

A Blueprint for *Equality*

Resourcing LGBTQIA+
Community Legal Centres

A Blueprint for Equality: Resourcing LGBTQIA+ Community Legal Centres

**Addressing Unmet Legal Needs and
Building Sustainable Legal Services for
LGBTQIA+ Communities in Australia**

August 2025

Inner City Legal Centre commissioned Consulting & Implementation Services to create this report, supported with funds provided by Rainbow Giving Australia.



Inner City
Legal Centre



**RAINBOW
GIVING
AUSTRALIA**

Introduction from Inner City Legal Centre

Since our establishment in 1980, the Inner City Legal Centre has provided a frontline legal service for the LGBTQIA+ Community in our local area. From our first offices on Oxford St in Darlinghurst, we worked directly to support community during a time when homosexuality was criminalised and our clients were routinely rounded up, violently assaulted and locked up in the notorious Darlinghurst Police cells. During the HIV/AIDS crisis, our volunteer lawyers drafted free wills for patients receiving care in Ward 17 South, the largest HIV/AIDS clinic in Australia.

Since the 1990's, the ICLC has expanded our LGBTQIA+ specialist services to cover all of NSW, especially as the community is no longer concentrated around the Darlinghurst area as it once was. The clients who now need us the most reside in western Sydney and in regional or remote NSW.

As we have been doing this work for 45 years and have established relationships with the communities that we support, people are always shocked when I tell them that our dedicated LGBTQIA+ services receive no dedicated funding from either the NSW or Commonwealth Governments. We have always relied on donations, philanthropy, volunteers and sausage sizzles to do this important work, as the LGBTQIA+ community have not traditionally been prioritised for Government spending on legal assistance services.



We are excited that this is likely to change under the National Access to Justice Partnership 2025–2030 (NAJP), which for the first time ever provides that LGBTQIA+ people are a priority population for the delivery of legal assistance services, right across Australia.

The NAJP commenced on 1 July 2025, however it does not allocate a specific amount of funding for any of the priority groups, nor does it prescribe how to establish services that are properly resourced and culturally appropriate for the communities that they serve.

We believe that LGBTQIA+ Services must be designed in collaboration with community, so we commissioned Consulting and Implementation Services (CIS) to assist us in developing this Blueprint. CIS has consulted widely with subject matter experts on unmet legal need in the LGBTQIA+ community and on models of best practice service delivery.

Some states and territories already have dedicated services, which operate under various models of funding. In recent years, the Victorian and Queensland Governments have invested in dedicated LGBTQIA+ legal services for their communities. Western Australia and NSW also have dedicated services; however, those services do not currently receive dedicated funding under the NAJP. South Australia, the Northern Territory, the ACT and Tasmania have no dedicated services.

It is our intention that this report will be used to make the case for long term, sustainable funding for community based LGBTQIA+ legal services, especially in those jurisdictions where there are no services, or where existing services are chronically underfunded.

I wish to thank the community experts who volunteered their time speaking with CIS to inform this report. Thanks to you, we are confident that its recommendations will support the multiple and complex needs of our diverse rainbow communities. I also wish to extend a huge thank you to our generous funders, Rainbow Giving Australia; their mission to support a properly resourced and funded LGBTQIA+ sector has supported this report, which in turn we hope will lead the expansion of safe and culturally appropriate Community Legal Services for our community.


Inner City Legal Centre

Foreword from Rainbow Giving

LGBTQIA+ community-led legal services play a critical role in the justice system. They are uniquely placed to understand the nuanced challenges faced by our communities, break down barriers to accessing justice, and provide safe, affirming support to people who have often experienced discrimination, stigma, and mistrust when engaging with the legal system.

Despite this, community legal centres working with LGBTQIA+ communities face chronic underfunding. This reflects a broader pattern of underinvestment in LGBTQIA+-led services, with only 6 cents in every \$100 of government funding flowing to rainbow communities.¹

Half of Australia's jurisdictions have no dedicated LGBTQIA+ legal funding at all. Where services do exist, they are forced to move mountains on pennies. Lawyers and frontline staff work at their limits responding to crises, without the sustained investment needed to build skills, strengthen capacity, maintain their wellbeing, and provide holistic wraparound services. This lack of funding also prevents systemic work, including advocacy, law reform, and sector-wide collaboration. These activities are essential to reducing long-term demand for crisis legal support and broader pressure on government services.

I remember clearly being in my early twenties, a law graduate working pro bono on a three-year strategy for an LGBTQIA+ legal service. The service was already at breaking point, with overwhelming evidence of unmet need

knocking on their door every day. When it came time to finalise the strategy, we were forced to scale it back to less than five percent of its ambition—not because the solutions didn't exist, but because the funding wasn't there. It was a sobering moment, knowing vulnerable community members would continue to be turned away.

A lack of data has contributed to this underinvestment, with the scale and complexity of need often underestimated and the value of targeted, community-led responses not fully recognised. At Rainbow Giving Australia, we know that data and evidence are vital to changing this funding reality. Data changes hearts and minds, and builds the case for funders to invest in lasting solutions. That is why we are proud to have funded this report, led by Inner City Legal Centre in collaboration with LGBTQIA+ legal centres nationwide.

This report highlights the urgent funding needs of LGBTQIA+ legal services and demonstrates that investing in these services is a smart investment. It strengthens access to justice, supports thriving communities, upholds equality before the law, and ensures all Australians are treated with dignity and respect.


Rainbow Giving Australia

Community Legal Centres across Australia are operating with severely limited resources, with very few having dedicated funding to address LGBTQIA+ legal needs. This significant gap persists even as the National Access to Justice Partnership 2025–2030 recognises LGBTQIA+ people as a priority population. Important progress that requires specific funding and implementation guidelines to deliver culturally appropriate services.

The Inner City Legal Centre's collaborative work with other CLCs demonstrates both the substantial demand and the value of community-led service design. Building on 45 years of expertise serving our communities, the ICLC has developed this comprehensive blueprint through extensive consultation with community members and subject matter experts, creating a framework for specialised legal support that acknowledges our diverse identities and experiences.

This report presents a strong case for long-term, sustainable funding for community-based LGBTQIA+ legal services, particularly in areas where services are non-existent or without dedicated funding. Supporting this initiative advances systemic change that upholds every rainbow community member's right to accessible, affirming legal support regardless of location.


Rainbow Giving Australia

Acknowledgements



Consulting & Implementation Services acknowledges the support and input provided by ICLC, and the following stakeholders who provided input through their participation in interviews.

The willingness of the participating organisations and individuals to share and contribute towards this report and the design of the blueprint was humbling and appreciated. We thank all those who generously provided their time and expertise to share valuable insights that informed recommendations and the blueprint and contributed to the delivery of this report.



Community driven justice.

Acknowledgement of Country

The office of the Inner City Legal Centre sits on Gadigal land of the Eora Nation.

We acknowledge the Gadigal people as the Traditional Custodians of this land and their continuing connection to land, waters and community.

We pay our respects to the Elders both past and present and extend that respect to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people right across the Country on which we live and work.

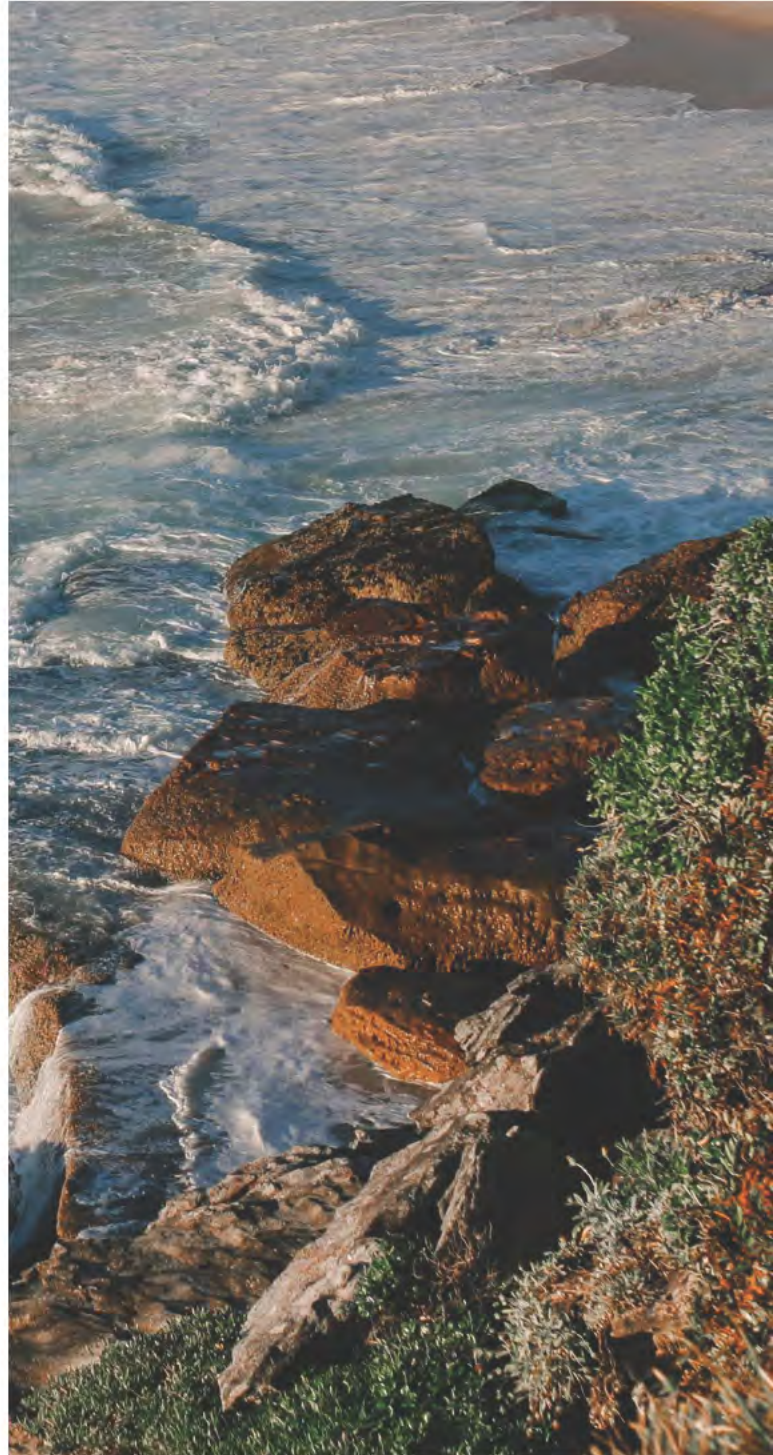


Photo of Gadigal Country

A Note on Language

We acknowledge that language is always evolving, particularly within the diverse communities that we will refer to throughout this report.

The below definitions are not absolute, however for the purpose of this report we wish to be clear who we are speaking about when the following terms are used. This report recognises that many people have intersectional identities that we may not explicitly address in the below definitions, however we have endeavoured to be inclusive in our use of language throughout this Report.

Transgender is an umbrella term for people who are transgender or gender diverse, and where their gender is different to what was presumed for them at birth.¹

Throughout this report, we intend for transgender to be used as an inclusive term. When we use the term "Trans" or "Transgender", we include people who are gender diverse, nonbinary and also Sistergirls and Brotherboys from First Nations communities.

Intersex and people with intersex variations are umbrella terms for people with natural innate variations in sex characteristics, who make up a diverse group with a wide range of lived experiences, sex characteristics, observed/assigned sex, genders, identities, bodies and preferred language.²

All organisations which seek to include and provide support services for people with innate variations of sex characteristics should undertake specific training to understand and appropriately respond to the unique legal, social and healthcare needs of this diverse group within this community.

LGBTQIA+ is an acronym for those who identify with one or more of the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Intersex, Asexual and Aromantic communities. The '+' acknowledges and identifies other diverse sexual orientations and gender identities, including pansexual and non-binary identities.

The '+' also represents the inclusion of known and emerging identities within this broad community. Different community organisations may adopt different use of this acronym. For example, some do not adopt the Q or the +, while others may include SG (Sistergirls) and SB (Brotherboys) in specific recognition of First Nations Communities. For the purpose of this Report, LGBTQIA+ is the acronym that is currently adopted by the Inner City Legal Centre and is therefore widely used throughout this Report. We respect and understand that other organisations may elect to use a different version of the acronym that is appropriate for the community groups that they are working for.

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Executive Summary

Across Australia, LGBTQIA+ people are formally recognised as a priority population for legal assistance under the National Access to Justice Partnership (NAJP) 2025–2030. Yet in practice, they remain a priority in name only. Half of the country has no dedicated LGBTQIA+ community legal service. Where specialist services do exist, they are forced to turn people away, operate without core funding, and run on volunteer hours and goodwill. This is not a gap in service, it is a gaping hole in the safety net.

Every year, six in ten LGBTQIA+ people will experience at least one legal problem, nearly double the national average. They come seeking help with discrimination, family and domestic violence, gender affirmation, housing, workplace safety, and access to healthcare. Many are navigating these legal challenges in circumstances of poverty, mental ill-health, disability, or social isolation. In rural, regional, and remote communities, the barriers multiply: no local expertise, long travel distances, conservative social climates, and often a deep mistrust of mainstream services rooted in decades of discrimination.

The costs of inaction are stark. Without targeted investment, four jurisdictions will remain without any specialist legal service. Outreach to the regions will be sporadic

or non-existent. Advocacy and law reform, the only levers that can dismantle systemic injustice, will continue to be done off the side of already overburdened desks, or not at all. People will remain trapped in cycles of violence, discrimination, and exclusion because the systems that are supposed to protect them are inaccessible or unsafe.

This blueprint provides a solution. Built through national consultation with legal experts, community leaders, and people with lived experience, it offers a scalable model for specialist LGBTQIA+ Community Legal Centres in every state and territory. It sets out what effective, culturally safe, trauma-informed services look like: multidisciplinary teams that integrate legal and social support; trained peer navigators to guide clients through daunting systems; dedicated outreach to regional, rural, and remote areas; and sustained capacity for advocacy and law reform so the same injustices do not have to be fought case by case, year after year.

We are calling for governments to invest new money, that is not carved from existing Community Legal Services, which will –

Establish dedicated LGBTQIA+ legal services in all jurisdictions.

1

Expand the capacity of existing services to meet demand.

2

Fund outreach to rural, regional, and remote communities.

3

Resource systemic advocacy and law reform.

4

Build robust data collection to track need and impact.

5

The return on this investment is clear. Early intervention prevents crises. Culturally safe services build trust in public systems. Effective advocacy reduces demand on health, housing, and justice systems. And most importantly, it delivers on the government's commitment to improve equity and access to justice for LGBTQIA+ Australians.

The NAJP has named this community a priority. The evidence is overwhelming, the model is ready, and the need is urgent. Now is the moment to match recognition with resources.

Justice is not inclusive until it is accessible for everyone.

1. Introduction

The Inner City Legal Centre (ICLC) commissioned this report to assess the legal needs of LGBTQIA+ communities across Australia and to develop a blueprint for LGBTQIA+ legal services, including actionable recommendations. The project was initiated by ICLC and made possible through funding from a Rainbow Giving, Amplify Pride Grant. The ICLC gratefully acknowledges this vital support, without which this report could not have been realised.

The release of this report is particularly timely, coinciding with the designation of LGBTQIA+ communities as a priority group under the newly launched National Access to Justice Partnership (NAJP) in July 2025. This recognition signals a critical opportunity for the Federal Government to allocate new funding – channelled through States and Territories – to strengthen and expand the resources available to LGBTQIA+ Community Legal Centres (CLC).

At the time of publication, no formal commitment had been made by the Federal Government to increase funding for legal services tailored to meet the needs of the LGBTQIA+ priority population. Despite providing free legal support to LGBTQIA+

communities for over 45 years without dedicated organisational funding, the Inner City Legal Centre (ICLC) remains steadfast in its mission. Through this report – and in collaboration with other stakeholders – the ICLC aims to advocate for sustainable, nationally coordinated funding to ensure the continuity of essential LGBTQIA+ CLCs, including targeted action to address the systemic gaps that continue to limit access to justice.

The LGBTQIA+ population has been declared a priority group under the new National Access to Justice Partnership (NAJP), launching in July 2025.

2. Methodology

The ICLC engaged CIS to develop this report using a comprehensive methodology that began with planning and targeted literature review. This was followed by 25 structured interviews with stakeholders from six LGBTQIA+ focused community legal centres (CLCs), peak bodies, health services, and academic researchers. Insights from these interviews were synthesised into key findings, actionable recommendations, and a simple financial model designed to support future funding and planning decisions. After drafting and refining the report, CIS facilitated a workshop with 23 stakeholders to test and validate the draft findings and recommendations. Feedback from this session was incorporated into the final version of this report.



3. Community Profile

Research,³ drawing on data from the long-running Household, Income and Labour Dynamics in Australia (HILDA) survey, highlights the growing visibility of LGBTQIA+ communities. In 2012, 3.3% of Australian adults in the survey identified as gay, lesbian, or bisexual. By 2020, that figure had risen to 5.8%. More recent estimates from the Australian Bureau of Statistics indicate that rates among younger Australians aged 16–24 have climbed to nearly 10%.⁴ While more inclusive and comprehensive data is still needed, these findings underscore the increasing significance of LGBTQIA+ populations within Australia's social and policy landscape.

LGBTQIA+ communities in Australia are diverse, encompassing a wide range of sexualities, gender identities and sex characteristics. Stakeholders consistently noted the limitations of the umbrella term, 'LGBTQIA+' particularly in capturing the distinct experiences and legal needs of specific groups, including transgender people, people with intersex variations and people who may not be 'out' about their diverse sexuality or gender. Nonetheless, this diversity reinforces the imperative for comprehensive, culturally safe legal services that are responsive to the varied and often complex needs of this population.

Evidence suggests that LGBTQIA+ people in Australia experience disproportionately high rates of legal problems. Approximately 60% report encountering at least one legal issue each year.⁵ Economic disadvantage is also prevalent, with about 40% of LGBTQIA+ people living below the poverty line.⁶

These intersecting vulnerabilities often compound legal challenges, contributing to housing insecurity, poor health outcomes and systemic exclusion. Similar patterns have been documented in comparable countries, including the United States.⁷

Understanding intersectionality means recognising that people's experiences are shaped by individual identities, and also by the ways systems like racism, sexism, ableism, classism, and homophobia intersect and compound disadvantage. For LGBTQIA+ communities – particularly those who are also First Nations, disabled, or from migrant and low-income backgrounds – these overlapping systems of oppression create unique barriers to accessing justice, safety, and culturally affirming support. Any meaningful reform must be grounded in this understanding, ensuring that policy, funding, and service delivery respond to the full complexity of people's lives.

*Understanding **intersectionality**, including the overlap of race, gender, class, sexuality, or disability with LGBTQIA+ identity is crucial.*

Economic disadvantage is also prevalent, with about 40% of LGBTQIA+ people living below the poverty line





4. Critical Gaps in Service Provision

Interviews and supporting literature reveal significant unmet legal needs within the LGBTQIA+ communities, driven by systemic barriers, service limitations and heightened exposure to legal risks. CLCs consistently report being unable to meet overwhelming demand due to chronic underfunding and capacity constraints – resulting in clients being turned away or receiving only limited, one-off advice and referrals.

There are no specialist LGBTQIA+ CLC services available in Tasmania, South Australia, the Northern Territory or the Australian Capital Territory

For LGBTQIA+ people, these challenges are compounded by additional barriers including historical mistrust of legal systems, culturally unsafe mainstream services, restrictive eligibility criteria and limited awareness of legal rights. These intersecting factors create a profound gap between legal need and available support. This gap is particularly stark in jurisdictions where no dedicated LGBTQIA+ legal services exist – currently in half of Australia's states and territories.

Key areas of unmet need are summarised in Figure 1 and explored in detail on the next page.

Capacity Gaps

Not enough capacity to meet all the legal needs

Insufficient lawyers overall and insufficient lawyers with professional experience in some legal areas

Insufficient social support

Rural-Remote Disadvantage

Social isolation and heightened stigma

Privacy and confidentiality concerns

Absence of local LGBTQIA+ expertise

Geographic barriers

Conservative social attitudes

Priority Legal Issues

Discrimination, vilification and harassment, especially in the workplace

Domestic and family violence

Property and family law

Criminal justice disparities

Sexual and physical assaults

Advocacy Shortfall

All but 1 CLC reported having dedicated funding for advocacy

Without adequate funding, systemic legal barriers that create issues remain unaddressed, perpetuating cycles of discrimination & ensuring that unmet legal need continues to grow rather than be prevented

Complex Legal Needs

Multiple legal issues

Multiple needs, e.g. higher rates of poverty, poor mental health & disability, add to complexity

Insufficient legal precedent & experienced lawyers, especially for transgender people and intersex people

Figure 1. Unmet legal needs

4.1 Geographic Service Gaps: Missing LGBTQIA+ CLC Services

A critical gap persists in the availability of dedicated LGBTQIA+ legal services across Australia. Four out of eight Australian states and territories – Tasmania, South Australia, the Northern Territory and the Australian Capital Territory – currently lack access to culturally safe, specialist legal support for LGBTQIA+ communities.

In states where specialist services do exist, they are often severely under-resourced. Many operate with fewer than four lawyers to service statewide catchments, receiving little to no dedicated funding. This limits their ability to provide comprehensive, accessible support.

Establishing dedicated, community based LGBTQIA+ legal services in every state and territory is essential.

These services must be appropriately funded to meet demand, deliver culturally appropriate support and address systemic barriers. Existing specialist services, including the ICLC (NSW), LGBTI Legal Service (QLD), Rainbow Legal (WA), Q+Law (VIC) and Justice Q (VIC), provide targeted support but require a significant increase in investment to expand capacity and geographic reach. Notably, some services, such as the ICLC and Rainbow Legal, currently operate without any dedicated funding from government for their specialist work.

Figure 2 provides a national snapshot of existing LGBTQIA+ legal services and highlights the jurisdictions where gaps remain.

This geographic disparity in service availability creates fundamental inequities where an individual's access to culturally competent legal support depends entirely on their postcode, leaving many community members with no appropriate service options despite significant legal need.



- Rainbow Legal (unfunded) – at Sussex St Community Law Service
- LGBTI Legal Service (dedicated funding)
- ICLC (unfunded)
- Q+ Law (dedicated funding) & Justice Q (unfunded)
- No service

Figure 2. LGBTQIA+ Specialist Legal Services in Australia

4.2 LGBTQIA+ Communities' Barriers to Accessing Justice

Unmet legal needs within the LGBTQIA+ community are shaped by entrenched systemic barriers that limit access to appropriate, culturally safe legal services. These barriers create a persistent gap between the legal support required and what is accessible or available – particularly for those with intersecting identities.

Mistrust and Fear

Stakeholders consistently highlighted deep mistrust of the justice system and fear of discrimination from mainstream providers, creating significant barriers to help-seeking behaviour. This mistrust is not incidental – it is the result of systemic exclusion, criminalisation, and persistent failures in legal and policing institutions.

Stakeholders emphasised that remnants of discriminatory laws continue to erode trust in institutional systems. For instance, the 'gay panic' defence – used to justify assault or homicide – was upheld in South Australian Courts until 2021. Until mid-2025, transgender people in New South Wales were required to undergo surgical interventions before being able to update their gender marker on identity documents; a requirement that was removed following the adoption of the Equality Bill. In most of Australia, religious schools and service providers can discriminate against LGBTQIA+ employees on the basis of "religious freedom".

While incremental improvements to discriminatory laws are progressing, their legacy continues to reinforce perceptions that LGBTQIA+ people are not fully recognised or have the same set of rights, fuelling distrust toward police, legal systems, healthcare providers, and government agencies.

The Speaking Out⁸ study was cited as evidence of this dynamic, revealing that 75% of LGBTQIA+ respondents who experienced homophobic or transphobic abuse did not report it to police or seek professional assistance. This decision to not engage was often driven by fear – fear of being disbelieved, judged or further harmed.

Mandatory HIV testing laws were also raised as a source of systemic harm. Stakeholders noted that these laws disproportionately target LGBTQIA+ people, particularly gay and bisexual men and transgender women, under the guise of public health. The framing of HIV as a criminal risk rather than a health issue reinforces stigma and perpetuates harmful stereotypes. Participants described these laws as punitive and discriminatory and often used in ways that escalate police surveillance and deepen mistrust. Rather than supporting community health, mandatory testing regimes were seen to entrench fear and discourage engagement with services.

Participants also described contemporary interactions with police as frequently unsafe and dismissive. Reports included misgendering, deadnaming, and a reluctance to act on complaints – even in circumstances where lawyers or other support workers attended a police station to support a victim

to report a crime. One lawyer noted that their organisation's solicitors often accompany clients to police stations to advocate directly, not only for support but to clarify basic legal rights to police officers unfamiliar with the law. These experiences were described as frustrating, time-consuming, and indicative of broader structural inequalities.

Stemming from these experiences, stakeholders challenged the role of police in responding to violence perpetrated against the LGBTQIA+ community, advocating for a reallocation of resources toward community-led services that are trauma-informed, culturally safe, and grounded in lived experience. These services, they asserted, are better positioned to build trust, respond to harm, and support healing.

Without specialist services that affirm LGBTQIA+ identities, many people choose not to seek help at all. The call to invest in peer-led, community-based responses reflects a broader shift toward justice models that prioritise safety, dignity and self-determination.

Culturally Unsafe Mainstream Legal Services

Mainstream legal services 'often lack the specialist knowledge or cultural capability to respond consistently in a safe, inclusive, accessible way',⁹ to LGBTQIA+ specific issues. This absence of cultural safety means that clients are frequently required to 'come out', justify their identity, or explain basic concepts like appropriate use of pronouns. This can lead to re-traumatisation and disengagement. The process of seeking help

becomes emotionally exhausting, particularly when services are not equipped to affirm and support diverse lived experiences.

Workshop participants described a recurring burden placed on LGBTQIA+ clients to educate legal professionals about their identities, experiences, and rights. This dynamic was especially pronounced in regional and rural areas, where mainstream services were perceived as under-resourced and structurally ill-equipped to respond to the needs of LGBTQIA+ clients. Even well-intentioned practitioners were said to lack the foundational understanding required to provide culturally safe support, resulting in clients feeling alienated or dismissed.

The absence of trauma-informed practices was identified as a critical gap. Stakeholders emphasised that mainstream services frequently fail to recognise the compounded impact of systemic discrimination, family rejection, and prior negative experiences with institutions. Without this specialist lens, legal support may inadvertently replicate harms rather than alleviate them.

Specialist services, particularly those that are peer-led, were consistently highlighted as essential. As one evaluation report quoted: "clients are more willing to open up and disclose important information when they know they won't be judged or misunderstood".¹⁰ Peer-led models were described as more effective and structurally necessary to ensure safety, dignity, and justice.

Workshop participants called for broader structural reform, noting that cultural safety cannot be achieved through superficial

training or tokenistic inclusion. It requires sustained investment in LGBTQIA+ leadership, community governance, and service design that centres lived experience. Without this, mainstream legal services will continue to fall short of meeting the needs of LGBTQIA+ communities.

Intersecting Barriers for First Nations and Culturally Diverse Communities

LGBTQIA+ people from First Nations Communities and diverse cultural backgrounds may experience multi-faceted barriers to accessing legal support, shaped by systemic racism, cultural erasure, and institutional mistrust. Mainstream legal services often fail to recognise diverse cultural frameworks and lack trauma-informed, culturally safe practices. For many, prior experiences of discrimination or disbelief – especially in cases involving family violence, sexual assault, or asylum – create deep reluctance to engage with legal systems.

Language barriers, limited access to interpreters, and exclusionary eligibility criteria further compound legal need. Yet when identity is central to the issue, LGBTQIA+ legal services are often able to provide safer, more affirming services for these groups. For First Nations clients in particular, availability of choice of culturally safe legal services was highlighted as a need for people in determining which service could best respond to a legal issue. Embedding cultural knowledge, lived experience, and peer-led models into service design is essential to rebuilding trust and improving outcomes for communities navigating intersectional disadvantage.

Cost and Eligibility

Many community members are unable to afford private lawyers, and the eligibility criteria for accessing free legal services – particularly Legal Aid – are often prohibitively narrow. Respondents consistently highlighted that income thresholds, visa status, and the type of legal problem frequently disqualifies people, despite acute need. This leaves a significant cohort in limbo: unable to access Legal Aid, yet priced out of private options. For trans and gender-diverse people, asylum seekers, and people experiencing housing insecurity or family violence, these financial and bureaucratic barriers compound existing vulnerabilities.





Lack of Client Awareness

There is a widespread gap in awareness of legal rights and available pathways amongst many in the LGBTQIA+ community. The respondents and literature¹¹ identify that many LGBTQIA+ people do not know their rights, fear repercussions when seeking to assert them, or assume their experiences fall outside the scope of legal protection. This is especially true for those navigating intersecting systems of marginalisation; including First Nations people, migrants, and young people – who may distrust legal institutions or lack access to culturally safe information. Without targeted outreach and community-led education, legal need often remains invisible and unaddressed.

“There is a degree of bureaucracy to navigate, plus mistrust of lawyers and government - and rightfully so - so it takes a lot of courage - clients have been repeatedly traumatised and marginalised. They may not expose all legal issues – it may take a few sessions”

In summary, the interconnected barriers of mistrust, cultural unsafety, cost, eligibility, and lack of awareness – creates a landscape where legal need is widespread and unmet. Even where services exist, they are often inaccessible or unsafe for LGBTQIA+ people, particularly those facing compounding forms of discrimination. Addressing this gap will require reforming service design and funding models and investing in community-led, culturally safe, and preventative approaches that centre lived experience in order to rebuild trust.

4.3 Priority Legal Issues

LGBTQIA+ people often present with complex legal problems that occur at significantly higher rates than in the general population, which creates a need for increased legal service capacity to undertake more complex casework. Stakeholder interviews revealed that community members seek assistance across a broad spectrum of legal matters, with discrimination (particularly employment related), family and domestic violence, and sexual assault and related legal problems featuring prominently in service demand.

Consultations highlighted that overlapping disadvantage, past trauma, and mistrust of mainstream services compound legal system interactions for the LGBTQIA+ community. This creates acute challenges for transgender community members and people with innate variations in sex characteristics in particular, who often face multiple forms of systemic discrimination.

The consultation process revealed specific vulnerabilities within these communities, where a lack of awareness, or outright discriminatory attitudes towards transgender people compound already complex legal situations. Trans people commonly encounter legal problems related to identity document changes, healthcare access, discrimination in employment and family law matters. People with intersex variations and their families experience unique challenges around consent to healthcare, identity recognition, and protection from non-consensual or

unnecessary medical interventions.

Stakeholders emphasised that LGBTQIA+ people often experience higher rates of mental illness and disability when compared to the general population, often as a direct result of stigma and discrimination. They noted that mental health challenges and disability are likely to contribute to legal problems and make navigating legal processes more difficult.

In spite of under-reporting of legal issues and crimes committed against LGBTQIA+ people, existing specialist CLCs still lack sufficient resources to meet demonstrated demand. The gap between actual need and service capacity is particularly concerning given that reported uptake of existing LGBTQIA+ specific services likely represents only a fraction of the community's total requirements for legal assistance.

This capacity shortfall is not only about the numbers of lawyers available. It is also about the specialised expertise required to understand the experiences of LGBTQIA+ communities, existing laws, and systemic discrimination. Even specialist CLCs report difficulties recruiting and retaining lawyers with the cultural competency, technical knowledge, and community connections that are necessary to effectively serve their client base.

This heightened legal need, increased complexity, and inadequate service capacity creates a perfect storm where some of our most vulnerable community members are left without access to adequate legal support.

Discrimination, Vilification, and Harassment

LGBTQIA+ people need assistance to address discrimination that they have experienced across multiple settings, creating significant demand for specialist legal services that understand the relevant laws. Responding to discrimination involves navigating the complexity of inconsistent Commonwealth and State anti-discrimination and industrial laws, which means that lawyers must be familiar with the operation of a number of different jurisdictions and systems.

Interactions with the legal system were often exacerbated by people experiencing intersecting disadvantage, past trauma and mistrust of mainstream services.

Workplace discrimination was identified in the literature and interviews as an area of significant legal need. The Diversity Council of Australia reported that 44% of LGBTQIA+ workers experienced harassment or discrimination in the last 12 months compared to 25% of non-LGBTQIA+ workers.¹² Workplace issues spanned discriminatory hiring practices to harassment, bullying, and unauthorised disclosure of sexual orientation or gender identity. The "Outing Injustice" study identified that "outing" in the workplace affected 23.4% of respondents, rising to 62.5% for intersex respondents.¹³ Consequences arising from workplace discrimination and outing included constructive dismissal, termination, or reduced working hours.

Discrimination in access to healthcare

creates complex legal challenges, particularly for transgender people. Issues were raised by stakeholders and substantiated in a national community survey, reporting that over one quarter of trans people had experienced stigma, discrimination or abuse in healthcare settings.¹⁴ The literature identified that many health professionals lacked basic literacy on health and social issues impacting transgender people, leading to inadequate care.¹⁵

Incidents of harassment in public spaces and online

generate substantial legal need, with nearly 60% of community members in the "Outing Injustice" study experiencing discriminatory or offensive comments in public places.¹⁶ Online vilification has become particularly prevalent, with the Trans Justice Project's 2023 report revealing that 95% of survey participants witnessed online anti-trans hate, and one in two transgender participants had experienced it directly.¹⁷ These cases often require expertise in both anti-discrimination laws and emerging cyber-harassment laws.

Discrimination in access to education and healthcare

creates further legal problems. Nearly half of sexually diverse young students experience verbal abuse owing to their sexuality, with almost three-quarters occurring at school.¹⁸ Religious exemptions in anti-discrimination laws can leave LGBTQIA+ young people without options for redress.

Insufficient access to safe housing contributes to LGBTQIA+ overrepresentation in accommodation services¹⁹ while "neighbourhood disputes" involving threats of violence and discriminatory harassment affect more than 20% of community members.²⁰

Family and Domestic Violence

LGBTQIA+ communities experience significantly higher rates of family and intimate partner violence when compared to the general Australian population, representing a critical area of unmet legal need. Stakeholders validated this, reported family and domestic violence as the most pressing legal issue experienced by their LGBTQIA+ clients.

According to the Private Lives 3 survey (2019),²¹ approximately 60% of LGBTQIA+ people reported experiencing intimate partner violence — substantially higher than the 27% and 12% of women and men respectively in the general population reported in the 2021–22 Personal Safety Survey.²² Within the LGBTQIA+ spectrum, transgender, gender-diverse and people with intersex variations are at particularly elevated risks of family and domestic violence.^{23,24}

Only 2% of LGBTQIA+ Australians impacted by intimate partner violence accessed domestic violence services. A staggering 72% did not disclose their experiences to anyone.²⁵ Analysis by the National Legal Aid Program identifies the lack of LGBTQIA+ aware services as a significant barrier to both disclosure and help seeking.²⁶

This combination of high prevalence and low reporting highlights the urgent need for inclusive, trauma-informed, and culturally safe legal and support services capable of addressing and preventing violence within LGBTQIA+ communities.

A recent ABC News investigation²⁷ reinforced these concerns, documenting a growing crisis in domestic and family violence among LGBTQIA+ Australians particularly impacting young transgender people. Open Doors reported increasing demand and a lack of safe and affirming emergency accommodation options, leaving many young people forced to remain in violent homes. In just six months, one funded joint youth worker and counsellor supported 153 young people – most seeking help for family violence. Yet, as Open Doors CEO Rachel Hinds notes, there has been “no investment into our community” for DFV, with State and Commonwealth funding falling critically short. Survivors describe systemic gaps in crisis response, protection, and aftercare, underscoring the need for dedicated, culturally safe support pathways.

Property and Family Law

Lack of specialist LGBTQIA+ legal services results in compounding issues involving property disputes, living arrangements and contact with children at the end of a relationship.²⁸ LGBTQIA+ specific family law matters involve access to healthcare for transgender children, surrogacy, donor agreements and adoption. Generalist Family Law services often lack the specialist knowledge to assist with these unique legal problems.

Disparities Across the Justice System

LGBTQIA+ people experience persistent and systemic disparities across criminal, civil, and administrative justice systems. In the criminal justice context, these disparities manifest as elevated rates of harassment, violence, discriminatory policing, and inadequate protection from hate crimes and sexual assault. For example, LGBTQIA+ individuals are at significantly higher risk of violence, sexual violence, harassment, or abuse.²⁹ In one study, 46% of transgender women and 36% of transgender men reported physical attacks without a weapon; and 38% of transgender women and 9% of transgender men reported physical attacks with a weapon.³⁰ Consultations also revealed entrenched bias in police responses—particularly with respect to the failure to investigate or prosecute sexual violence against LGBTQIA+ sex workers.

Historical injustices and ongoing discrimination create rational mistrust of legal institutions that leaves survivors without recourse or protection.

These disparities are not confined to the criminal system. They extend into civil and administrative domains, including family law, healthcare access, and social services—systems that are often not designed with LGBTQIA+ communities in mind. Participants highlighted being misgendered during court proceedings, a lack of recognition of chosen family structures, and discriminatory gatekeeping in healthcare and housing services.

Sexual Assaults and Related Offences

Sexual assault is a significantly under-addressed legal issue within LGBTQIA+ communities, as confirmed by both stakeholder interviews and contemporary research. According to Private Lives 3,³¹ 32.8% of all participants reported experiencing sexual assault or violence. This rate was substantially higher amongst non-binary people (41.5%), trans men (36.9%), and trans women (28.9%), compared to 23.8% of cisgender women and 11.2% of cisgender men. Similarly, rates of sexual coercion were elevated across gender-diverse groups: 21.2% of all participants reported experiences of coercion, rising to 32.5% among non-binary people and 29.8% among trans men, compared to 19.6% of cis women and 9.6% of cis men.

The Fuelling Hate³² report reinforces these findings, with 1 in 10 trans participants experiencing anti-trans violence, including physical and sexual assault, within a 12 month period.

For LGBTQIA+ sex workers, these vulnerabilities are further compounded by legal and systemic barriers. A case run by the ICLC in the NSW District Court established that non-payment

for sexual services can amount to both wage theft and battery in NSW. The Court awarded more than \$360,000 in damages, with the Judge remarking that the Defendant's conduct amounted to "sexual assault or rape" because payment had been a condition of consent.

The justice system's response to sexual violence perpetrated against LGBTQIA+ victims is critically undermined by under-reporting and entrenched systemic barriers rooted in discrimination and institutional bias. In the Speaking Out survey, 75% of LGBTQIA+ respondents did not report their victimisation to police or support services. This response was further validated during stakeholder interviews. Commonly cited barriers included prior negative experiences with law enforcement, fear of further victimisation, fear of being outed, and concerns about homophobic or transphobic responses from service providers.

Under-reporting is particularly acute among LGBTQIA+ sex workers, who frequently face police unresponsiveness, harassment, and vilification after reporting crimes. This has led to a widespread reluctance to engage with the legal system, driven by what researchers describe as a "lack of faith in police and courts to hold offenders accountable."³³

These challenges are compounded for transgender and male sex workers, who face higher rates of violence from both intimate partners and clients, while also contending with bias from law enforcement.

The barriers identified above are purely the tip of the iceberg. Multiple reports identify additional legal issues experienced in higher prevalence by the LGBTQIA+ community, and significant gaps in the ability of services to support community members.

Interestingly, similar findings of unmet need have been reported in a North American study (Figure 3), adding weight to the central argument that the LGBTQIA+ community has significant and diverse unmet needs that must be met by competent specialist services nationwide.



3 LOW-INCOME LGBT PEOPLE ARE IN DESPERATE NEED OF CIVIL LEGAL SERVICES.



Housing



Income &
Disability
Assistance



Immigration



Healthcare



Family



Employment



Education



Veterans

4 VIOLENCE AND HARASSMENT ARE SEVERE AND PERVERSIVE PROBLEMS THAT CREATE MAJOR LEGAL NEEDS FOR LOW-INCOME LGBT PEOPLE

50% experienced some form of violence



5 LOW-INCOME TRANSGENDER PEOPLE FACE EVEN GREATER VIOLENCE AND HARASSMENT THAN LGB PEOPLE, GIVING RISE TO EVEN GREATER LEGAL NEEDS

26% of the transgender respondents to our survey experienced problems with employment in the last year alone.

6 INTERSECTIONS BETWEEN RACE, POVERTY, SEXUAL ORIENTATION, AND GENDER IDENTITY POSE ADDITIONAL LEGAL CHALLENGES FOR MANY LOW-INCOME LGBT NEW YORKERS

Legal services providers should be vigilant about and be prepared to aggressively challenge discrimination in all its forms.



Figure 3 Findings from the US Study:
"Poverty is an LGBT Issue"

4.4 Access in Rural, Regional and Remote Areas

Stakeholders consistently identified access to culturally appropriate legal services for LGBTQIA+ people in rural, regional and remote (RRR) areas as a critical and complex challenge. Existing specialist LGBTQIA+ legal services, though often having “statewide catchments,” lack the sufficient funding, or receive no funding at all, to establish meaningful connections or strong referral pathways in regional communities.^{34,35,36} LGBTQIA+ people living in states with no specialist services are left to rely on generalist CLCs, which often lack the specialised knowledge or cultural competence required for LGBTQIA+ issues.

This landscape creates a patchy safety net; strong in some metropolitan centres, but with large, critical gaps stretching across vast distances, leaving many community members without the tailored support they desperately need.

Consultations revealed that geographic isolation adds to the barriers already faced by LGBTQIA+ communities, creating a compounding effect where physical distance intersects with social and cultural barriers. Unlike metropolitan areas, where anonymity and diverse services offer pathways to support, RRR regions often lack both specialised expertise and the social infrastructure required for inclusive service delivery.

This gap extends well beyond legal support. A national survey³⁷ found that LGBTQIA+ people in rural locations experience more difficulty in accessing a mental health service that is inclusive of LGBTQIA+ people; and experience lesser acceptance, including at health or support services. While this pertains to health, it underscores a broader systemic absence of culturally safe and inclusive support in RRR areas.

The scarcity of specialised services in RRR areas leaves LGBTQIA+ people facing significant barriers to justice, resulting in unresolved legal problems, heightened exposure to discrimination and violence, and poorer health and wellbeing outcomes. Many are forced to navigate complex legal systems without adequate support, or they forgo seeking help altogether.³⁸

Key Challenges Identified in RRR Communities

Social isolation and heightened stigma emerge as particularly acute in smaller communities where everyone knows everyone, making it difficult for LGBTQIA+ people to seek help without their identity or legal issues becoming community knowledge.

“In rural areas, LGBTQIA+ people are significantly more likely to experience inequalities, including: lower acceptance rates in the community and at health care services....greater difficulty accessing inclusive mental health services..”
Pride Foundation Australia

Privacy and confidentiality concerns are magnified in close-knit communities where legal service staff may have personal connections to clients or their families, creating potential conflicts of interest and breaches of confidentiality.

Absence of local LGBTQIA+ expertise means that generalist CLCs in RRR areas often lack the specialised knowledge, cultural competency, and affirming practices necessary to serve LGBTQIA+ clients effectively.

Geographic barriers create practical obstacles including travel costs, time away from work, and the physical impossibility of accessing metropolitan services for people with disabilities, caring responsibilities, or limited transport options.

Conservative social attitudes in some RRR communities can create hostile environments where LGBTQIA+ people face discrimination, making them reluctant to disclose their identity or seek help locally.

In summary: this rural-urban divide compounds existing inequities, leaving LGBTQIA+ people living in RRR areas with virtually no access to culturally safe legal support, creating acute pockets of unmet legal need in communities already facing geographical disadvantage.



4.5 Systemic Change Limitations: Advocacy and Law Reform Gaps

The interviews uncovered the critical role that CLCs play in driving advocacy and law reform to address systemic disadvantage, secure sustainable resources, and to inform the development of laws that are just, inclusive and fit for purpose. However, in all but one case, this work was unfunded – leaving staff to pursue reform efforts after hours or at the expense of direct client service. This structural constraint undermines the sector’s capacity to respond to emerging legal need.

Workshop participants echoed these concerns, highlighting that LGBTQIA+ legal need is often rooted in systemic failures—such as discriminatory legislation, exclusionary service design, and punitive responses to poverty, migration, and gender diversity. Without dedicated funding and infrastructure for advocacy, CLCs are unable to challenge these root causes or contribute meaningfully to law reform processes. The result is a reactive system that treats symptoms rather than causes, and leaves its frontline workers overextended and under-resourced.

These findings closely mirror those reported by LGBTQIA+ organisations. The 2022 *Where are the Rainbow Resources* Report, identified chronic underinvestment in structural advocacy and an absence of coordinated national reform efforts. Figure 4 illustrates this, reinforcing the urgent need for sustained investment in systemic change work that is led by and for LGBTQIA+ communities.

Without adequate advocacy and law reform capacity, the systemic legal barriers that create many LGBTQIA+ legal issues will remain unaddressed, perpetuating cycles of discrimination, causing unmet legal need to grow rather than being prevented at its source.

Challenges facing LGBTQ+ organisations

Funding to do our work



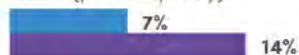
The impact of COVID-19



Finding the right people (staff, board, volunteers)



Other (please specify)



Lack of public interest in/understanding of the needs of the community/ies we serve



Discrimination against our community



Lack of registration/DGR status



Don't have the capacity in our team to apply for funding



Finding other organisations to partner with



Key Challenge A challenge

Figure 4 Challenges Facing LGBTQ+ Organisations

5. Building Effective LGBTQIA+ Legal Services

Stakeholders reiterated the need for legal services that are accessible, culturally safe, multidisciplinary and tailored to the diverse needs and geographies of LGBTQIA+ communities. Crucially, they emphasised that effective service design must go beyond direct delivery to embed systemic reform and prevention.

Their priorities coalesce around three core categories, explored in the following section:

- 5.1 Core service design principles
- 5.2 Operational infrastructure and workforce needs
- 5.3 Financial sustainability and appropriate resourcing



5.1 Core Service Design Principles

Designing effective legal services for LGBTQIA+ communities requires more than responsive casework – it demands a deliberate, trauma-informed, and culturally safe approach that embeds systemic reform and prevention. Stakeholders consistently emphasised that lasting impact hinges on addressing both individual needs and the structural conditions that cause legal vulnerability. The following principles – summarised in Figure 5 – outline the core service design principles elements required to meet these goals.

Multidisciplinary Service Delivery for Complex Needs

A strong consensus emerged from literature³⁹ and interviews supporting the implementation of multidisciplinary service models that provide ‘wrap-around’ support, addressing (in house) a fuller spectrum of client needs rather than attending to legal issues in isolation. These multidisciplinary approaches include lawyers typically working alongside social workers, educators, peer workers, policy workers, and trained client intake staff to create effective support systems.

Stakeholders emphasised the preventive value of this integrated approach, noting that early



Figure 5 Core Service Design Principles

intervention on non-legal issues – such as mental health challenges or housing instability – can prevent problems from escalating into complex legal problems. Respondents pointed to successful examples including Core & Cluster women's refuges and Kaleido Health Centre as demonstrations of how integrated models can deliver more effective outcomes for clients with complex, interconnected needs.

The consultation revealed that clients frequently present with multifaceted challenges where legal support alone was insufficient for achieving comprehensive, lasting solutions. Several stakeholders advocated for scheduled 'drop-in' sessions where clients could access assistance with day-to-day administrative matters including dealing with government agencies, understanding correspondence, or navigating bureaucratic processes that have not yet escalated to legal issues but carry significant potential to do so if left unresolved.

Interviewees who championed this preventive approach argued that addressing these administrative challenges for clients early on represents an effective intervention available to CLCs. By providing accessible, low cost and low-barrier support for everyday problems, services can prevent the accumulation of unresolved issues that often compound into complex legal matters that may end up in court or elsewhere in the justice system. This early intervention model not only serves clients more effectively but also creates sustainable caseload management for legal practitioners. The location of the drop-in service could be either at the CLC premises or at culturally safe premises where the community commonly gathers.

Stakeholders also identified an alternative strategic approach that some specialist services have deliberately adopted. Rather than building internal multidisciplinary capacity, these services concentrate their limited financial resources exclusively on employing solicitors, while establishing strong referral networks to culturally appropriate external services for clients' non-legal needs.

This focused model offers several strategic advantages. It enables services to develop critical mass in legal expertise specifically tailored to their community's unique needs – expertise that cannot be replicated through external referrals. By partnering with existing culturally appropriate services for social support needs, these organisations avoid the challenge of maintaining isolated professionals (such as a single social worker) within a predominantly legal practice. This approach ensures both legal specialisation and comprehensive support while maximising effective use of limited resources.

Both approaches – integrated internal services and specialised legal services with strong external partnerships – provide effective services for LGBTQIA+ communities. Both approaches require respect for other professional roles to foster effective socio-legal collaboration between lawyers, social workers and peer workers and a deliberate coordinated response between legal and other social supports. The choice largely depends on organisational structure and capacity, the community context and available partnership opportunities.

Trauma-Informed Practice

Stakeholders consistently emphasised the critical importance of implementing trauma-informed approaches across all aspects of service delivery, recognising that many LGBTQIA+ clients have experienced significant trauma related to discrimination, family rejection, violence and adverse interactions with mainstream services. This trauma can profoundly shape the client experience when engaging with legal services and requires deliberate and informed responses from service providers.

“If you are a generalist (CLC) receiving a request for help from a trans person – the first barrier is immediately the intake process – it can be off putting and awful. By the time the client has done intake they may already have had a negative experience”

The intake process emerged as a particularly crucial moment to establish client safety, comfort, and trust while actively working to prevent re-traumatisation. Stakeholders stressed that first impressions and initial interactions often determine whether clients will continue engaging with services or decide to withdraw following feeling unsafe or misunderstood.

Several CLCs recommended integrating peer navigators and trained ‘problem identifiers’ – ideally these are people with lived LGBTQIA+ experience – into intake and triage processes.

These roles serve multiple functions; they assist with initial triage to ensure clients connect with appropriate services, they provide warm referrals that are genuine and supportive, and they guide clients through their initial engagement with a legal system that often feels overwhelming or intimidating. The inclusion of people with lived experience helps to create immediate connection and reduces the burden on clients to explain their identity or circumstances to potentially unfamiliar service providers.

Beyond intake processes, stakeholders identified several essential strategies for embedding trauma-informed practice throughout service delivery:

Creating safe physical and emotional environments. This involves designing spaces that are welcoming and private, display inclusive symbols, ensure confidentiality, and maintain a calm, non-judgmental atmosphere where clients feel secure to share sensitive information.

Comprehensive staff training in trauma-informed care. This ensures all team members understand the ways in which trauma may manifest, the impact of trauma on client behaviour and decision-making, and how to respond therapeutically rather than punitively when clients exhibit trauma responses including hypervigilance, emotional dysregulation, emotional outbursts or avoidant behaviours.

Recognition of trauma’s impact on help-seeking behaviour. This supports staff to understand why clients may seem distrustful, may not follow through on appointments

or may present as angry or withdrawn. This reframes these responses as reactions to trauma, rather than deficiencies in the person.

Flexible service delivery approaches.

This accommodates the reality that trauma survivors may require multiple attempts to engage with services, may require frequent rescheduling and may need services delivered in non-traditional formats such as phone consultations, outreach locations or extended appointment times.

These trauma-informed approaches recognise that effective legal service delivery for LGBTQIA+ communities involves addressing not only the immediate and presenting legal issue in isolation. It also involves the broader context of trauma and marginalisation that shapes a client's capacity to engage with and benefit from legal support.

Cultural Safety and Inclusion

Stakeholders emphasised that visible symbols of inclusion – including rainbow flags, Pride stickers, the accredited 'rainbow tick' and affirming online statements – are vital signals that communicate a service's commitment to being welcoming and safe for LGBTQIA+ community members. These visual cues assist people to quickly identify supportive environments before they even engage with services.

Beyond visible symbols, stakeholders highlighted that word-of-mouth recommendations from trusted community members are powerful ways to build credibility and social licence. Services must be supported

to maintain their reputation with community, which means having adequate capacity to provide legal assistance when it is needed and further capacity to listen to community feedback when it is offered.

Central to these discussions was the critical importance of establishing genuine trust with the LGBTQIA+ community, particularly given the documented history of discrimination and trauma that many community members have experienced. Stakeholders stressed that services must prioritise cultural safety by creating environments where clients feel genuinely respected, understood, and comfortable sharing their personal information. This means ensuring that staff are trained to provide non-judgmental support and that clients never feel pressured to explain or justify their identity, relationships, or experiences.



Systemic Advocacy and Structural Reform

Stakeholders consistently emphasised that lasting improvements for LGBTQIA+ communities will require moving beyond provision of individual case work. Services must have capacity to confront the systems, laws, and institutional practices that produce legal inequality. While direct legal services do provide essential support to individual clients, they alone cannot dismantle the structural conditions that perpetuate disadvantage.

“A lot of laws impact our communities disproportionately so taking legal assistance on an individual basis is like pushing a boulder up a hill and watching it roll down. So, changing laws and systems is essential”

Systemic advocacy; which includes informing strategic policy development, law reform, and institutional accountability – is critical to preventing legal issues before they arise and creating more equitable legal frameworks. LGBTQIA+ CLCs currently face significant capacity constraints. All but one of the services consulted receive no dedicated funding for systemic policy and law reform work, despite being repeatedly asked to contribute to government consultations on policy and law reform, and institutional change.

This funding gap creates a paradox: services are tasked with addressing systemic issues while lacking the resources to engage in the

solutions required. Stakeholders described the unfunded burden of providing expert input into policy processes, often under tight timeframes and without support for research, submission writing, or stakeholder engagement.

The consultation identified several priority areas that would support:

Development of culturally appropriate service standards

Creation of inclusive institutional practices across justice and health systems

Advance evidence-based policy solutions grounded in community-identified priorities

Systemic advocacy must be recognised as core business, not just an optional extra. It is the mechanism through which services can shift from reactive support to proactive change, addressing root causes rather than symptoms.

Advocacy alone is insufficient if the laws themselves remain unjust. Stakeholders stressed that law reform is a necessary extension of systemic advocacy – enhanced legal protections can be used to enforce individual rights and protections.

Law Reform Priorities

Stakeholders identified numerous areas where current laws are either inadequate or actively harmful to LGBTQIA+ communities. Priority reform areas include: strengthening anti-discrimination protections, streamlining of gender affirmation processes, advancing the rights of people with intersex variations

and the right to bodily autonomy and ensuring comprehensive bans on conversion practices across all jurisdictions.

Respondents emphasised that law reform extends beyond securing legislative change. It must also include ensuring that adequate implementation and monitoring mechanisms are resourced and available. Historical examples illustrate that well-intentioned reforms can fail without proper resourcing for implementation, training, and ongoing compliance monitoring.

The consultations emphasised the urgent need for reform impacting trans communities, where legal frameworks often lag significantly behind community needs and human rights standards. These gaps create ongoing legal uncertainty and require resource-intensive case-by-case advocacy. The need for individual test cases could be prevented through proactive law reform.

Police Accountability and Institutional Change

Beyond legislative reform, stakeholders identified policing as a persistent site of harm, mistrust and systemic failure for LGBTQIA+ communities. Consultations revealed a consistent pattern of negative experiences with law enforcement—including discrimination, harassment, and, in some cases, physical assault. This continues to erode trust in police and contributes to significant under-reporting of crimes by the LGBTQIA+ community.

Addressing entrenched mistrust in police will require sustained investment in police

accountability mechanisms, comprehensive cultural competency training, and systemic culture change across policing and justice institutions. Stakeholders also emphasised the immediate need for funding to support LGBTQIA+-experienced lawyers who are able to accompany clients to police interactions. This would provide both practical assistance and a layer of oversight that helps mitigate harm.

Other sector recommendations included redirecting funding that is currently allocated to police services towards LGBTQIA+ specialist community-led services which are better positioned to understand the needs of LGBTQIA+ people and more capable to deliver culturally safe, appropriate support. Community members are more likely to seek help from these services, as many avoid police due to fear, past harm, and a lack of safety throughout those interactions.

Education and Awareness Raising

Stakeholders highlighted that education and awareness raising are essential components of effective service delivery and upstream prevention. While quality online resources and social media campaigns were seen as valuable tools – particularly for reaching tech-savvy and geographically dispersed communities – they must be complemented by proactive, community-led engagement strategies.

Participants described a strong appetite for provision of legal information and education across LGBTQIA+ communities, noting that many are competent and eager to understand their rights but lack access to clear and culturally safe resources. Education efforts



must be tailored, accessible, and grounded in lived experience, and delivered through trusted channels, including delivery by peer navigators or access workers, presence at community events and through partnerships with allied frontline services.

Community legal education and expanded legal knowledge in community was also framed as a trust-building strategy. By equipping communities with knowledge and confidence to navigate legal systems, education initiatives have capacity to create networks, build community confidence reduce fear, prevent escalation of legal issues and foster earlier engagement with legal support services.

Engagement and Outreach

Engaging directly with community groups, including leveraging online platforms and attending community events were identified as essential for building trust, raising awareness of services and tailoring responses. Stakeholders identified several successful strategies to achieve this.

Community Engagement: LGBTQIA+ CLCs reported the value of running events to promote their services and increase visibility amongst the LGBTQIA+ community.

Direct Outreach Services: One respondent identified the need to extend outreach to vulnerable populations in places like prisons, rehabilitation facilities, women's refuges and homelessness services that intersect with the LGBTQIA+ community. It was suggested that outreach should be provided by solicitors and peer navigators.

RRR Access Strategies: While the establishment of dedicated LGBTQIA+ CLCs in RRR areas was identified as the ideal solution, stakeholders acknowledged current financial constraints and proposed several alternative models to improve access:

- **Embedding specialist lawyers:** Placing lawyers with LGBTQIA+ experience within existing RRR generalist CLCs was suggested as a pragmatic approach. While some endorsed this approach, others raised concerns about professional isolation, limited peer support, and heightened risk of burnout for embedded specialist workers.
- **Coordinated outreach services:** A collaborative outreach model, led by a specialist LGBTQIA+ CLC and delivered in partnership with local CLCs and community-based organisations, was proposed to extend reach and build trust across RRR communities.
- **Capacity Building for Generalist CLCs:** Delivering targeted training and resources that would enhance the cultural competency and responsiveness of generalist CLCs was seen as essential for improving service quality and inclusivity.
- **Technology-Enabled Support:** Leveraging telephone and video conferencing for remote consultations, alongside social media platforms to foster connection and visibility, was recommended to overcome geographic barriers and geographic isolation.

- **Partnerships and Referral Pathways:** Establishing strong, values-aligned partnerships and clear referral pathways with local generalist CLCs and frontline agencies was recommended to ensure consistent, culturally safe support for LGBTQIA+ community members in RRR areas.

Referral Pathways and Networks

All CLC stakeholders interviewed emphasised the need for clear, safe, and well-understood referral pathways between legal and non-legal services. These pathways serve as essential bridges that ensure clients receive wrap-around, coordinated support. Stakeholders highlighted the value of warm referrals, proactive follow-ups, and culturally appropriate service connections, all of which significantly shape the client experience and build trust.

Strengthening relationships with Legal Aid, police, government agencies, and professional bodies – including law societies and other CLCs—was also identified as key to improving service responses and driving systemic change for LGBTQIA+ communities.

Supporting the Whole Client

Recognising that individuals experience legal vulnerability that may be shaped by overlapping identities including gender, sexuality, race, disability, geography, and socioeconomic status. Stakeholders emphasised that service delivery must be responsive to these layered experiences.

Respondents consistently highlighted the need for nuanced, intersectional approaches that reflect the distinct experiences of trans people, First Nations peoples, people with intersex variations, people with disability and those living in RRR areas.

Tailored support for victims of sexual and family violence was identified as essential but frequently under-resourced. Stakeholders noted that mainstream services often lack the cultural competency to respond effectively to these experiences, reinforcing the need for specialist LGBTQIA+ legal services that are trauma-informed and grounded in lived experience.

Embedding design principles across intake, triage, outreach, and referral processes that consider intersecting client needs is critical. This includes:

Prioritising peer navigators and lived experience roles to build trust and reduce re-traumatisation.

Ensuring flexible service formats that accommodate diverse needs.

Partnering with culturally appropriate organisations to extend reach and relevance.

Advocating for funding models that support service delivery to groups experiencing overlapping vulnerabilities.

Through client-centred service design, legal services can more effectively respond to the realities of LGBTQIA+ communities and ensure that no one is left navigating the system alone.



5.2 Operational Infrastructure and Workforce Needs

Workforce Development and Retention

Attracting and retaining skilled legal staff within CLCs remains a significant challenge across the sector, in circumstances where remuneration is low and there is a high risk of burnout. While vicarious trauma was acknowledged, respondents consistently emphasised that psychosocial stressors, particularly those related to workload and inadequate workforce resourcing, pose the greatest threat to staff wellbeing. Several shared stories of the emotional toll experienced when unable to support clients due to limited service capacity, describing the burden as 'carrying the weight of the world'.

"Put funding, structures and processes in place so that staff can rely on those rather than passion and getting drawn into an emotional web".

To address these challenges, stakeholders identified the need for:

- Improved wages that are attractive and competitive with Legal Aid and government roles of similar seniority
- Improved working conditions
- Access to professional development and structured support
- Clear pathways for career progression and role sustainability
- Culturally appropriate external supervision for First Nations and trans frontline workers
- More staff at all levels to be available for proper debriefing and support, and capacity for solicitors to participate in reflective practice and clinical supervision

Key attributes for staff working with LGBTQIA+ communities included:

- Professional competence
- Empathy, patience, resilience, and self-reflection
- A strong commitment to advancing LGBTQIA+ rights

While in-house training materials were seen as helpful, stakeholders strongly advocated for in-person training and dedicated roles as far more effective than relying solely on written and on-line material. They recommended comprehensive, ongoing training for all staff, covering LGBTQIA+ issues, trans specific

training, training on people with intersex variations, inclusive language and trauma-informed practices, as essential to delivering culturally safe and affirming services.

However, stakeholders also raised concerns about how organisations often rely informally on staff with lived experience to lead inclusion efforts and educate others. While these staff members do bring invaluable insight, this informal expectation can place an undue emotional burden on them, particularly when they are positioned as spokespersons for whole communities.

To build truly inclusive and sustainable services, organisations must invest in formalised roles, structured training programs, and systems of support that do not rely disproportionately on lived experience staff to carry the cultural load.

Technology and Facilities

Investment in suitably built infrastructure and office spaces, suitable IT systems, practice and records management software are needed to realise improved operational efficiency, increase job satisfaction and improve retention of talent.

Data Collection and Management

Robust data collection and management systems are foundational to effective service delivery, strategic planning, and policy reform. Stakeholders consistently emphasised the urgent need for national-scale data to better understand the size, diversity, and legal needs of LGBTQIA+ communities, particularly those facing compounded disadvantage.



National Data Needs: There was strong consensus across the literature⁴⁰ and interviews that current national data on LGBTQIA+ populations is fragmented, inconsistent, and insufficient. This limits the ability to make evidence-based decisions about resource allocation, service design, and workforce planning. Stakeholders widely supported the inclusion of relevant questions in the National Census and other population-level datasets to enable more accurate estimates of legal need and community size. Without this foundational data, systemic reform efforts risk being under-informed and under-resourced.

Client Data Management: At the service level, many CLCs lack the infrastructure to consistently collect and manage client demographic and client outcome data. Interviews revealed significant variation in practice management systems, which hinders interoperability and sector-wide analysis. Stakeholders noted the potential value of harmonising systems across LGBTQIA+ CLCs to improve efficiency, data integrity, and collaboration. Importantly, data collection must be culturally safe, trauma-informed, and aligned with community expectations around privacy and consent.

Data for Evaluation: Improved data systems were also seen as critical for evaluating service effectiveness, particularly for outreach,

volunteer-led, and early intervention programs. Stakeholders highlighted the need for consistent metrics to assess impact, identify gaps, and support continuous improvement. Reliable data enables CLCs to demonstrate value, advocate for funding, and adapt service models to meet evolving community needs.

Governance and Operations

Stakeholders highlighted that the governance structure and operational model of LGBTQIA+ specialist CLCs play a critical role in shaping service effectiveness, workforce sustainability and the organisation's ability to respond to community's needs.

Specialist CLC services: Dedicated community-controlled CLCs were strongly favoured by some stakeholders as best suited to deliver client-centric care and to build trust with the LGBTQIA+ community. However, there was also evidence, and agreement by stakeholders, that a specialised CLC can operate effectively as a dedicated initiative within a larger (non-LGBTQIA+) CLC and enjoy benefits, such as increased financial certainty and economies of scale for operations.

National or Jurisdictional Coordination: Stakeholders discussed the potential benefits of establishing a national or jurisdictional-based network or coordinating hub for specialist LGBTQIA+ CLCs. This could enhance efficiency, promote consistent practices, and support the development of shared systems to streamline information exchange and enable the creation of reliable data repositories. It would also provide a mechanism to oversee a comprehensive online collection of educational and training resources for the sector.

However, several caveats were raised. Maintaining national or jurisdictional networks require long-term, predictable funding to ensure relevance and to provide benefit. Respondents expressed limited confidence that new funding would be sufficient to support such an initiative. As a result, there was only modest support for prioritising a coordinating hub over direct investment in frontline CLC services.

5.3 Financial Sustainability and Appropriate Resourcing

LGBTQIA+ organisations in Australia are critically underfunded. Only 0.2% of registered charities list LGBTQIA+ people as primary beneficiaries, and they receive just 5 cents out of every \$100 received by Australian charities. Government invests 6 cents out of every \$100 to LGBTQIA+ organisations. Philanthropists and bequests account for 12 cents out of every \$100 of donations that are received by Australian LGBTQIA+ charities.⁴¹

Nearly 40% of the surveyed LGBTQIA+ charities operated on budgets of less than \$10,000, and over half relied entirely on volunteers, lacking the paid staff that are needed to deliver services effectively. Organisations supporting transgender communities and organisations supporting people with intersex variations are particularly under-resourced, despite facing some of the most significant legal, economic, and social barriers.⁴²

The ICLC receives no dedicated funding for the specialist services that they provide for the LGBTQIA+ community

This chronic lack of financial support has direct implications for the legal wellbeing of LGBTQIA+ communities. For example, between 2013 – 2018, a third of organisations surveyed in the survey for 'Where are the Rainbow Resources' Report had to cease programs due to funding constraints, even as 72% experienced rising demand.⁴³ Many groups reported an increasing need for legal advocacy and support for discrimination, housing security, youth protection and legal gender affirmation, yet lacked the infrastructure and referral pathways to respond. Strengthening and resourcing LGBTQIA+ CLCs is vital to meeting this unmet demand. These centres provide culturally competent, rights-based support and empower community-led legal reform. They are essential community supports that are overdue for targeted investment.

Immediate Funding Shortfalls

The resource crisis facing LGBTQIA+ legal services creates immediate operational challenges that compromise service quality and sustainability. For example, the ICLC, which receives no government funding for its

LGBTQIA+ dedicated legal services, reports a predicted shortfall of over \$320,000 in its FY25/26 budget. This example illustrates the immediate and substantial nature of funding gaps across the sector.

Investment Priorities for Additional Resources

Respondents demonstrated clear consensus about how additional funding should be allocated, emphasising investments that increase capacity, efficiency, scope, and reach. Merely maintaining existing service levels would not meet the pressing demand. Stakeholders agreed that individual CLCs are best positioned to prioritise funding allocation, based on their specific community contexts and service models.

Priority investment areas identified through the consultation include increasing lawyer full-time equivalent positions to expand both capacity and specialised expertise, and enhancing client support through additional social workers, peer navigators, and trained intake officers rather than relying on volunteers to take on the bulk of this skilled work. Services also prioritised expanding service scope through initiatives like drop-in services and client outreach programs, increasing community visibility and engagement, and developing capacity to serve rural, regional, and remote clients.

Organisational sustainability priorities include improving staff conditions through better remuneration and benefits, investing in specialised training and professional development and upgrading practice infrastructure including office facilities, information technology, and case management

systems. Stakeholders also emphasised the critical need for dedicated funding for advocacy, policy work, and law reform activities, alongside improved data collection systems to demonstrate impact and inform service development.

Sustainable Funding Models

The consultation reinforced the fundamental importance of funding predictability for effective service delivery. Stakeholders highlighted that current funding uncertainty creates significant operational inefficiencies, diverting specialist legal expertise away from client service toward fundraising activities and grant applications.

The time and resources required for continuous fundraising represent a substantial opportunity cost, reducing the time available for direct client service and systemic advocacy work. This situation creates a counterproductive cycle where under-resourced services must divert their limited capacity away from their core mission, in order to secure the resources necessary to fulfill that mission.

Sustainable funding models require multi-year commitments that enable strategic planning, staff retention, and the development of specialised expertise. Specialist LGBTQIA+ CLCs with guaranteed, dedicated funding could eliminate the administrative burden of continuous grant applications, while providing the stability necessary for effective long-term advocacy and law reform work.



6. Service Delivery: A Blueprint for Specialist LGBTQIA+ CLC's

Drawing on insights from stakeholders and sector literature, this report proposes a blueprint for LGBTQIA+-focused CLCs that centres client experience, cultural safety and service effectiveness. The model, presented in Figure 6 and detailed below, maps a client journey from initial contact through to sustained support, structured around four phases:

- **Connecting:** how clients find and connect to services
- **Engaging:** initial interaction with the service, intake and trust building
- **Providing:** legal advice and representation, and other non-legal supports
- **Sustaining:** organisational capacity for outreach, advocacy and long-term impact

This blueprint recognises that effective LGBTQIA+ legal services require more than just legal expertise. They must also invest in the infrastructure, workforce and community relationships that underpin culturally safe, trauma-informed, and accessible service delivery. The blueprint is not prescriptive or exhaustive, rather it offers a flexible rubric that existing LGBTQIA+ CLCs and new specialist

CLCs can refer to when designing and expanding services to meet the needs of the LGBTQIA+ community in their area.

Importantly, the blueprint identifies major resource-dependent activities across each phase, highlighting what is required to sustainably address needs while meeting organisational goals. A simple financial model summarised below, provides estimates of human resources needed at the phases based on population size.

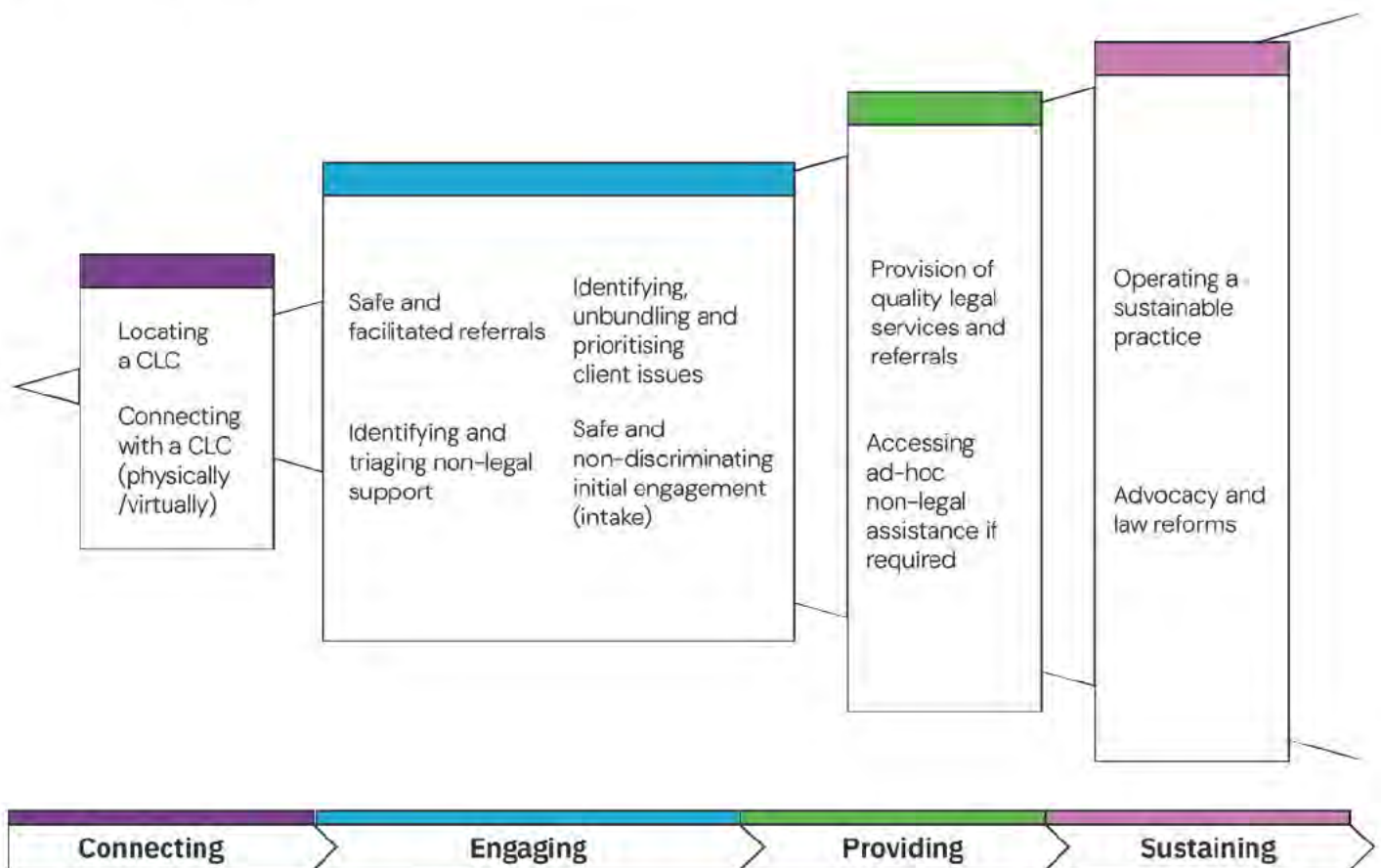


Figure 6 A Service Design Blueprint for LGBTQIA+ CLCs

Phase 1: CONNECTING Building Community Awareness and Trust

Digital and Physical Presence

Maintain a culturally safe and inclusive website, social media presence, and office signage that signals safety and a welcoming environment for all LGBTQIA+ community members.

Ensure consistent visual identity across all platforms, reflecting a commitment to community values.

Use digital tools to amplify legal literacy and upstream prevention, especially for tech-savvy and geographically dispersed communities.

Community Engagement Infrastructure

Deploy appropriately trained staff to attend community events, deliver community legal education and build awareness of available supports.

Facilitate cross-promotion with allied services to expand reach, strengthen referral networks and foster sector collaboration.

Establish telephone, video and other communication services to accommodate people with diverse accessibility needs and geographic barriers.

Phase 2: ENGAGING Creating Accessible Entry Points

Specialised Intake Systems

Engage funded and qualified intake staff with skills in LGBTQIA+ cultural competency, trauma-informed practice, and experience delivering services to diverse communities.

Provide access to social and community workers who are skilled at navigating complex legal and psychosocial needs.

Retain peer navigators with lived experience to build trust, reduce barriers and support early engagement.

Comprehensive Support Infrastructure

Retain paralegal staff to support effective triaging, prioritisation and appropriate referrals.

Implement harmonised practice management systems to protect client confidentiality and streamline service delivery.

Ensure safe, welcoming physical premises that celebrate and reflect community values.

Phase 3: PROVIDING Delivering Specialised Legal Services

Invest in Legal Capacity

Retain sufficient full-time equivalent (FTE) lawyers that will sufficiently address identified legal need within designated catchment areas.

Maintain legal expertise to address complex and systemic issues affecting LGBTQIA+ clients.

Provide competitive remuneration and conditions to attract and retain quality legal staff with relevant specialisation.

Supporting communities in RRR areas

Retain sufficient FTE lawyers to meet outreach targets for RRR locations.

Conduct regular outreach visits to ensure geographic equity in service access.

Retain staff capacity and / or referral networks to offer selected non-legal services that respond to client needs.

Phase 4: SUSTAINING Ensuring Long-term Impact and Organisational Health

Systemic Change Capacity

Retain FTE lawyers who will contribute to policy discussions and undertake advocacy and law reform.

Develop sustainable funding relationships that enable long-term strategic planning, impact measurement and sector leadership.

Organisational Sustainability

Ensure that services are able to pay fair and competitive wages to attract and retain skilled staff, prevent staff burnout and uphold service quality over time. Workforce sustainability is foundational to culturally safe and client-centred service delivery.

Establish systems for ongoing professional development, supervision and knowledge exchange to maintain cutting-edge expertise and support staff wellbeing.

Build financial reserves and diversify funding streams to reduce vulnerability to economic shifts and policy changes, ensuring continuity of services.

Implementation Considerations

This blueprint model recognises that effective LGBTQIA+ legal services require investment across all four phases simultaneously, with each phase building upon and reinforcing the others. The model emphasises that sustainable service delivery depends not only on direct legal capacity but also on the social support including peer navigators, social workers and financial counsellors; broader infrastructure to enable community engagement; specialised intake systems and long-term organisational health.

Success in this model requires recognition that LGBTQIA+ legal needs are often more complex than those addressed by mainstream legal services, necessitating higher resource investment per client served but delivering proportionally greater community impact through resolution of individual cases while advocating for broader, systemic change.

Financial Model

A simple quantitative financial model supports the blueprint, offering CLCs a means to estimate the funding required to deliver quality services. The model is designed to be flexible, allowing each CLC to set its own service level targets across metropolitan, regional, and remote catchments, and tailor those estimates according to identified priorities in the population.

The resources are estimates only. They **must** be customised by individual CLCs to meet the needs of the communities that they serve, their strategic priorities, and infrastructure requirements. Premises, IT systems, and

workforce composition will be unique to different services.

The model provides baseline estimate cost estimates for legal, administrative and social support functions across all States and Territories in Australia. It intentionally excludes costings for several essential components, not because these components are optional, but because there is variability in specialist CLC models and operational contexts.

These excluded items include:

- Executive leadership roles (e.g. CEO, COO), board remuneration and governance expenses
- Insurance, IT infrastructure and communication systems
- Pro bono training, onboarding and coordination
- Staff training and professional development
- Rent, fit out, utilities and cleaning
- Travel for outreach, community engagement and events
- Events and communication
- Other overheads

These exclusions highlight the need for CLCs to undertake bespoke financial planning that reflects their organisational structure, service scope, and sustainability goals. The model is a starting point and not a prescription.

The model should be used in conjunction with strategic planning and community consultation to ensure that individual services are adequately resourced to be culturally safe, responsive, and financially viable service delivery.

The model does account for:

- Solicitors to deliver legal services ('Providing'), advocacy and law reform work ('Sustaining'), and some outreach and community legal education ('Connecting').
- Administration and social support staff such as social workers, peer workers and financial counsellors to assist with 'Engaging'.

The model assumes:

- The specialist CLC would service approximately 20% of the legal needs of the LGBTQIA+ community within its catchment, with other organisations addressing the remainder of needs. A specialist CLC would decide which clients they are able to prioritise, and why. This could be based on geography, legal problem, client vulnerability or other factors.
- The mix of professionals would be at the discretion of each CLC. For example, a CLC may prefer to have more legal expertise and rely on referral pathways for social support services. Others may choose to prioritise policy and law reform over direct service provision.



New South Wales	Connecting	Engaging	Providing & Sustaining	Total
Solicitors (FTE)	1.53		18.32	19.85
Solicitors (\$)	\$237,509		\$3,282,944	\$3,556,453
Social Support Staff & Admin		6.87		6.87
Social Support Staff & Admin (FTE)		\$618,142		\$618,142
Total NSW (\$)	\$237,509	\$618,142	\$3,282,944	\$4,174,595
Total NSW (FTE)	1.53	6.87	18.32	26.72

Victoria	Connecting	Engaging	Providing & Sustaining	Total
Solicitors (FTE)	1.26		15.07	16.33
Solicitors (\$)	\$225,792		\$2,700,544	\$2,926,336
Social Support Staff & Admin		5.65		5.65
Social Support Staff & Admin (FTE)		\$508,749		\$508,749
Total VIC (\$)	\$225,792	\$508,749	\$2,700,544	\$3,435,085
Total VIC (FTE)	1.26	5.65	15.07	21.98

Queensland	Connecting	Engaging	Providing & Sustaining	Total
Solicitors (FTE)	1.01		12.06	13.07
Solicitors (\$)	\$180,992		\$2,161,152	\$2,342,144
Social Support Staff & Admin		4.52		4.52
Social Support Staff & Admin (FTE)		\$407,061		\$407,061
Total QLD (\$)	\$180,992	\$407,061	\$2,161,152	\$2,749,205
Total QLD (FTE)	1.01	4.52	12.06	17.59

Northern Territory	Connecting	Engaging	Providing & Sustaining	Total
Solicitors (FTE)	0.05		0.55	0.60
Solicitors (\$)	\$8,960		\$98,560	\$107,520
Social Support Staff & Admin		0.21		0.21
Social Support Staff & Admin (FTE)		\$18,595		\$18,595
Total NT (\$)	\$8,228	\$18,595	\$98,560	\$126,115
Total NT (FTE)	0.05	0.21	0.55	0.81

Western Australia	Connecting	Engaging	Providing & Sustaining	Total
Solicitors (FTE)	0.53		6.40	6.93
Solicitors (\$)	\$94,976		\$1,146,880	\$1,241,856
Social Support Staff & Admin		2.40		2.40
Social Support Staff & Admin (FTE)		\$216,154		\$216,154
Total WA (\$)	\$94,976	\$216,154	\$1,146,880	\$1,458,010
Total WA (FTE)	0.53	2.40	6.40	9.33

South Australia	Connecting	Engaging	Providing & Sustaining	Total
Solicitors (FTE)	0.34		4.04	4.38
Solicitors (\$)	\$60,928		\$723,968	\$784,896
Social Support Staff & Admin		1.52		1.52
Social Support Staff & Admin (FTE)		\$136,409		\$136,409
Total SA (\$)	\$60,357	\$136,409	\$723,968	\$921,305
Total SA (FTE)	0.34	1.52	4.04	5.90

Tasmania	Connecting	Engaging	Providing & Sustaining	Total
Solicitors (FTE)	0.10		1.24	1.34
Solicitors (\$)	\$17,920		\$222,208	\$240,128
Social Support Staff & Admin		0.47		0.47
Social Support Staff & Admin (FTE)		\$41,954		\$41,954
Total TAS (\$)	\$17,920	\$41,954	\$222,208	\$282,082
Total TAS (FTE)	0.10	0.47	1.24	1.81

Australian Capital Territory	Connecting	Engaging	Providing & Sustaining	Total
Solicitors (FTE)	0.09		1.02	1.11
Solicitors (\$)	\$16,128		\$183,412	\$198,696
Social Support Staff & Admin		0.38		0.38
Social Support Staff & Admin (FTE)		\$34,543		\$34,543
Total ACT (\$)	\$16,128	\$34,543	\$182,784	\$233,455
Total ACT (FTE)	0.09	0.38	1.02	1.49

Total Australia (\$)	\$879,205	\$1,981,607	\$10,519,040	\$13,379,851
Total Australia (FTE)	4.91	22.02	58.70	85.63

7. Recommendations

The evidence clearly indicates a significant and complex challenge in meeting the legal needs of the LGBTQIA+ community in Australia. Unmet need stems from a lack of dedicated funded services, capacity constraints, systemic barriers and the unique experiences of discrimination and disadvantage experienced by community members, particularly those in RRR areas or presenting with multiple and complex needs.

To address these critical gaps and build a more just and equitable legal system for the LGBTQIA+ community, the following recommendations summarised in Figure 7, and described in more detail below, are proposed for consideration in allocation of funding under the National Legal Assistance Partnership.

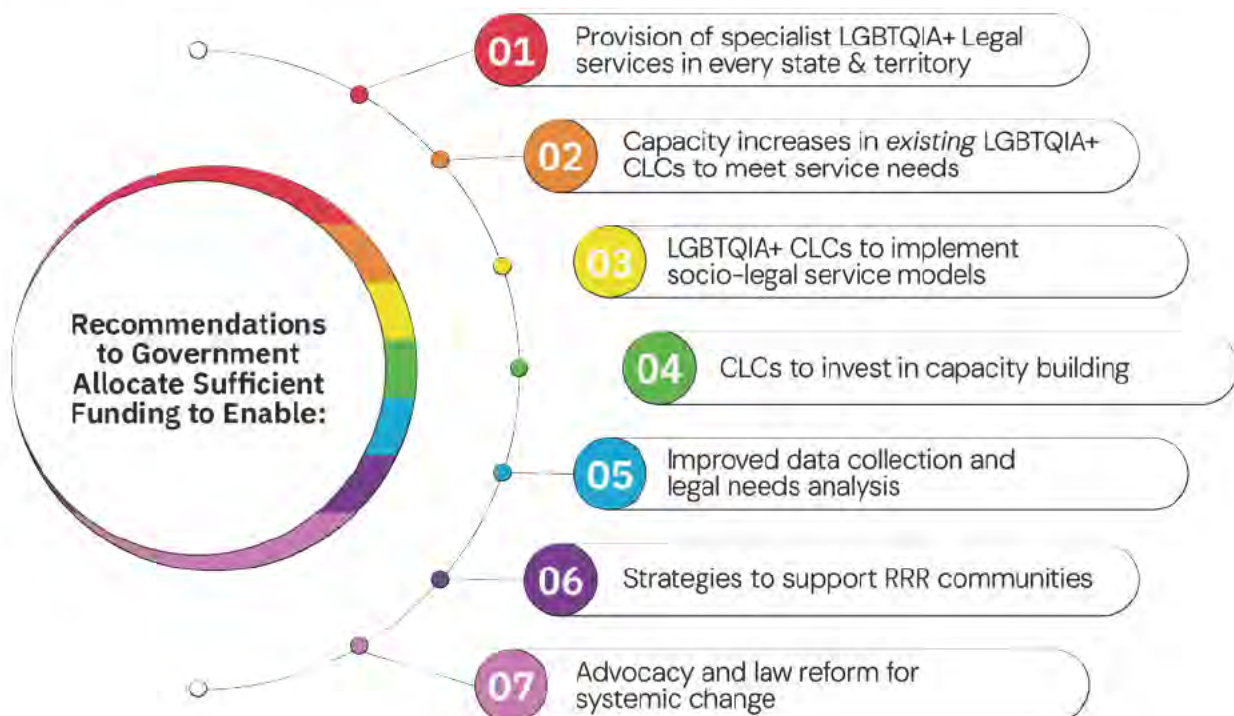


Figure 7 Recommendations to Government

Provide and Fund Specialist LGBTQIA+ Legal Services: Provide specialist LGBTQIA+ legal services in every state and territory, ensuring they are appropriately funded to deliver comprehensive and culturally safe support. In smaller jurisdictions, Generalist CLCs should be supported to introduce specialist LGBTQIA+ staff.

Provide appropriate funding to increase capacity in existing LGBTQIA+ CLCs: Provide an appropriate increase in overall funding to existing LGBTQIA+ CLCs to address the severe capacity constraints. This new funding should be provided in addition to (and not at the expense of) funding already allocated to existing Generalist CLCs and other priority populations.

Implement wrap-around service models: To improve overall quality of services and client outcomes, funding that includes wrap-around support for clients presenting with both legal and non-legal needs. This includes resourcing for trained client intake and outreach staff and peer navigators.

Invest in training and capacity building: Fund comprehensive, trauma-informed training programs for legal and non-legal staff in all CLCs, focusing on LGBTQIA+ inclusive practice.

Support LGBTQIA+ communities in RRR areas: Implement tailored strategies to improve legal service provision to RRR areas. Several options are proposed, recognising that addressing access in RRR areas requires both immediate service provision and long-term capacity building to create sustainable, locally embedded support networks. This could be achieved by;

- Expanding specialist outreach capacity through dedicated LGBTQIA+ CLCs, providing both direct service delivery and local relationship-building with generalist CLCs to create sustainable pathways for ongoing support.
- Building local capability through comprehensive training programs and ongoing resource provision for generalist CLCs, enabling existing RRR services to develop internal expertise and create more inclusive service environments for LGBTQIA+ clients.
- Embedding specialist expertise within existing infrastructure by placing lawyers with demonstrated LGBTQIA+ community experience and cultural competency within established RRR generalist CLCs, ensuring local access to specialised knowledge, while maintaining community connections.

Resource advocacy and systemic change: Fund CLCs to inform contributions to government consultations and to contribute to policy and law reform; provide strategic litigation to address systemic (legal) issues and advance the rights of the LGBTQIA+ communities, including advocating for enhanced police accountability.

Improve data collection for legal needs analysis: Fund improved data collection systems and advocate for the inclusion of relevant questions under the National Legal Assistance Partnership to enable robust needs analysis and inform resource future allocation decisions and policy development.

Supporting Recommendations

Establish national CLC coordination: Allocate funding to CLCs to collaborate in developing consistent approaches, common systems, and shared resources.

Create online resource repository: Allocate funding to CLCs for shared education, training materials, and safe referral partners that can be hosted in a centralised repository.



8. The Ask

We call on the Commonwealth and State Governments to invest in specialist LGBTQIA+ community legal centres as essential infrastructure for equity, safety, and justice. These services provide culturally safe, trauma-informed legal support to communities disproportionately impacted by discrimination, violence, and systemic exclusion. Chronic underfunding constrains reach, continuity, and workforce sustainability – despite rising demand and demonstrated impact – and perpetuates injustice by denying communities not only access to legal support, but also the advocacy and law reform focus needed to challenge systemic drivers of harm. This creates a vicious cycle where exclusion from services is compounded by exclusion from important policy and law reform discussions. Targeted investment will strengthen early intervention and prevention and reduce downstream costs across health, housing, and justice. Investment will also advance Commonwealth and State Government's commitments to inclusion, safety, and human rights. **This is not just a funding ask—it is a strategic opportunity to embed lived experience, law and policy reform and ensure LGBTQIA+ communities can access justice on their own terms.**

9. Conclusion

The convergence of findings across multiple reports and the sector underscores a clear and urgent consensus: investment in specialist LGBTQIA+ legal services is well-founded and long overdue. The evidence is compelling, legal need is escalating, and the opportunity to act is now, within the lifespan of the National Access to Justice Partnership, which includes the LGBTQIA+ population as a priority group for delivery of legal services for the first time. For this new priority population, timely action will address long overlooked service gaps and will also drive systemic reform, uphold human rights, and deliver on our Government's commitment to equity and justice.



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A Blueprint for Equality: Resourcing LGBTQIA+ Community Legal Centres

Addressing Unmet Legal Needs and
Building Sustainable Legal Services for
LGBTQIA+ Communities in Australia



Inner City
Legal Centre



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