

Submission to the Second Action Plan under the National Plan to End Violence Against Women and Children 2022 - 2032

Prepared by Switchboard Victoria.

Acknowledgement of Country

Switchboard Victoria is based on the unceded lands of the Yaluk-ut Weelam clan of the Boon Wurrung peoples and the Wurundjeri People of the Kulin Nation. We pay our respects to all Elders of yesterday and today, and extend those respects to all Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples across this country we know as Australia. We recognise Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples as diverse individuals, with a historic and continuing connection to culture, land and waters – a right and responsibility that was stolen and remains uncaded to this day.

We acknowledge the strength and resilience of all Rainbow Mob. We recognise that First Nations peoples have always had rich and diverse understandings and practices of sexuality and gender, and that homophobia and transphobia were introduced under colonial occupation. Switchboard Victoria acknowledges that sovereignty has never been ceded and our work takes place locally and nationally on what always was and always will be Aboriginal land.

In writing this submission, we acknowledge that First Nations peoples experience unique and ongoing legacies of settler colonial violence, dispossession, and harm. When we advocate for meaningful responses to family, domestic and sexual violence, this must begin with Rainbow Mob. We hope that the outcomes of this work can set a pathway to reform systemic, historical and contemporary harms, centering First Nations ways of being and restoration as a meaningful pathway towards change.

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1. Introduction

LGBTIQ+ people experience unique forms of violence, including identity-based abuse and family of origin violence (FOV)¹. It is critical that the Second Action Plan under the National Plan to End Violence Against Women and Children (the National Plan) includes a focus on LGBTIQ+ people, including transwomen and transfeminine people, non-binary and gender diverse people, to respond to DFSV in a holistic, meaningful and integrated way.

Switchboard Victoria welcomes the opportunity to contribute to the Second Action Plan. This submission supports an integrated approach to responding to and preventing gender-based and identity-based violence against LGBTIQ+ people, with a focus on intersectionality, community leadership, addressing drivers of violence and sector collaboration. In addition, this submission articulates the need to address sexual violence as a distinct form of violence, requiring targeted support, prevention and recovery approaches complementary of and in addition to domestic and family violence responses.

As one of Victoria's longest running LGBTQIA+ specialist support and referral services, Switchboard Victoria has provided confidential, non-judgmental information, peer support, and crisis-responsive referrals for more than 30 years. We support LGBTQIA+ people whose experiences of hate are compounded by racism, disability, migration status, faith, age, regional isolation, or socioeconomic disadvantage. This positions us to understand how violence is experienced differently across communities and how government can support the implementation of community-led, holistic responses that respond to the needs of LGBTQIA+ communities.

Switchboard Victoria is committed to supporting the development and implementation of the Second Action Plan through lived experience insights, service level evidence, and practical recommendations that centre dignity, safety, and equity for all LGBTQIA+ people.

Recommendations are contextualised through Switchboard's insights gathered from delivering

¹ Barnes, R., and C. Donovan (2018) 'Domestic Violence in Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and/or Transgender Relationships'. In N. Lombard (ed.) Routledge Handbook of Gender and Violence (p. 67–81). London: Routledge.

frontline DFSV support to LGBTIQ+ communities, and contemporary LGBTIQ+ DFSV response and prevention frameworks.

2. About Switchboard Victoria

Switchboard's breadth of programming and deep connections to Victorian LGBTIQ+ communities uniquely positions the organisation to identify, understand and respond to the diverse needs of LGBTIQ+ community members, including victim-survivors of domestic, family and sexual violence (DFSV).

Switchboard works across Victoria and the country to deliver responsive, peer-driven supports for LGBTIQ+ people, their families, loved ones and allies. Programs include:

1. **Rainbow Door** – Providing information, specialist support and referral to LGBTIQ+ people in Victoria experiencing DFSV, abuse, mental health concerns, alcohol and other drug concerns and housing insecurity. Staffed by experienced LGBTIQ+ peers, Rainbow Door empowers LGBTIQ+ people and their loved ones to connect with, navigate and access services within a safe and affirming environment.
 - 1.1. [Meet Up App Facilitated Violence Line \(M-APPS\)](#)- Through Rainbow Door, Switchboard delivers a [dedicated helpline](#) in response to the escalation in premeditated attacks which have targeted users of dating and meet-up apps.
2. **QLife** – Providing anonymous peer-based support for LGBTIQ+ people and their loved ones. Staffed by experienced LGBTIQ+ peers, this free service is available for those wanting to talk about a range of issues including sexuality, identity, gender, bodies, feelings or relationships.
3. **Suicide Prevention Program** – Working nationally to provide suicide prevention, intervention and postvention programs and resources, with an emphasis on building community connection through peer-led and lived experience activities.
4. **QTIBPoC Program** - Contributing to greater connection and equity among QTIBPOC (queer, trans and/or intersex Black people, Indigenous people, and People of Colour) in Victoria through free events, workshops and grants created by and for QTIBPOC communities.

5. **Pride in Ageing** - Reducing social isolation, tackling ageism, and working with local communities to build long-term improvements and change for older lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, gender diverse and intersex (LGBTI+) Victorians over 55.
6. **Rainbow Families** - Advocating for and connecting LGBTIQA+ parents, carers and their families to relevant supports, resources, information and local events throughout Victoria.
7. **Training** – Delivering LGBTIQA+ peer-driven training to workplaces and community members, with a focus on LGBTIQA+ suicide prevention, peer support, inclusivity and family and intimate partner violence.

3. Understanding experiences of DFSV for LGBTIQA+ people

3.1 Systemic discrimination, violence and dehumanisation

Despite significant legislative and social changes that have supported and progressed LGBTIQA+ rights, institutional homophobia, transphobia, intersexphobia, misogyny, racism and ableism continue to permeate every level of our society. Addressing DFSV requires an understanding of the systemic dehumanisation of LGBTIQA+ identities and bodies and how this shapes LGBTIQA+ experiences of violence, support and recovery.

The dehumanisation of LGBTIQA+ people is seen in our contemporary environment through:

- Rising anti-LGBTIQA+ hate and violence, including anti-trans violence and app-facilitated violence largely targeting gay and bisexual men, and trans, non-binary and gender diverse people.
- LGBTIQA+ lives being subject to political debate, including through the 2017 marriage equality plebiscite and current bans on trans youth healthcare in Queensland.
- The sexualisation, fetishisation and objectification of LGBTIQA+ bodies and identities, particularly cisgender men's fetishisation of transwomen and transfeminine people.
- Suppression, conversion and correction practices, including the restriction of access to gender affirming care.

- Unnecessary medical interventions performed on children born with innate variations in sex characteristics (also called intersex).
- The ongoing impacts of criminalisation and pathologisation.

This creates a permissive environment for DFSV against LGBTIQ+ people to occur in ways that are legitimised, minimised or misunderstood. Tailored prevention, response and recovery initiatives are required to counter dehumanisation and support LGBTIQ+ people to live free from violence.

3.2 Unique experiences of DFSV for LGBTIQ+ people

Insights from Switchboard's frontline services, including QLife, Rainbow Door and the M-APPS Line indicate that DFSV is experienced similarly by many people regardless of identity, however experiences for LGBTIQ+ people may include identity-based abuse which is specific to the LGBTIQ+ experience. This may include:

- Threats to out, or actual outing of a partner (this could be at work, family, school, places of worship, social groups, community sport)
- Using someone's HIV status by threatening to 'out' them to family, friends or employers
- Threats to a partner's capacity or right to children
- Isolating someone from contact with the LGBTIQ+ community, LGBTIQ+ organisations, family or friends
- Withholding medications or hormones or controlling access to health treatments
- Policing of identity and gender expression/presenting
- Controlling your social life and access to queer community
- Exploiting someone's fear of the police
- Misgendering or refusing to use someone's pronouns
- Using homophobia, biphobia, transphobia, intersexphobia, and/or queerphobia to assert power and control over a partner
- Conditional acceptance from family of origin relevant to someone's sexuality or gender.

These unique forms of violence can have serious impacts on the wellbeing of victim-survivors. These impacts are reinforced and exacerbated by systemic dehumanisation and broader experiences of anti-LGBTIQ+ hate and violence².

Further, LGBTIQ+ people may experience barriers recognising and responding to experiences of victimisation³. Hetero-normative and cis-normative understandings of DFSV across our social, health and education systems often invisibilise LGBTIQ+ identities and relationships. As such, LGBTIQ+ people often do not have a framework to recognise when violence is occurring. This can be further complicated by a victim-survivor feeling like their identity has caused the violence, or that their identity is inherently 'wrong'. This may lead to a person minimising what is happening to them out of fear they will not be believed, will be judged, or will lose their connection to someone who purports to love them. For LGBTIQ+ people experiencing family of origin violence (FOV), including young people, this may look like taking responsibility for keeping their family together or feeling guilt for not conforming to familial or cultural expectations. All of these factors can be weaponised by people using violence to normalise or justify abusive behaviour.

3.2.1 Impacts of DFSV on intersectional LGBTIQ+ victim-survivors

Intersectional community members face higher rates of victimisation, and may face additional barriers to accessing justice and recovery pathways. In the context of DFSV, compounding societal dehumanisation creates an environment where violence is further minimised or legitimised because institutional prejudice reinforces dominance over particular identities, or victim-survivors do not fit the archetype of a 'perfect victim'⁴.

Rainbow Mob	In addition to systemic factors influencing LGBTIQ+ experiences of DFSV, experiences for Rainbow Mob are shaped by ongoing legacies of settler
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² Marina, C., Fairchild, F., Parsons, M., Farrugia, C., Power, J. and Bourne, A. (2021) 'Pride in Prevention: A guide to primary prevention of family violence experience by LGBTIQ communities'.

<https://rainbowhealthaustralia.org.au/news/launch-pride-in-prevention-evidence-guide>

³ Gibson, M., Kassisieh, G., Lloyd, A., and McCann, B. (2020). 'There's No Safe Place At Home: Domestic and family violence affecting LGBTIQ+ people'. Equality Australia and the Centre for Family Research and Evaluation, Drummond Street Services.

⁴ Safe and Equal. 'Working with misidentified victim survivors'. https://safeandequal.org.au/wp-content/uploads/MisID_SurvivorAdvocateResource_A4_FINAL.pdf

	colonial violence, dispossession and disenfranchisement. Our Watch's <i>Changing the Picture</i> framework, addressing violence experienced by First Nations people, including Rainbow Mob, must include addressing colonisation and racism as key drivers of violence ⁵ .
Trans and gender diverse people	Trans and gender diverse people experience higher rates of victimisation, particularly sexual violence, compared to broader LGBTIQ+ communities ⁶ . Within family and intimate partner contexts, violence may be framed as a permissible corrective practice based on religious or cultural grounds, or concern for the victim-survivor's safety. In addition, broader societal hypersexualisation and fetishisation is weaponised by people using violence to minimise violence towards trans and gender diverse people ⁷ . Trans women and transfeminine people in relationships with cisgender men are particularly vulnerable to experiencing identity-based, prejudicial violence from their intimate partner ⁸ due to pervasive societal ideas that transfeminine people are not suitable partners for cisgender men ⁹ .
QTIBPoC people	In addition to homophobia, transphobia and intersexphobia, racism is a key driver of DFSV against QTIBPoC people. Racism creates additional barriers to accessing support and pursuing pathways to justice, with QTIBPoC people reporting they experience stigma, discrimination and insufficient support from policing and judicial systems when reporting

⁵ Our Watch (2025). 'Changing the picture: A national resource to support the prevention of violence against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and their children'. <https://assets.ourwatch.org.au/assets/Key-frameworks/Changing-the-picture-AA.pdf>

⁶ Safe and Equal, and the Zoe Belle Gender Collective (2026). 'Risk in Context: Trans and gender diverse communities'. https://safeandequal.org.au/wp-content/uploads/RiskInContext_TGD_A4_FINAL_02.pdf

⁷ Ibid

⁸ Starlady, Fairchild, J., Diamonds, L., & O'Connor, B. (2024). Responding to the objectification, fetishisation and sexual exploitation of trans women and trans feminine people by cisgender men. https://zbgc.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2024/12/Transfemme_Practitioner_Guide-2024.pdf

⁹ Ibid

	violence ¹⁰ . In addition, refugees and people seeking asylum may have their visa status weaponised or exploited as a tool of violence ¹¹ .
Older LGBTI+ people	Many older LGBTI+ people lack intergenerational family support and have lived through criminalisation, pathologisation and conversion or suppression practices. This creates a deep mistrust in mainstream and judicial systems and enhances barriers to accessing support when violence does occur. Elder abuse can also look different to other kinds of family violence or abuse, particularly in ageing and aged care settings. This means elder abuse might be missed, especially when the perpetrator is a support worker or another community member.
LGBTIQA+ people with experiences of disability	LGBTIQA+ people with experiences of disability may be more prone to victimisation due to a reliance on healthcare or other support systems that can be weaponised by people using violence. In addition, institutional ableism creates barriers to victim-survivors reporting and accessing support after violence occurs.
LGBTIQA+ young people	LGBTIQA+ young people are more likely to experience sexual violence compared to non-LGBTIQA+ young people ¹² , and more likely to experience domestic and family violence than older LGBTIQA+ people ¹³ . In particular, FOV can have a devastating impact on young LGBTIQA+ people, leading to distress, fear and confusion. FOV may include the restriction or denial of access to gender-affirming care, and suppression practices perpetrated on religious or cultural grounds.

¹⁰ Safe and Equal, and the Zoe Belle Gender Collective (2026). Ibid

¹¹ Family Safety Victoria (2021). MARAM Practice Guides: Foundation Knowledge Guide. Melbourne, Vic: State of Victoria, page 80.

¹² Higgins, D. J., Lawrence, D., Haslam, D. M., Mathews, B., Malacova, E., Erskine, H. E., Finkelhor, D., Pacella, R., Franziska Meinck, Thomas, H. J., & Scott, J. G. (2024). Prevalence of Diverse Genders and Sexualities in Australia and Associations With Five Forms of Child Maltreatment and Multi-type Maltreatment. *Child Maltreatment*, 30(1). <https://doi.org/10.1177/10775595231226331>

¹³ Gibson, M., Kassisieh, G., Lloyd, A., and McCann, B. (2020). Ibid

3.3 Research

While there is a growing evidence base regarding the LGBTIQ+ communities and DFSV, more is required to effectively understand LGBTIQ+ experiences, including intersectional community experiences and secondary victimisation through healthcare, legal and other support systems.

A lack of funding for community research and inconsistent data collection about LGBTIQ+ communities through state-based and national data systems impacts the sector's ability to understand and respond to LGBTIQ+ victim-survivors. In addition, LGBTIQ+ community members may be hesitant to report their identity due to stigma and anonymity concerns. Further, it was identified through the Coronial Inquest into the suicide deaths of five transgender women in Victoria in 2021 that Victoria Police do not accurately capture trans, nonbinary and gender diverse identities through the Law Enforcement Assistance Program (LEAP), highlighting a critical gap in data collection within law enforcement contexts.

Recommendations:

1. Include Rainbow Mob as leaders and partners in responses to, prevention of and redress of DFSV, centering First Nations ways of being and restoration as a meaningful pathway towards change. This should be considered across all subsequent recommendations included in this submission.
2. Undertake contemporary research into secondary victimisation for DFSV victim-survivors and its impacts on intersectionally marginalised cohorts.
3. Review national and state-based health and coronial data reporting to include questions that adequately capture marginalised communities and priority cohort experiences
4. Incorporate key LGBTIQ+ datasets in the National Plan Outcomes Framework and Performance Measurement Plan.
5. Expand on the National Community Attitudes towards Violence against Women Survey to conduct a research project that captures community attitudes towards anti-LGBTIQ+ violence.

4. Improving support for LGBTIQ+ victim-survivors

It is critical that response, recovery, and justice services can meet the diverse needs of LGBTIQ+ victim-survivors. LGBTIQ+ people continue to experience barriers when accessing DFSV support, including:

- Fear of not being believed or being blamed
- Fear of being 'outed' to family, friends, workplaces and community as an unintended consequence of a police investigation or prosecution
- Previous negative experiences with law enforcement or DFSV services
- Loss of privacy
- Exacerbation of internalised stigma and shame
- Reporting processes that require use of the victim-survivor's legal name, particularly for trans, nonbinary and gender diverse people
- Fear of further victimisation from people using violence, particularly given the risk of there being no finding of guilt or minimal consequence following an investigation or prosecution.

Responding to these barriers requires a coordinated approach that supports the sustainability of tailored, LGBTIQ+ community-led DFSV responses and facilitates broader sector capacity building to ensure healthcare and legal systems are equipped to meet the needs of LGBTIQ+ victim-survivors.

4.1 The role of peer services

Where systemic barriers and previous experiences of stigma or victim-blaming render mainstream services and systems inaccessible, community-led services can meet an essential relational support need for LGBTIQ+ victim-survivors.

Talking to a peer can provide victim-survivors with solidarity and a sense of community. In addition, another LGBTIQ+ person may be more likely to understand the systemic barriers experienced by the victim-survivor, equipping them to help a victim-survivor navigate legal and support systems in a manner that meets their needs or protects against secondary victimisation.

Switchboard's Rainbow Door program provides free specialist support to LGBTIQ+ victim-survivors, including risk assessment, advice, case management and referrals to counselling, housing, legal, healthcare and other services as required. Staffed by trained LGBTIQ+ peers, Rainbow Door can support victim-survivors to access the resources they need to move towards recovery and help navigate complex systems. Rainbow Door also provides secondary consultation to generalist DFSV services working with LGBTIQ+ victim-survivors, supporting the capacity of the broader sector to respond to LGBTIQ+ community needs.

In addition to Rainbow Door, safety for victim-survivors is enhanced through anonymous support options, such as QLife, where a person does not have to disclose identifying details to access trauma-informed care. Insights from Switchboard's frontline services indicate that QLife as an anonymous peer service, particularly one that is delivered after-hours when distress is more likely, provides an essential and accessible entry point for help seeking. QLife can provide a victim-survivor with the space to explore their options, needs and experiences in a judgement-free environment.

Despite the value of peer-led services in supporting victim-survivors, services are not resourced to meet demand, resulting in wait times and additional barriers for community members who are in urgent need of support. It is essential that community-led services are resourced to meet growing demand and deliver support to LGBTIQ+ victim-survivors when they need it most.

Recommendations:

6. Review and strengthen the support infrastructure for LGBTIQ+ victim-survivor helpline services, including Rainbow Door and QLife, to ensure national access that is appropriate, skilled, consistent and has clear partnership arrangements with local LGBTIQ+ community-led services.

4.2 Moving beyond DFSV crisis services

Effectively ending gender-based and identity-based violence requires expanding beyond crisis-driven responses to prevention- and recovery-oriented practice. When support options are time-limited and focused on understanding an individual's experiences within a single call or brief

service engagement, there is minimal scope to implement supports that will support a victim-survivor to move towards recovery over the longer term.

For LGBTIQ+ victim-survivors, episodic crisis support can become a site of harm. Practitioner assumptions and problematic beliefs about LGBTIQ+ identities and bodies can become exacerbated by resource constraints and lead to minimisation, dismissal or misunderstanding of a victim-survivor's experience¹⁴. When DFSV literacy within LGBTIQ+ communities is relatively low, this can create additional barriers to safety. This is compounded by limited appropriate referral options for LGBTIQ+ victim-survivors to access tailored services, counselling and recovery programs.

Specialist support options, such as those established under the 500 Workers Initiative and peer supports that exist before and after a point of crisis, can support people to better understand their situation and take steps towards safety and recovery that do not expose them to further harm. These promising approaches must be strengthened to effectively support victim-survivors under the Second Action Plan.

4.2.1 Strengthening suicide prevention services

There is a strong association between experiences of DFSV, including FOV and intimate partner violence, and suicidality for LGBTIQ+ people¹⁵. In particular, LGBTIQ+ youth are 8.4 times more likely to have attempted suicide following experiences of family rejection¹⁶. Strengthening support for victim-survivors must include suicide prevention supports, including LGBTIQ+ community-led services that are able to respond to unique experiences of dehumanisation and systemic harm that enhance both experiences of DFSV and suicidality for LGBTIQ+ communities.

¹⁴ Gray, R., Walker, T., Hamer, J., Broady, T., Kean, J., Ling, J., & Bear, B. (2020). Developing LGBTQ programs for perpetrators and victims/survivors of domestic and family violence. Sydney, NSW: ANROWS.

¹⁵ Amos, N., Hill, A., Donovan, C., Carman, M., Parsons, M., McNair, R., Lyons, A., & Bourne, A. (2023). Family Violence Within LGBTQ Communities in Australia: Intersectional Experiences and Associations with Mental Health Outcomes. *Sexuality Research and Social Policy*, 20. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s13178-023-00822-2>

¹⁶ Brangwin, E., Zhao, Z., Shramko, M., Toomey, R. B., & Syvertsen, A. K. (2022). The Association Between Family Physical Abuse and Suicide Attempts Among Gender Minority Adolescents: A Comparison Study. *LGBT Health*. <https://doi.org/10.1089/lgbt.2021.0415>

Recommendations:

7. Support the sustainability of LGBTIQ+ community-led responses before and after the point of crisis, including prevention and recovery supports.
8. Strengthen LGBTIQ+ suicide prevention services to ensure effective, tailored supports are available for victim-survivors experiencing suicidal distress, thoughts and behaviours.

4.3 Assessment tools

Consistent assessment tools, such as the MARAM in Victoria, are effective in supporting information sharing between practitioners. A nationally consistent risk assessment framework would support victim-survivors moving between jurisdictions and facilitate the development of national practice approaches, enhancing partnership and broader sector uplift across the country.

Further, specific practice guidance for practitioners working with LGBTIQ+ victim-survivors can address assumptions and ensure LGBTIQ+ relationships, identities and experiences are not erased during risk assessment. Tools developed with LGBTIQ+ communities, such as Safe and Equal and the Zoe Belle Gender Collective's *Risk in Context* resource and Switchboard's upcoming *Queering the MARAM* resource, should be implemented across the DFSV sector to support mainstream services working with LGBTIQ+ victim-survivors.

Recommendations:

9. Support the implementation of tools developed with LGBTIQ+ communities, such as Safe and Equal and the Zoe Belle Gender Collective's *Risk in Context* resource and Switchboard's upcoming *Queering the MARAM* resource, to support mainstream services working with LGBTIQ+ victim-survivors.

4.4 Responding to misidentification

LGBTIQ+ people are more likely than non-LGBTIQ+ people to be misidentified as perpetrators of DFSV¹⁷. This is due to hetero-normative, cis-normative, and other cultural assumptions about what a victim and person using violence look like. Law enforcement may also be more likely to assume both partners are using ‘mutual violence’, particularly in same-gender relationships where patterns of abusive behaviour and control do not automatically align with normative framings of violence¹⁸. The risk of misidentification is higher for LGBTIQ+ people who experience intersecting forms of discrimination, including Rainbow Mob, LGBTIQ+ people with migrant and refugee backgrounds, and LGBTIQ+ people with experiences of disability¹⁹.

It is critical that the Second Action Plan addresses the needs of victim-survivors who have been misidentified and seeks to strengthen the capacity of legal and judicial systems to recognise coercive or violent dynamics within LGBTIQ+ and other non-normative relationships.

Recommendations:

10. Strengthen supports for victim-survivors who have experienced misidentification, including LGBTIQ+ people, First Nations people, people with refugee and migrant backgrounds, and people with experiences of disability.

4.5 Sexual violence responses

The National Plan acknowledges the high rates of sexual violence experienced by LGBTIQ+ people, noting that the majority of this violence is perpetrated by cisgender men²⁰. Rates are particularly high for trans women and transfeminine people, with a report produced by Safe and Equal and the Zoe Belle Gender Collective finding that 28 per cent of culturally and linguistically

¹⁷ No to Violence (2019). ‘Predominant aggressor identification and victim misidentification’. https://ntv.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2024/03/NTV-Discussion-Paper_Predominant-Aggressor-Identification-And-Victim-Misidentification.pdf

¹⁸ Safe and Equal. Ibid

¹⁹ Ibid

²⁰ Commonwealth of Australia (Department of Social Services) (2022). ‘National plan to end violence against women and girls 2022 – 2032’. <https://www.dss.gov.au/system/files/resources/national-plan-end-violence-against-women-and-children-2022-2032.pdf>

diverse trans women in Australia have been assaulted over 10 times²¹. In addition, LGBTIQ+ young people experience higher rates of sexual violence compared to the general population²².

While sexual violence does occur within family and domestic violence settings, it is critical that sexual violence is understood as a distinct form of violence that requires a tailored response in complement and addition to family and domestic violence responses.

A growing evidence base exists regarding sexual violence responses, including the Australian Law Reform Commission Inquiry into Justice Responses to Sexual Violence. The Second Action Plan must consider enhancing national sexual violence responses in line with contemporary research and improving supports for LGBTIQ+ victim-survivors. This includes supporting LGBTIQ+ community-led responses to sexual violence and building the capacity of the broader sexual violence response sector to be culturally safer for LGBTIQ+ victim-survivors.

In addition, tailored prevention approaches are essential to address the rates of sexual violence against LGBTIQ+ people. LGBTIQ+ community-led organisations are best equipped to lead prevention efforts, including targeted campaigns that speak to different parts of LGBTIQ+ communities who experience particularly high rates of sexual violence, for example young gay and bisexual men, and transwomen and transfeminine people. It is integral that prevention campaigns consider and address rigid gender norms and gender policing as drivers of sexual violence, particularly in relation to transgender and gender diverse communities.

Recommendations:

11. Expand nationally accessible sexual violence supports, informed by the extensive sexual violence evidence base, including:
 - a. Funding an update to the National Association of Services Against Sexual Violence (NASASV) sexual violence practice guidelines, ensuring LGBTIQ+ stakeholder representation throughout the process.

²¹ Safe and Equal, and the Zoe Belle Gender Collective (2026). Ibid

²² Higgins, D. J., Lawrence, D., Haslam, D. M., Mathews, B., Malacova, E., Erskine, H. E., Finkelhor, D., Pacella, R., Franziska Meinck, Thomas, H. J., & Scott, J. G. (2024). Ibid

- b. Implementing recommendations from the Australian Law Reform Commission Inquiry into Justice Responses to Sexual Violence.
 - c. Strengthening community sexual health, gender health and LGBTIQ+ primary health services capacity to respond to disclosure, and support safety and referral under national Supporting Recovery pilot programs.
12. Resource LGBTIQ+ organisations to deliver targeted sexual violence services and prevention campaigns.
13. Support partnerships between sexual violence and LGBTIQ+ organisations to strengthen responses for LGBTIQ+ victim-survivors across the sexual violence sector.

4.6 Judicial and legal system responses

Across the country, there is a significant legacy of violence, surveillance and disenfranchisement of LGBTIQ+ people, including through law enforcement systems²³. While the law no longer criminalises homosexuality, historical framings of LGBTIQ+ people as deviant and immoral continue to impact interactions between law enforcement and LGBTIQ+ people. This legacy is enhanced for:

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, including Rainbow Mob, who experience unique forms of colonial and racist violence through judicial and legal systems²⁴ and have experienced settler violence and dispossession since colonisation began.
- Older LGBTI+ people who lived through histories of criminalisation and the HIV/AIDS epidemic.
- Trans, nonbinary and gender diverse people who experience transphobia through judicial-legal systems.
- QTIBPoC people, who experience systemic racism and racialised profiling through judicial-legal systems.

²³ RMIT School of Law (2026). Transitional justice and historical repair for LGBTIQ+ communities in Victoria. https://cdn.thorneharbour.org/media/documents/RMIT_LGBTIQ_report_online.pdf

²⁴ Tubex H, Bartels L, Curtis A, Culbong H & Tufuga E 2026. Stories that matter: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people's experiences of the Western Australian criminal legal system. Trends & issues in crime and criminal justice no. 725. Canberra: Australian Institute of Criminology. <https://doi.org/10.52922/ti78120>

This has created deep distrust that means LGBTIQ+ people, particularly Rainbow Mob, QTIBPoC, older LGBTI+ and trans, non-binary and gender diverse community members are hesitant to engage with law enforcement, leading to underreporting. When law enforcement is engaged, community members often cite experiencing stigma, victim-blaming rhetoric, dismissal, and minimisation.

Further, LGBTIQ+ people may experience homophobia, transphobia and other forms of discrimination when participating in judicial systems²⁵. There are limited protections for LGBTIQ+ people interacting with the justice system and limited capacity for recourse when systemic harm occurs.

Alternative pathways to justice, such as restorative justice processes, should be considered as an essential element of a DFSV response system that can effectively meet the needs of those most marginalised by existing systems. Where systemic dehumanisation contributes to harm for victim-survivors and people using violence, restorative justice approaches can provide a strong avenue for accountability, victim-survivor support and recovery.

Recommendations:

14. Ensure that LGBTIQ+ competency training and other capacity building initiatives are embedded within judicial and legal systems.
15. Expand the accessibility of restorative justice pathways, such as the RMIT Centre for Innovative Justice, as an essential alternative to traditional judicial and legal system responses.

4.7 Improving support for young LGBTIQ+ victim-survivors

LGBTIQ+ people under 25 are 4.5 times more likely to experience domestic and family violence than LGBTIQ+ people over 25²⁶, highlighting an urgent need for tailored, youth-focused DFSV responses. Responses should include:

²⁵ Mitchell, M., McCrory, A., Skaburskis, I. and Appleton, B. (2022) "Criminalising Gender Diversity: Trans and Gender Diverse People's Experiences with the Victorian Criminal Legal System", *International Journal for Crime, Justice and Social Democracy*, 11(4), pp. 99-112. doi: 10.5204/ijcjsd.2225.

²⁶ Gibson, M., Kassisieh, G., Lloyd, A., and McCann, B. (2020). Ibid

- The adaptation of assessment tools to capture young peoples' experiences.
- Implementing brokerage support and payments in line with existing DFSV and victimisation programming for young people under 18.
- Investing in the sustainability of services that can provide specialist support to LGBTIQ+ young victim-survivors and their families, including [Transcend](#).
- Preventative programming that supports LGBTIQ+ young people and their families in educational, social and healthcare settings (further explored in Section 7).

Responses should be focused on upholding the rights of young LGBTIQ+ people through prevention, response and recovery. This includes protecting the rights of trans, non-binary and gender diverse young people to access to gender-affirming healthcare and the dispelling of mis- and disinformation about LGBTIQ+ communities as a responsibility of the DFSV sector. The NMHRC's *National clinical practice guidelines for the care of trans and gender diverse people under 18 with gender dysphoria* currently in development provide a strong opportunity to address medical misinformation and disinformation about trans, non-binary and gender diverse victim-survivors of DFSV who access or may access gender affirming care.

Recommendations:

16. Expand the initial national frontline community-led specialist victim-support service established under the 500 Workers Initiative and transitions the LGBTIQ+ workforce onto a 5-year funding cycle. Additionally, leverage the initial workforce under the Initiative to:
 - a. Expand prevention projects and frameworks both for victims-survivors and people using violence
 - b. Develop suicidality responsive crisis brokerage for people at acute risk due to DFSV victimisation
 - c. Ensure the availability of specialised, community-led victim-survivor support for victim-survivors that have experienced secondary victimisation from mainstream systems
 - d. Progressing the availability of the Leaving Violence Payment and Victims of Crime payments for people under 18.

17. Leverage the delivery of *National clinical practice guidelines for the care of trans and gender diverse people under 18 with gender dysphoria* to establish a clinical expert reference group, or similar advisory body, to address medical misinformation and disinformation about trans, non-binary and gender diverse victim-survivors of DFSV who access or may access gender affirming care.
18. Support partnerships between youth, DFSV and LGBTIQ+ organisations to strengthen responses for LGBTIQ+ young victim-survivors across the sector.

5. People who use violence against LGBTIQ+ people

5.1 LGBTIQ+ people who use violence

LGBTIQ+ people who use violence in their relationships use the same tactics to gain power and control as people using violence in heterosexual relationships. This can include physical, sexual, emotional and psychological abuse, financial control, isolation, intimidation, threats and more.

People using violence either seek support following a mandated directive, or of their own volition after identifying problematic, harmful, or violent patterns of behaviour. It is important that services are accessible for people seeking support independently, and that messaging is invitational rather than driven by stigma and shame. For LGBTIQ+ communities, messaging should be informed by the understanding that people using violence may have experienced systemic dehumanisation that has resulted in disconnection, distress, and poorer health outcomes. While this does not excuse or justify the use of violence, it provides critical context for responding to LGBTIQ+ people using violence, including supporting accountability and behaviour change.

Existing interventions, including Men's Behaviour Change Programs (MBCPs), are often inaccessible to LGBTIQ+ people due to heteronormative and cis-normative framings of relationships and individual safety concerns accessing mainstream programming²⁷. This is

²⁷ Worrell S, Fooks A, Gillespie C, Silk V, Jamieson L, Castle M, Peterson J and Bourne A. (2024). 'Catalysts of change: interventions and service pathways for gay, bisexual, trans and queer (GBTQ) men who have used family violence in Victoria, Australia'. 2024. <https://doi.org/10.26181/25209692>

representative of the barriers LGBTIQ+ people experience more broadly accessing mainstream programming and highlights the necessity of community-led responses to violence. Research indicates that service responses have a significant impact on a person using violence's acknowledgement of the need to change their behaviour²⁸. Effective service responses should include:

- **Specialist LGBTIQ+ services**, which can provide an alternative avenue for LGBTIQ+ people using violence to begin to take accountability for their behaviour and explore support options. Integrated services offerings like those at Switchboard's Rainbow Door and Thorne Harbour Health's Family Violence Counselling Program can support someone using violence to take accountability for their behaviour.
- **Partnerships between LGBTIQ+ and more generalist services**, with a view to increasing the capacity of the whole DFSV sector to respond to LGBTIQ+ people using violence. Partnerships can also support clear referral pathways between services, facilitating people using violence to access support for co-existing issues, including AOD, housing, financial and mental health concerns.

Recommendations:

19. Support LGBTIQ+ community-led responses for people using violence.
20. Support partnership between LGBTIQ+ and generalist services working with people who use violence.

5.2 Hate crimes within DFSV settings

For LGBTIQ+ communities, particularly trans, non-binary and gender diverse people, identity-based violence within DFSV settings often constitutes a hate crime²⁹. This includes anti-LGBTIQ+ violence, suppression or corrective practices perpetrated by family of origin, or violence that shames or exploits a victim-survivor's identity in the context of systemic homophobia and

²⁸ Ibid

²⁹ Safe and Equal and the Zoe Belle Gender Collective (2026). Ibid

transphobia. This behaviour is often minimised or legitimised due to patriarchal ideas around dominance, consent and control. A masculinised ‘in-group’ enacts violence against a feminised, racialised or otherwise othered ‘out-group’, seeking to correct or suppress expression that is perceived as non-normative or deviant³⁰. This is visible in:

- Cisgender men’s violence against trans women, where homophobia, transphobia and feelings of shame, including feelings related to what attraction to trans women means for the cisgender man’s masculinity, manifests in identity-based violence³¹.
 - The *Transfemme* project outlines how hateful anti-trans attitudes may impact trans women and transfeminine people who are in relationships with cisgender men.
- App-facilitated ambush attacks executed by groups of young men, where violence enacted against an LGBTIQ+ person serves as a social connection exercise that bonds perpetrators through the performance of dominant masculinities.
- Identity-based violence perpetrated against Rainbow Mob and QTIBPoC people, where colonial ideas of superiority and dominance legitimise violence against First Nations and other racialised people.
- Suppression and conversion practices perpetrated on religious or cultural grounds.

Preventing DFSV under the National Plan must include consideration of the intersections between hate crimes and DFSV for LGBTIQ+ people. Responses should include engagement with specialist services that can respond to anti-LGBTIQ+ hate crimes, and the promotion of partnerships between DFSV services and broader anti-hate initiatives.

Recommendations:

21. Consider the recommendations from the Victorian Parliamentary Inquiry into anti-LGBTIQ+ hate crimes, scheduled for release in September 2026.

³⁰ Rottweiler, B., Clemmow, C., & Gill, P. (2024). A Common Psychology of Male Violence? Assessing the Effects of Misogyny on Intentions to Engage in Violent Extremism, Interpersonal Violence and Support for Violence against Women. *Terrorism and Political Violence*, 37(3), 1–26.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/09546553.2023.2292723>

³¹ Starlady, Fairchild, J., Diamonds, L., & O’Connor, B. (2024). Ibid

22. Support the sustainability of community-led efforts working to address violence against trans people, including trans women and transfeminine people in relationships with cisgender men.
23. Invest in community-led efforts working to address violence against Rainbow Mob, in recognition of colonial histories of violence, dispossession and racism.
24. Explore the development of consistent legislation and guidelines that address the use of LGBTIQ+ change and suppression practices in the context of DFSV, with the Victorian *Change or Suppression (Conversion) Practices Prohibition Act 2021* as an exemplary benchmark.

6. Prevention and early intervention

Prevention DFSV against LGBTIQ+ people requires coordinated efforts to:

- **Deconstruct rigid gender norms, cisnormativity and heteronormativity:** Prevention initiatives must address the drivers of DFSV for LGBTIQ+ people. The Second Action Plan should seek to implement existing evidence-based primary prevention frameworks, including Rainbow Health Australia's *Pride in Prevention* framework and the forthcoming national framework in development by Rainbow Health Australia and Our Watch.
- **Build DFSV literacy within LGBTIQ+ communities :** DFSV organisations should partner with LGBTIQ+ community-led programs to build literacy within LGBTIQ+ communities about the specific ways in which DFSV can be enacted against LGBTIQ+ people.
- **Reject dehumanisation, anti-LGBTIQ+ behaviour and promote strengths-based messaging about LGBTIQ+ communities:** In addition to building literacy around what violence can look like, LGBTIQ+ communities must receive messaging that tells them they are worthy of living in safe and loving environments, free from hatred and violence. Social campaigns will play a powerful role in promoting this and rupturing the dehumanisation that creates barriers for LGBTIQ+ people to recognise and respond to DFSV. The Second Action Plan should facilitate campaigning that clearly rejects anti-LGBTIQ+ hatred and

violence, promotes strength-based messaging about LGBTIQ+ identities, and dispels mis- and disinformation about LGBTIQ+ people.

- **Support the inclusion of young people in educational, sporting and broader community settings:** For young people, preventative efforts must include a foundational focus on inclusion. A 2020 report found that 60.2 percent of young LGBTIQ+ people felt uncomfortable at high school due to their identity²⁹, highlighting the progress that still needs to be made to ensure LGBTIQ+ young people feel included in community settings. Respectful relationships education is essential to support inclusive interpersonal engagement and consent practices amongst young people, and media literacy education can mitigate radicalisation and absorption of misinformation related to LGBTIQ+ people, particularly anti-trans rhetoric.
- **Address intersectional experiences of victimisation:** It is critical that tailored prevention approaches are developed and implemented that respond to the intersectional needs of Rainbow Mob, QTIBPoC people, LGBTIQ+ people with experiences of disability, older LGBTI+ people, and trans, nonbinary and gender diverse people, in recognition of how historical contexts and other drivers shape experiences of victimisation. Approaches should be developed through meaningful community leadership and adequate resourcing of community-led organisations. For Rainbow Mob, this includes the meaningful implementation of community-led research and best practice guidance to strengthen the DFSV sector, including the Walkern Katatdjinn Roadmap³² and the Rainbow Mob are My Mob Model³³.

³² Liddelow-Hunt, S., Hayward, L., Hill, B., Perry, Y., Wilson, M., Stretton, N., Anderson-Hyde, MJ, Andrews, L., Bagshaw, D., Baptist, R., Basset-Bokic, N., Berry, M., Blow, T., Cameron, D, Cox, L., Daglas, K., Dau, D., Devez, Y., Eddy, S., Fowler, J., Henderson, C., Hill, B., Hill, J.H.L., Hunt, A., James, J., Lee, T., Makuru, K., Morrison, J., Riley, Nathan; S., Dion; S., Natalie; Thorne, S., Wade, A., Waples-Crowe, P., Weir, V., Wells, K., Wishart, E., Uink, B. & Lin, A., (2025) Walkern Katatdjinn Phase 3 Roadmap Report. Perth, Western Australia.

³³ Powell, D. & Basset-Bokic, N. (2026). Rainbow Mob are my Mob: Best Practice Model for Rainbow Mob Inclusion in ACCOs.
<https://cdn.intelligencebank.com/au/share/NJA21J/1zZDp/2d4gP/original/Rainbow+Mob+Are+My+Mob+Best+Practice+Model+for+Rainbow+Mob+Inclusion+in+ACCOs+Project+Report>

Recommendations:

25. Engage LGBTIQ+ organisations as central partners in violence prevention and response, enabling the development of community-led targeted prevention responses. This includes investing in organisations that can effectively meet prevention needs relevant to Rainbow Mob, older LGBTI+ people, QTIBPoC people, LGBTIQ+ people with experiences of disability, and trans, nonbinary and gender diverse people.
26. Expand inclusion and respectful relationships education in schools to ensure they are effectively representing LGBTIQ+ identities and providing alternatives to harmful gender norms.
27. Expand media literacy education in schools to support the identification of dis- and misinformation, enhancing inclusion of LGBTIQ+ young people in community spaces.
28. Implement social programming and campaigns that address the drivers of anti-LGBTIQ+ violence, developed in partnership with relevant expertise from LGBTIQ+, violence prevention, gender equity, men's health and youth organisations.
29. Support the implementation of the Walkern KatatdjIn Roadmap and Rainbow Mob are my Mob Model as essential best practice guidance for working with Rainbow Mob to support the prevention of DFSV.
30. Fund the implementation of the forthcoming prevention framework from Rainbow Health Australia and Our Watch.

7. Strengthening sector integration and workforce

While peer support provides specialist, tailored care, LGBTIQ+ people may not always present to a community-led service. This may be due to limited availability of LGBTIQ+ services, not being 'out' within their community, or the desire to seek support for a discrete issue (e.g. housing). As such, it is critical that the broader DFSV sector is equipped to work with LGBTIQ+ victim-survivors. As explored throughout this submission, LGBTIQ+ community-led organisations should be resourced to work in partnership with broader sector organisations, improving referral pathways, practice linkages and building the capacity of other services to provide tailored support to

LGBTIQA+ communities. LGBTIQA+ community-led organisations can also work with governments and law enforcement to meaningfully address harms and distrust within LGBTIQA+ communities, supporting broader cultural progress towards a safe, integrated response system at all levels of healthcare and policy.

Recommendations:

31. Develop a national DFSV workforce strategy that explicitly includes an LGBTIQA+ lens.
32. Develop a national quality systems and governance capacity building project for social and community service organisations providing frontline DFSV supports to ensure minimum accessibility standards in line with contemporary human rights and anti-discrimination frameworks.
33. Review governance arrangements under the National Plan to include LGBTIQA+ stakeholder representation, particularly in the National Evidence Technical Working Group.
34. Review governance arrangements and linkages between the National Plan, Our Ways, Strong Ways, the National Women's Health Strategy, the National Action Plan for the Health & Wellbeing of LGBTIQA+ People, Working for Women: National Strategy for Gender Equality, the National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children and the National Strategy to Prevent and Respond to Child Sexual Abuse, to address fragmentation gaps with regard to LGBTIQA+ gendered violence and gender inequality.
35. Establish an expert working group from LGBTIQA+ community stakeholders through the DFSV Commission.

8. Full List of Recommendations

1. Include Rainbow Mob as leaders and partners in responses to, prevention of and redress of DFSV, centering First Nations ways of being and restoration as a meaningful pathway towards change. This should be considered across all subsequent recommendations included in this submission.
2. Undertake contemporary research into secondary victimisation for DFSV victim-survivors and its impacts on intersectionally marginalised cohorts.

3. Review national and state-based health and coronial data reporting to include questions that adequately capture marginalised communities and priority cohort experiences
4. Incorporate key LGBTIQ+ datasets in the National Plan Outcomes Framework and Performance Measurement Plan.
5. Expand on the National Community Attitudes towards Violence against Women Survey to conduct a research project that captures community attitudes towards anti-LGBTIQ+ violence.
6. Review and strengthen the support infrastructure for LGBTIQ+ victim-survivor helpline services, including Rainbow Door and QLife, to ensure national access that is appropriate, skilled, consistent and has clear partnership arrangements with local LGBTIQ+ community-led services.
7. Support the sustainability of LGBTIQ+ community-led responses before and after the point of crisis, including prevention and recovery supports.
8. Strengthen LGBTIQ+ suicide prevention services to ensure effective, tailored supports are available for victim-survivors experiencing suicidal distress, thoughts and behaviours.
9. Support the implementation of tools developed with LGBTIQ+ communities, such as Safe and Equal and the Zoe Belle Gender Collective's *Risk in Context* resource and Switchboard's upcoming *Queering the MARAM* resource, to support mainstream services working with LGBTIQ+ victim-survivors.
10. Strengthen supports for victim-survivors who have experienced misidentification, including LGBTIQ+ people, First Nations people, people with refugee and migrant backgrounds, and people with experiences of disability.
11. Expand nationally accessible sexual violence supports, informed by the extensive sexual violence evidence base, including:
 - a. Funding an update to the National Association of Services Against Sexual Violence (NASASV) sexual violence practice guidelines, ensuring LGBTIQ+ stakeholder representation throughout the process.
 - b. Implementing recommendations from the Australian Law Reform Commission Inquiry into Justice Responses to Sexual Violence.

- c. Strengthening community sexual health, gender health and LGBTIQ+ primary health services capacity to respond to disclosure, and support safety and referral under national Supporting Recovery pilot programs.
12. Resource LGBTIQ+ organisations to deliver targeted sexual violence services and prevention campaigns.
13. Support partnerships between sexual violence and LGBTIQ+ organisations to strengthen responses for LGBTIQ+ victim-survivors across the sexual violence sector.
14. Ensure that LGBTIQ+ competency training and other capacity building initiatives are embedded within judicial and legal systems.
15. Expand the accessibility of restorative justice pathways, such as the RMIT Centre for Innovative Justice, as an essential alternative to traditional judicial and legal system responses.
16. Expand the initial national frontline community-led specialist victim-support service established under the 500 Workers Initiative and transitions the LGBTIQ+ workforce onto a 5-year funding cycle. Additionally, leverage the initial workforce under the Initiative to:
 - a. Expand prevention projects and frameworks both for victims-survivors and people using violence
 - b. Develop suicidality responsive crisis brokerage for people at acute risk due to DFSV victimisation
 - c. Ensure the availability of specialised, community-led victim-survivor support for victim-survivors that have experienced secondary victimisation from mainstream systems
 - d. Progressing the availability of the Leaving Violence Payment and Victims of Crime payments for people under 18.
17. Leverage the delivery of *National clinical practice guidelines for the care of trans and gender diverse people under 18 with gender dysphoria* to establish a clinical expert reference group, or similar advisory body, to address medical misinformation and disinformation about trans, non-binary and gender diverse victim-survivors of DFSV who access or may access gender affirming care.

18. Support partnerships between youth, DFSV and LGBTIQ+ organisations to strengthen responses for LGBTIQ+ young victim-survivors across the sector.
19. Support LGBTIQ+ community-led responses for people using violence.
20. Support partnership between LGBTIQ+ and generalist services working with people who use violence.
21. Consider the recommendations from the Victorian Parliamentary Inquiry into anti-LGBTIQ+ hate crimes, scheduled for release in September 2026.
22. Support the sustainability of community-led efforts working to address violence against trans people, including trans women and transfeminine people in relationships with cisgender men.
23. Invest in community-led efforts working to address violence against Rainbow Mob, in recognition of colonial histories of violence, dispossession and racism.
24. Explore the development of consistent legislation and guidelines that address the use of LGBTIQ+ change and suppression practices in the context of DFSV, with the Victorian *Change or Suppression (Conversion) Practices Prohibition Act 2021* as an exemplary benchmark.
25. Engage LGBTIQ+ organisations as central partners in violence prevention and response, enabling the development of community-led targeted prevention responses. This includes investing in organisations that can effectively meet prevention needs relevant to Rainbow Mob, older LGBTI+ people, QTIBPoC people, LGBTIQ+ people with experiences of disability, and trans, nonbinary and gender diverse people.
26. Expand inclusion and respectful relationships education in schools to ensure they are effectively representing LGBTIQ+ identities and providing alternatives to harmful gender norms.
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28. Implement social programming and campaigns that address the drivers of anti-LGBTIQ+ violence, developed in partnership with relevant expertise from LGBTIQ+, violence prevention, gender equity, men's health and youth organisations.

29. Support the implementation of the Walkern Katatdjín Roadmap and Rainbow Mob are my Mob Model as essential best practice guidance for working with Rainbow Mob to support the prevention of DFSV.
30. Fund the implementation of the forthcoming prevention framework from Rainbow Health Australia and Our Watch.
31. Develop a national DFSV workforce strategy that explicitly includes an LGBTIQ+ lens.
32. Develop a national quality systems and governance capacity building project for social and community service organisations providing frontline DFSV supports to ensure minimum accessibility standards in line with contemporary human rights and anti-discrimination frameworks.
33. Review governance arrangements under the National Plan to include LGBTIQ+ stakeholder representation, particularly in the National Evidence Technical Working Group.
34. Review governance arrangements and linkages between the National Plan, Our Ways, Strong Ways, the National Women's Health Strategy, the National Action Plan for the Health & Wellbeing of LGBTIQ+ People, Working for Women: National Strategy for Gender Equality, the National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children and the National Strategy to Prevent and Respond to Child Sexual Abuse, to address fragmentation gaps with regard to LGBTIQ+ gendered violence and gender inequality.
35. Establish an expert working group from LGBTIQ+ community stakeholders through the DFSV Commission.

9. Conclusion

This submission has outlined the impact of systemic dehumanisation of LGBTIQ+ people, the unique experiences of DFSV for LGBTIQ+ communities, and the urgent need for integrated, tailored responses to DFSV. This includes:

- Effectively resourcing LGBTIQ+ community-led initiatives that can deliver intersectional, trauma-informed support to victim-survivors.

- Investing in partnerships between LGBTIQ+ community-led organisations and generalist organisations responding to DFSV and sexual violence.
- Investing in prevention programming that addresses the systemic factors that create the conditions for violence towards LGBTIQ+ people.
- Providing safe, alternative avenues for justice and recovery for victim-survivors of family and domestic violence AND sexual assault.
- Building the evidence base around the experiences and needs of LGBTIQ+ victim-survivors.
- Implementing targeted sexual violence prevention, support and recovery approaches that are complementary of and additional to broader domestic and family violence responses.

Switchboard is uniquely positioned to be a collaborative leader in this response system, with our breadth of peer-led programs effectively set up to deliver tailored support to LGBTIQ+ victim-survivors.

We recognise that this document cannot speak to the full experiences of our communities or the depth of Switchboard's program insights. We welcome any opportunity to contribute further to the Second Action Plan or any subsequent activities.

Appendix 1. Media release: Support for LGBTIQ+ victims of app-facilitated violence

Thursday 21 August 2025

SUPPORT FOR LGBTIQ+ VICTIMS OF APP-FACILITATED VIOLENCE

From 10am on Thursday 21 August, Switchboard Victoria will offer a dedicated helpline providing confidential support and information to LGBTIQ+ people who have experienced targeted app-facilitated homophobic and/or transphobic violence. This free, confidential service will be available via Switchboard's Rainbow Door helpline and operate 5 days a week, from 10am - 5pm, Tuesday to Saturday. Staffed by trained LGBTIQ+ peer workers, the service will offer trauma-informed support and information in a safe, affirming environment. Following the recent community forum organised by Thorne Harbour Health, Switchboard is establishing a dedicated helpline in response to the escalation in premeditated attacks targeting users of dating and meet-up apps, in particular gay, bisexual and other men who have sex with men. Across the country, there has been a pattern of perpetrators using fake profiles to lure victims to meetings, where they are subsequently ambushed, robbed, assaulted, filmed and humiliated with homophobic abuse. In some cases, footage of these attacks has been used to expose, threaten and/or extort victims.

Callers to the helpline can expect to be believed, supported, and provided with information about their rights and options - including accessing legal help, counselling, and police reporting pathways. Our aim is to empower victim-survivors to make the best decision for themselves. In addition to Switchboard's dedicated helpline, Thorne Harbour Health has shared [community safety tips](#) and reduced wait times for key services, including:

- *Mental health counselling*
- *Alcohol and other drug (AOD) support*
- *Family violence services*

For more than 30 years, Switchboard Victoria has provided LGBTIQ+ peer support services to Victorian communities. This specialised helpline will operate until September 30, subject to demand.

If you, or someone you know has experienced violence and/or been lured by fake profiles on hookup or dating apps, you can contact Switchboard for free, confidential support, information and referral options.

Call 1800 729 367 and press 1

Quotes attributable to [REDACTED]

- *“Switchboard aims to be responsive to emerging issues for LGBTQIA+ Victorians. The impacts of the recent spate of hate crimes facilitated through meet up and dating apps have reverberated through the LGBTQIA+ community. It is vital that victim-survivors are able to access confidential support, referral and information about their rights.”*
- *“We know that there are very low police reporting rates for sexual assault, hate crimes and targeted attacks. Those who have reported will represent only a fraction of those who have been victimised. Switchboard will be providing a safe and confidential place for people to access support and information about their rights and options.”*
- *“Barriers to accessing support include the fear of not being believed, the fear of being blamed for the assault and the fear of losing control over who knows what has happened to them.”*
- *“This situation is primed for victim blaming narratives, which are likely to compound the fear of being outed and exposed.”*

Quotes attributable to [REDACTED], Victorian Commissioner for LGBTIQ+ Communities:

- *“The recent app-facilitated attacks have left many people fearful, isolated, and unsure where to turn. Having a direct line staffed by people who understand LGBTIQ+ experiences means victim-survivors can reach out and get immediate, affirming support. This is not only about crisis response, but also about helping people rebuild safety, connection and dignity.”*

- *“These are not random crimes, they are targeted attacks on gay and bisexual men. It’s homophobia and it’s gender-based violence. We must respond, invest in prevention initiatives, and most importantly ensure people aren’t left to face it alone.”*

Quotes attributable to 

- *“We are seeing the worst violence against our communities in over 40 years. The violence is compounded by victim blaming, fear of reprisal and mistrust of authorities. We thank Switchboard for supporting our work and providing a safe space for victims of hate crimes to seek support and advice.”*
- *“This helpline is a vital community-led support for victims, but it cannot be the only response. While our communities and services will always step up, we need a coordinated, whole-of-government response to address the culture of homophobia and online radicalisation driving these attacks.”*

Quotes attributable to 

- *“In the global backlash against gender equity LGBTIQ+ communities are being increasingly vilified. This has resulted in escalating levels of the violence from men using homophobia and transphobia to socially bond and reassert dominant forms of masculinity. Our government, services and community urgently need to develop and implement a co-ordinated response to prevent further violence against LGBTIQ+ communities and to support the victims of this violence.”*
- *“The trans community have been fiercely advocating for a co-ordinated and funded response to the escalating levels of transphobia in our communities. We stand in solidarity with gay and bisexual men who are also being increasingly targeted in violent attacks. Sadly, homophobia and transphobia are being increasingly used as a way for young men to socially bond and reassert dominant forms of masculinity. Our community is stronger when we stand together in responding to gendered violence.”*

END