

19 October 2023

Dear Department of Social Services,

Working It Out has prepared this submission to the National Housing and Homelessness Plan. The submission emphasises the need for specific policy considerations to address the unique homelessness and housing experiences of LGBTIQ+ people and to ensure that they can access safe and affordable housing. Specifically, this submission highlights:

- (1) LGBTIQ+ populations are overrepresented in experiencing homelessness when compared to general populations. This is further compounded by intersecting identities experiencing overlapping discrimination.
- (2) Current research identifies disparities in health, housing, and income outcomes for LGBTIQ+ Tasmanians stemming from historic and ongoing discrimination.
- (3) LGBTIQ+ populations need specific action targets to ensure unique needs are addressed, and to change systemic discrimination and inequalities in community, service, and family settings.

Working It Out (WIO) is Tasmania's only dedicated support, advocacy and education service for Tasmania's lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, queer and asexual (LGBTIQ+) populations. Our mission is to create change through lived-experience based education, support and advocacy which enables LGBTIQ+ Tasmanians to live their best lives.

Data on LGBTIQ+ identities is not collected systematically in AIHW (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare) or the national census, creating an ongoing knowledge gap for this vulnerable population. However, based on what is known:

- The ABS's 2017 General Social Survey identifies gay, lesbian and bisexual people are more likely to experience homelessness compared to heterosexual people (Tas Govt 2023).
- The LGBTIQ Australian survey *Private Lives 3* (Hill et al. 2020) found transgender and non-binary people are more likely to have experienced homelessness than cisgender people.
- The ongoing impacts of discrimination and life-time disadvantage for LGBTIQ Tasmanians are reflected in present day data on disparities in health and wellbeing, income and work, and housing (Grant & Pisanu 2021).

Gender diverse/non-binary Tasmanians experiencing homelessness report service barriers caused by current service models not recognising them or impeding access because of their gender identity. In emergency accommodation services, there are designated single gender conditions (male or female services) which lead to shelters being ill-equipped to assist or accept some trans Tasmanians presenting to them. This is compounded in rural and regional areas with fewer crisis shelters.

Additional barriers because of intersecting characteristics will occur for different groups identified in the issues paper. Including (but not limited to) LGBTIQ+ people who are Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, young, older, living with a disability, migrant, have sought asylum, and/or have a refugee background.

With LGBTIQ+ populations known to experience discrimination and overrepresented in homelessness figures, LGBTIQ+ populations should not only be explicitly included in any National Plan, but there should also be recognition of the impact of intersectionality for LGBTIQ+ people.

We note that while LGBTIQ+ populations are overrepresented they were excluded in the submission guidelines for population groups that may be more vulnerable to housing insecurity and homelessness.

The Tasmanian government's *Tasmanian Housing Strategy, Housing Support for Tasmanians in Need* (Tas Govt 2023) provides a number of strategies/actions which address the needs of the LGBTIQ+ community. These are:

- Ensuring safe emergency accommodation is available for gender diverse and non-binary Tasmanians.
- Supporting partnerships addressing causes of housing stress and homelessness adversely affecting younger people within the LGBTIQ+ community, especially

gender diverse and non-binary young people, and those living in regional, rural and remote areas.

- Providing support to the housing and homelessness workforce to deliver sensitivity training to prevent discrimination and ensure the timely and appropriate delivery of services to meet the specific needs of LGBTIQ+ clients.
- Ensuring that services are available without discrimination to LGBTIQ+ people escaping family violence.

WIO welcomes the Tasmanian Government's recognition of LGBTIQ+ populations experiencing barriers to accessing basic housing needs and encourages any National Plan to also recognise these needs.

Such actions should come with assigned responsibilities, resourcing, timelines, activities, and goals. Key elements of an action plan should include:

- Data collection of LGBTIQ+ identities systematically in the AIHW (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare) and the national census.
- Investment into evidence-based interventions to reduce homophobia and transphobia in community, service, and family settings.
- Investment into supporting parents to be accepting and nurturing of LGBTIQ+ children and young people as an early intervention activity to prevent significant trauma and homelessness.
- A symposium with relevant community, housing service providers, and other affected stakeholders to map out current issues and gaps for population groups with unique needs.
- Evidence of government funded services implementing best practice inclusion guidelines (*LGBTIQ+ Inclusive Practice Guide for Homelessness and Housing Sectors in Australia*).
- Training and sector capacity development, delivered by local community led LGBTIQ+ organisations.
- Contract clauses in housing services which require service pathways for trans and gender diverse populations.
- Recognition that LGBTIQ+ populations have bespoke needs around safety, specifically for young people escaping unsafe family environments hostile about their gender identity or sexuality. This need also extends to safety guarantees from crisis shelter services and from other service users in a single gendered model system (male vs female services) which are currently often ill-equipped to support trans and gender diverse/non-binary Tasmanians.

Because of ongoing life-time disparities and disadvantages and resulting overrepresentation in homelessness and housing instability, WIO advocates for the explicit inclusion and recognition of LGBTIQ+ people in the National Plan. Additionally, that the plan includes specific actions to address these systemic issues and to support positive long-term health and housing outcomes. Without this inclusion, ongoing barriers and disadvantage will persist.

[REDACTED],
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

References

- Dwyer A, Grant R, Mason R, & Barnes A, 2021, *LGBTIQ+ Tasmanians: Telling Us the Story*, Tasmanian Government and University of Tasmania, Australia
- Grant R, & Pisanu N, 2021, *The Tasmania Project: What wellbeing means for LGBTIQ Tasmanians*, University of Tasmania, Australia.
- Hill, A. O., Bourne, A., McNair, R., Carman, M. & Lyons, A, 2020, *Private Lives 3: The health and wellbeing of LGBTIQ people in Australia*, ARCSHS Monograph Series No. 122, Australian Research Centre in Sex, Health and Society, La Trobe University, Melbourne, Australia.
- Tasmanian Government, 2023, *Tasmanian Housing Strategy, Housing support for Tasmanians in need – May 2023*, Tas Govt, Australia.