBTIQ+ Inclusive Practice 2019-2021 Action Plan

First in Care,  
Research and  
Learning



## Why do we need an LGBTIQ+ Plan?

While Australian society is generally accepting, some LGBTIQ+ people still experience discrimination; at work, in their community and sometimes when accessing health care. In particular, transgender and gender diverse individuals remain highly vulnerable to discrimination in all facets of their life. It is also important not to understate the experience of older LGBTIQ+ Australians or LGBTIQ+ immigrants who grew up in an age and /or place of state-imposed persecution and the significant impact that state sanctioned persecution pervaded, intimidated and potentially limited the lives of LGBTIQ+ people.

People who identify as Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex, Queer (LGBTIQ+) are recognised as one of a number of vulnerable groups that require targeted actions in order to address additional barriers to accessing and receiving healthcare. LGBTIQ+ Victorians experience poorer health outcomes than the general population.

Factors contributing to this include:

- fear of or actual rejection by family and friends
- cultural and social stigma of identifying as LGBTIQ+
- stress of the impact of 'coming out' or being 'outed' by someone else
- discrimination or perceived threat/stress thereof – in the workplace, in social contexts, in community groups or places of worship
- negative past experiences can limit the trust individuals have in interacting with government or religious-affiliated services

As a result, LGBTIQ+ populations have increased rates of mental health issues, suicide, general health and sexual health issues, alcohol abuse and drug use. It is important to understand these barriers and work to create an inclusive environment that makes all patients and staff feel welcome, safe and able to be active partners in care.

Melbourne Health is committed to partnering with and empowering all our patients, consumers and staff in order to advance health for everyone, every day. Creating an inclusive workplace is equally important. It is generally accepted that when staff bring their 'whole self' to work, staff performance and job satisfaction is higher than if they feel excluded or have to suppress part of who they are.

## Developing the plan in partnership with LGBTIQ+ staff, patients and consumers

A number of staff who had previously expressed an interest in working on LGBTIQ+ inclusive practice were invited to participate in the LGBTIQ+ committee. The purpose of the committee and indeed the plan is to review the Gay Lesbian Health Victoria (GLHV) audit tool annually and develop actions that support LGBTIQ+ inclusive practice for our patients, consumers, visitors and staff.

### Key action areas identified from the audit tool:



#### 1 Hear directly from LGBTIQ+ community

Understanding the needs, concerns and challenges of the LGBTIQ+ community is key to making meaningful inroads to create and embed inclusive practice.

In 2019 we conducted a community survey on social media to hear from the LGBTIQ+ community directly. We developed this plan to respond to the community feedback and consulted with the consumer representatives on our LGBTIQ+ committee to shape the final plan.



#### 2 Create a safe and welcoming environment

The physical environment can help or hinder feeling safe and welcome. The rainbow flag on the door of organisations has long been a sign of welcome and support for LGBTIQ+ consumers.

Access to single toilets and inclusive signage for larger toilet facilities can reduce the risk of discrimination experienced by transgender people



#### 3 Promote inclusive data collection

Collection and use of information can have inherent biases such as automatically defaulting to “Mr & Mrs” on letter templates or requiring you to enter Male or Female for sex.

We’re looking at our forms, databases and templates to advance LGBTIQ+ inclusive practice, both for patients in care and correspondence and for staff as part of recruitment processes.



#### 4 Improve your experience: Be a great place to work, a great place to receive care

*Enhance our patient experience* - Providing more information to LGBTIQ+ patients, consumers and visitors on available services and ‘need to know’ information prior to an appointment or admission.

*Enhance our staff experience:*

Creating a staff LGBTIQ+ network, celebrating diversity and raising awareness of LGBTIQ+ health and wellness with an annual calendar of events.

## LGBTIQ+ Days of Recognition and Celebration

| Date                                       | Event                           | Notes   |
|--|---------------------------------|---|
| 30 August                                  | Wear it Purple Day              | LGBTIQ+ Staff & Allies Networking event   |
| 11 October                                 | National Coming Out Day         | Staff stories on feeling safe in the workplace and bringing your whole self to work   |
| Second week in November                    | Transgender Awareness Week      | Transgender and Gender Diverse Inclusive Practice staff training sessions   |
| Mid Jan – Early Feb each year (dates vary) | Midsumma Carnival               | LGBTIQ+ working group and staff volunteers to staff the stall and promote Melbourne Health actions to become a Great Place to Work, A Great Place to Receive Care |
| Early Feb each year (dates vary)           | Midsumma Pride March – St Kilda | Explore opportunities to partner with other health services to march in Midsumma Pride March  |
| 17 May                                     | IDAHOBIT Day                    | Annual Event – International Day Against Homophobia, Biphobia, Intersexism and Transphobia  |

## *Our Supporting LGBTIQ+ Inclusive Practice Action Plan*

The Royal Melbourne Hospital Supporting LGBTIQ+ Inclusive Practice Action Plan is derived from the results of our audit using the GLHV (Gay Lesbian Health Victoria) Audit Tool for inclusiveness in healthcare. Implementing these actions will assist the organisation to promote a safe and welcoming health care environment for LGBTIQ+ patients, consumers, visitors and LGBTIQ+ staff.

| GLHV Standard   | Suggested actions  | 2019 | 2020 | 2021 |
|---|--|------|------|------|
| <b>Standard 1 - Organisational capability</b><br>The organisation embeds LGBTIQ+-inclusive practice across all its systems and continuously seeks opportunities for improvements. | 1. Include Gender and Gender identity, rather than Gender alone in diversity statements  | X    |      |      |
|   | 2. Review website welcome statement to include inclusive practice  |      | X    |      |
|   | 3. Publish a calendar of events of important dates for diverse groups to demonstrate organisations commitment to inclusion   | X    | X    |      |
|   | 4. To facilitate staff and volunteer inclusion, create internal networks for diverse groups, including LGBTIQ+   | X    | X    | X    |
|   | 5. Understand diversity in the workforce - conduct information gathering activities to understand the needs of the workforce for LGBTIQ+ staff (and other diverse groups) through staff networks |      | X    |      |
|   | 6. Develop a guideline for managers and staff on how to support a staff member or student who is transitioning, including the use of pronouns and how best to communicate these                  | X    | X    |      |
|   | 7. Review all forms within our control for inclusive questions, titles, gender representation, including digital data collection   | X    | X    | X    |
|   | 8. Refine our processes to support staff who are transitioning and provide training to their colleagues  |      |      | X    |

| GLHV Standard   | Suggested actions  | 2019 | 2020 | 2021 |
|---|--|------|------|------|
| <p><b>Standard 2 - Workforce development</b><br/>All staff and volunteers understand their responsibilities to LGBTIQ+ consumers and are trained and able to deliver LGBTIQ+-inclusive services</p> | 9. Consult with staff, community and key LGBTIQ+ community groups regarding consumer experiences at The Royal Melbourne Hospital and opportunities for improvement to feedback to the workforce                | X    |      |      |
|   | 10. Plan a sustainable approach to training about LGBTI+ inclusive practice across craft group learning programs, including the governing body and senior management   | X    | X    |      |
|   | 11. Annual Discussion Guide for Managers to be updated in include prompts for reflection on inclusive practice for diverse groups, including LGBTIQ+   |      | X    | X    |
|   | 12. Support the workforce to be aware of community services to which LGBTIQ+ patients and consumers can be referred.   |      | X    | X    |
| <p><b>Standard 3 - Consumer participation</b><br/>LGBTIQ+ consumers are consulted about, and participate in the planning, development, and review of the service.</p>                               | 13. Engage with patients and the broader LGBTIQ+ community through major community events and organisations to understand key health issues for LGBTIQ+ communities to inform training and service improvement | X    | X    | X    |
|   | 14. Share on external website how The Royal Melbourne Hospital can support managing the issues identified in Action 13   |      | X    |      |
| <p><b>Standard 4 - A welcoming and accessible organisation</b><br/>LGBTIQ+ consumers can easily and confidently access services because the physical and virtual environments, including</p>        | 15. Rainbow decal/stickers at physical entrances/main foyer and information on accessing services for LGBTIQ+ people on organisations external website.  |      | X    |      |
|   | 16. Identify opportunities to have gender neutral toilets, especially in main foyer or key waiting or high traffic areas   |      | X    |      |

| GLHV Standard  | Suggested actions   | 2019 | 2020 | 2021 |
|--|---|------|------|------|
| information, structures, resources and processes, are welcoming.   |   |      |      |      |
| <b>Standard 5 - Disclosure and documentation</b><br>LGBTIQ+ consumers, staff and volunteers feel safe to provide personal information, including their sexual orientation, gender identity and/or intersex status, because they know information will be treated respectfully and that there are systems in place to ensure their privacy. | 17. Enhance existing policies to specifically describe how sensitive information (such as Sex at Birth, sexuality or gender identity) should be collected, stored, used and deleted when no longer necessary. Sensitive information will only be recorded when it is specifically required. |      | X    | X    |
|  | 18. Review how we educate about disclosure of sensitive information   |      | X    | X    |

## Glossary of Terms

**Sex:** this is Sex at birth. Sex at birth is based on biological and physical sex characteristics. Sometimes this is called Sex assigned at birth

**Gender Identity:** This is the gender you *feel* you are, regardless of your sex assigned at birth

**Transgender or trans:** is a person whose sense of personal identity and gender is DIFFERENT to their sex assigned at birth (e.g. assigned male at birth, identify as female)

**Cisgender:** a person whose sense of personal identity and gender does is the SAME as their sex assigned at birth (e.g. assigned male at birth and identify as male)

**Intersex:** Intersex people are born with physical sex characteristics that don't fit medical and social norms for female or male bodies<sup>1</sup>

**Sexuality:** Sometimes sexuality, sex and gender identity can be confused.

- Heterosexuality is a sexual attraction to a person of the opposite sex.
- Homosexuality is an attraction to a person of the same sex.
- Bi-sexuality is a sexual attraction to both males and females.
- Pansexuality is a sexual attraction to any gender or gender identity.

**Misgendered:** The term for when a transgender person is referred to in a way that doesn't reflect their gender identity. (A trans female, male at birth, living as a female but being called Mr, Sir, he, guys etc.). Being misgendered can be accidental or purposely intended to cause distress and can result in someone being 'outed' as a trans person. Being misgendered can affect the person's self-esteem and reduce their sense of strength and continuity in their identity.

**Dead-naming:** Calling a person who has transitioned by their former name, to which they no longer identify

**Ally/Allies:** A person who isn't LGBTIQ+ but supports equality

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<sup>1</sup> As defined by Intersex Human Rights Australia