

WAPHA and LGBTIQ+ mental health

WA Primary Health Alliance (WAPHA) is committed to ensuring people of diverse sex, sexuality and/or gender have access to safe, inclusive and culturally appropriate healthcare.

As a Rainbow Tick accredited organisation, WAPHA advocates for the pride, diversity and inclusion of people who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans and gender diverse, intersex and queer (LGBTIQ+), across Western Australia's primary and social care sectors.

LGBTIQ+ mental health

The prevalence of mental health issues and mental illness experienced by LGBTIQ+ Australians is disproportionately high and carries significant human, social and economic consequences¹.

LGBTIQ+ populations have higher rates of depression, attempted suicide and substance abuse than the general population².

Rates of major depressive episodes in LGBTIQ+ communities can be four to six times higher than the general population, psychological distress rates are reported as twice as high, and suicide rates are higher than in any other group in the Australian population³.

The 2016 National Drug Strategy Household Survey found that illicit drug use in the last 12 months was more common among people who identified as homosexual or bisexual (42 per cent) than among heterosexual people (14 per cent)⁴.

LGBTIQ+ Australians face discrimination, exclusion and stigma which are key factors influencing mental and physical health and wellbeing⁵.

Stigma also creates barriers to accessing health and social care services.

The Fifth National Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Plan notes that reducing stigma and improving the appropriateness of mental health services is critical for LGBTIQ+ communities.

Improving data

WAPHA is committed to ensuring the health services we fund are safe, and general practices are welcoming and inclusive of the needs of LGBTIQ+ people.

To be sure we are directing our efforts and funding in the right direction, data on LGBTIQ+ health trends is needed to ensure the services we fund, and existing primary care services meet the needs of people of diverse sex, sexuality and/or gender. However, the scarcity and inconsistency of data is problematic. Without robust data, we don't have the full picture of health needs and service utilisation required to help our funded service providers and general practice meet the needs of LGBTIQ+ communities⁶.

To overcome this, along with our funded service providers, WAPHA has improved the way we capture data on service provision and outcomes for people of diverse sex, sexuality and/or gender.

For example, we are working to include data elements that adequately capture sexual orientation and gender identity in our outcome indicators.

More widely, we've sought to influence data sets to include sexual orientation and gender identity and made it clear that

- 1 Leonard W & Metcalf A. *Going upstream: a framework for promoting the mental health of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) people*. National LGBTI Alliance, Sydney. 2014
- 2 Western Australian Department of Health. *Western Australian Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex(LGBTI) Health Strategy 2019–2024*. Perth: HealthNetworks, Western Australian Department of Health; 2019
- 3 Rosenstreich G. *LGBTI people mental health and suicide*. Revised 2nd edn. Sydney. National LGBTI Health Alliance, 2013
- 4 Australian Institute of Health and Welfare. *National Drug Strategy Household Survey 2016: detailed findings*. Drug Statistics series no. 31. Cat. no. PHE 214. Canberra: AIHW. 2017
- 5 Western Australian Department of Health (2019)
- 6 Council of Australian Governments Health Council. *The Fifth National Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Plan*. Canberra: Commonwealth of Australia. 2018

the collection, analysis and interpretation of data and trends should be formulated in consultation with LGBTIQ+ communities to avoid inadvertently causing additional stigmatisation.

Inclusiveness in data collection represents, at a system level, the first step towards breaking down the barrier to service access for LGBTIQ+ people.

Rainbow Tick

The Rainbow Tick was developed in response to a growing number of requests from people seeking inclusive health professionals and services, and health and human services organisations wanting to understand how they could improve the quality of care they provided to ensure LGBTIQ+ people received appropriate and inclusive healthcare.

Rainbow Tick consists of six standards which organisations can be independently assessed and formally accredited against to demonstrate their commitment to inclusive practice and service delivery.

The six Rainbow Tick Standards are:

1. Organisational capability.
2. Workforce development.
3. Consumer participation.
4. A welcoming and accessible organisation.
5. Disclosure and documentation.
6. Culturally safe and acceptable services.

WAPHA is the first Primary Health Network in Australia to achieve [Rainbow Tick accreditation](#).




**WA Primary
Health Alliance**
Better health, together

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This is one of a series of factsheets regarding mental health and primary health care, developed by WAPHA. Further factsheets and other resources can be found at www.wapha.org.au/mental-health-framework
The information in this factsheet was accurate at December 2020.