



LGBTQIA+ Action Plan

2020-2023



Northeast Health Wangaratta

Every patient, Every time



Left to right: Tessa Archbold- Project Coordinator, David Kidd- Director of Community Health and Partnerships and Allison Winters- Project Officer at the Rainbow Flag Raising Ceremony in 2019.

Northeast Health Wangaratta (NHW) acknowledges the traditional owners and custodians of the land and we pay our respect to them, their culture and their Elders past and present.

NHW pays respects to lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans and gender diverse and intersex elders and allies, and acknowledges the ongoing effects of past trauma and violence experienced by the LGBTQIA+ community, and ongoing systemic discrimination and inequity in access to health services.

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MESSAGE FROM THE CEO

Driving our strategy and organisational culture at NHW, which is truly inclusive of everyone in society, and particularly supportive of access and care for minority groups, is a key focus and responsibility of the NHW Board of Directors, along with the CEO and executive staff.

LGBTQIA+ people experience worse health outcomes than their non LGBTQIA+ peers in a range of areas and, noting that the mental health of LGBTQIA+ people is amongst the worst in Australia, NHW is actively driving a Rainbow Tick Accreditation process to ensure we are as well placed as we can be with regard to the education and attitude of our staff along with the service delivery available for people from the LGBTQIA+ community.

Visual symbols, which includes flying the Rainbow flag, are important in making it known that NHW is a culturally safe environment for LGBTQIA+ staff, patients and visitors.

The visibility of the Rainbow flag is about a culture of care, kindness and inclusion.



Tim Griffiths
Chief Executive Officer
Northeast Health Wangaratta
October 2020

MESSAGE FROM THE RAINBOW TICK ACCREDITATION PROJECT TEAM

The journey towards Rainbow Tick Accreditation started in 2017 with a gap analysis and plan for the project. Since then this has evolved to become a real, growing and exciting project within the Northeast Health Wangaratta organisation and within the wider community.

Our message has been consistent: We acknowledge that we aren't going to get it right every time - but we want to, and we're committed to improving and *working towards inclusive practice for LGBTQIA+ patients, carers, staff and visitors.*

Some organisations 'welcome' the LGBTQIA+ community, but this isn't just about being welcomed or accepted. We don't want to be just *accepted*. It's about being wanted, celebrated, respected and *valued*.

Our differences make us interesting, our differences make us unique and everyone should be valued for their diversity.

The staff at NHW are a reflection of the greater community. Staff and volunteers are as diverse as our region, and we will be leading the way in inclusive practice. By enabling and leading change here at NHW, our goal is to promote LGBTQIA+ inclusive practice within the Wangaratta community and across the region.

**By changing our workplaces, we can change our organisations.
By changing our organisations we can change the community.**

People ask me why we're doing this. "We treat everyone the same." What people don't realise is that actually isn't what we do. We don't treat every patient or family the same. Depending on someone's age, ability, background, health, comorbidities, culture, language, faith, and rurality - we tailor the care we provide based on how someone wants to be treated. And we will be continually reinforcing this as part of our work towards Rainbow Tick Accreditation and inclusive practice for the LGBTQIA+ community.

I am so incredibly grateful for the commitment from the leadership team at NHW and the very clear mission for equity, inclusion and safety from Tim and the board. I'm also very excited to see where this journey to inclusive practice leads the organisation and the community.



Allison Winters
(They/them)
October 2020

ORGANISATION PROFILE

Our Vision

Thriving communities in North East Victoria, with the best quality of life for everyone.

Our Purpose

To be leaders in health, who transform and deliver high quality and safe healthcare for all.

Our Role we play

We are a **healthcare provider**; We are an **employer**; We are an **educator**; We are an **innovator**; We are an **advocate**; and We are a **partner and leaders**.

Our Values

Fairness

Everyone has the right to healthcare

Kindness

Supporting and treating every one with kindness

Excellence

Quality is non-negotiable

Integrity

Open and ethical in all our actions

Respect

Believe in and commit to trust and understanding

Courage

Boldness and bravery – going above and beyond

LGBTQIA+ refers to lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans and gender diverse, queer, intersex and asexual individuals with the '+' acknowledging that the acronym doesn't include the entire range of sex, sexuality and gender diversity within the community.



Rainbow Flag Raising Ceremony at NHW - 3 December 2019.

NHW is a leading Victorian health service committed to providing quality health care to more than 90,000 people across North East Victoria.

We are the major referral facility for people with complex health needs from Bright, Mansfield, Beechworth, Myrtleford, Yarrawonga, Euroa and Benalla.

NHW has a 24/7 Emergency Department and offers an extensive range of healthcare services as well as a residential aged care facility, Illoura.



Emergency Department entrance at NHW.

DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION AT NHW

The Diversity and Inclusion Group was formed in 2019 with a range of staff represented, including CALD, ATSI, gender equity, LGBTQIA+, disability and older persons. The group meets monthly to discuss policy updates, communication to patients and staff as well as improving accessibility, education and training.

In consultation with the Diversity and Inclusion Group, NHW Community Advisory Group and NHW LGBTQIA+ Advisory Group developed a diversity statement and framework, highlighting the importance of a broader diversity focus.



Left to right: Gleen Chua, Allison Winters, Tessa Archbold, Anita Cooper and Tracey McGeehan- members of NHW Diversity and Inclusion Group.

POLICY AND LEGISLATION

Legislation:

Federal:

Fair Work Act 2009

Sex Discrimination Act 1984

Workplace Gender Equality Act 2012

Workplace Human Rights Commission Act 1986

Victorian:

Equal Opportunity Act 2010

Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006

Accreditation Standards:

Rainbow Tick Accreditation Standards

National Safety and Quality Health Service Standards

Aged Care Quality Standards

NHW Policies and Procedures:

Code of Conduct

Standards of Behaviour

Bullying and Harassment Policy

Patient/Client Rights and Responsibilities

Care and Support of LGBTQIA+ consumers Guideline

Diversity Policy

PROJECT PLAN – RAINBOW TICK ACCREDITATION

Underlying issues trying to address:

- Negative experiences by LGBTQIA+ staff and patients,
- Results from 2018 and 2019 People Matters Survey,
- Results from the 2019 Rainbow Tick Survey and
- Disparities in mental health outcomes, homelessness, domestic violence and health of LGBTQIA+ individuals.



Flags flying at NHW

According to the 2018 People Matters Survey, NHW rated lower than comparable health services in a number of areas, with staff reporting 'work colleagues actively support diversity' down 3% from previous surveys.

In addition to this the results indicated a marked reduction from previous surveys in the number of staff who believe there is a 'positive culture within the organisation for LGBTQIA+ staff' (down 4%), which was also lower than other health services. A reduced number of staff reported 'gender identity was not a barrier to success,' a 5% reduction from previous studies.

This prompted a need for further information required from organisational audits and from staff and consumer participation to determine the specific focus areas and potential solutions.

STAFF SURVEY

A staff survey was conducted in June 2019 in order to gain an understanding of staff knowledge, values and attitudes and to consider training needs. The results of the staff survey will be utilised to create a baseline measure prior to implementing changes to the organisation and is expected to guide further initiatives.

Key Findings

- The majority (69%) of staff believe it is “important that NHW becomes more inclusive”.
- There was an overall lack of understanding of LGBTQIA+ specific needs from staff.
- Staff were mindful of making a mistake and unintentionally causing distress or unknowingly discriminating against a member of the community.
- Few staff were confident in providing health services to LGBTQIA+ consumers.
- The majority of staff (79%) had never attended LGBTQIA+ training.
- Staff preferred online modules and group learning for LGBTQIA+ training.
- Overwhelming number of staff believed treating everyone the same was best practice.

Recommendations:

- Utilising values highlighted in survey and matching against Rainbow Tick Accreditation Standards and NHW Organisational Values (and potentially Kindness Charter) to help facilitate change.
- Updating patient and staff forms/paperwork to reflect gender and body diversity to reduce forms of systemic discrimination.
- Suggest a key focus around a response to “we treat everyone the same” to shift the focus to equity and person centred care to acknowledge everyone has different life experiences and that treating everyone the same isn’t always best practice
- Acknowledging and respecting the rights for consumers to disclose or not to disclose sexual orientation, gender identify and intersex status, however recognise that staff rely on information to help provide the right care for individuals and can only work within best practice within information provided by the consumer
- Review policy and procedures on discrimination and for this to be well communicated to staff
- To consider the variety of delivery options for training to enable staff to attend training, specifically an e-module for staff and volunteers.
- Specific training around discrimination and how Rainbow Tick Accreditation fits within a broader diversity focus
- Specific training targeting key topics as requested by staff
- Repeat of staff survey in June 2020 to gauge changes in attitudes, awareness and knowledge

AIMS & STRATEGIES

Our goal is to achieve Rainbow Tick Accreditation, with the aim to:

- Provide a safe and inclusive environment for people identifying as lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans and gender diverse, queer, intersex, asexual (LGBTQIA+) or sexuality and gender diverse (SGD), and allies, that they feel valued and respected (whether or not they disclose),
- Increase staff understanding of the individual needs of these communities and the knowledge to apply this to practice,
- To develop sustainable systems within the organisation that will increase accessibility and safety for LGBTQIA+ staff, patients and visitors, and promote this to the wider community,
- To educate and empower staff to recognise and respond appropriately to discrimination, bullying and harassment experienced or witnessed in the workplace and in the community, with

The central purpose to celebrate LGBTQIA+ individuals and community.

SUSTAINABILITY AND SUCCESS

This project will be supported by NHW Leadership Team and Board Members, and will involve:

- Training and education for staff,
- Collaboration with LGBTQIA+ community members and peak bodies, and
- Regular reviews as LGBTQIA+ community needs change.
- Ongoing consultation and collaboration with:
 - NHW Diversity and Inclusion Group,
 - NHW LGBTQIA+ Community Reference Group,
 - Rainbow Tick Accreditation Working Group,
 - Rainbow Tick Accreditation Project Officers,
 - CEO, leadership team and Board of Directors and
 - NHW Consumer Advisory Committee.

DEFINITION OF TERMS

NHW acknowledges the changing definitions, terms and language within the LGBTQIA+ community and recognises the importance of inclusive language.

Asexual – An umbrella term describing someone who does not experience sexual attraction.

Bisexual – A person of any gender who self-identifies as being emotionally, romantically and/or sexually attracted to people of more than one gender.

Biphobia – The fear, hatred, or discriminatory behaviour/treatment of a bisexual person or towards the bisexual community.

Cisgender – Relating to someone whose sense of personal gender identity corresponds with the gender assigned at birth.

Consumer – A person who uses the services of NHW. This can include a patient, resident, client, family member, carer or visitor. Consumers may engage as individuals, groups or organisations.

Discrimination – *“treating, or proposing to treat, someone unfavourably because of a personal characteristic protected by the law. This includes bullying someone because of a protected characteristic”* (Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission, 2019).

Diversity – The mix of people in the workplace and community and is defined by the Diversity Council Australia as *“All the differences between people in how they identify in relation to their age, Caring responsibilities, cultural background, disability, gender, Indigenous background, sexual orientation, and socio-economic background (social identity), and their profession, education, work experiences, and organisational role (Professional identity).”* (Diversity Council of Australia, 2017).

Equity – *“the absence of avoidable or remediable differences among groups of people, whether those groups are defined socially, economically, demographically, or geographically,”* (World Health Organisation, 2019) acknowledging these differences and where necessary, compensating to achieve greater equality.

Gay – A person who self-identifies as being emotionally, romantically and/or sexually attracted toward people of the same sex. Sometimes used as an umbrella term for the whole LGBTQIA+ community.

Gender Identity – “A person’s sense of identity defined in relation to the categories male and female, other or neither. For some people their sense of gender identity can be fluid (or change) over time” (Victorian Department of Health and Human Services, 2017).

Gender Diverse – *“refers to a range of genders expressed in different ways”* and can include (but is not limited to) transgender, non-binary, agender and gender questioning (Victorian Department of Health and Human Services, 2019).

Heteronormativity – *“A worldview that promotes heterosexuality as the ‘normal’ or preferred sexual orientation rather than one of many possibilities. Often in combination*

with heterosexism (which can be defined as prejudiced attitudes or discriminatory practices against homosexuals by heterosexuals). Heteronormative worldviews also usually ascribe fixed gender roles to men and women, and view gender as binary” (Diversity Council of Australia, 2018).

Homophobia – The *“fear, hatred or intolerance of people who are same-sex attracted or are perceived to be same-sex attracted, including lesbians, gay men and bisexuals, that often leads to discriminatory behaviour or abuse”* (GLHV, 2016).

Inclusive Practice/Service – *“The provision of services that are culturally sensitive and aware. This includes the provision of services that are able to meet the needs of people... in a culturally appropriate and sensitive manner”* (Department of Health and Human Services, 2017).

Intersex – People who are born with genetic, hormonal or physical sex characteristics that are not typically ‘male’ or ‘female’. People with an intersex variation have a diversity of bodies and identities.

Lesbian – A person who identifies as a woman who self-describes as being emotionally, romantically and/or sexually attracted towards other people who identify as women.

LGBTQIA+ - An acronym which is used to describe lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans and gender diverse, queer, intersex and asexual community, with the ‘+’ acknowledging the that the acronym doesn’t include the entire range of sex, sexuality and gender diversity within the community.

Non-Binary – *“People who are non-binary may have sex characteristics that do not fit a binary model of male or female or may express their gender in ways that do not match the dominant social expectations of the sex they were assigned at birth”* (GLHV, 2016).

Pronouns – How people refer to themselves and each other (this can include but is not limited to she/her, he/him or they/them, or a combination of these).

Queer – A reclaimed slur. Queer can mean different things to different people within the LGBTQIA+ community and is sometimes used as an umbrella term for the whole LGBTQIA+ community. Some members of the LGBTQIA+ community find this term offensive due to previous negative connotations.

Sex – *“A person’s physical characteristics relating to sex, including genitalia, chromosomes or hormones and also secondary sex characteristics that emerge at puberty”* (GLHV, 2016).

Sexuality/Sexual Orientation – *“describes a person’s romantic and/or sexual attraction to others”* and can include (but is not limited to) lesbian, gay, bisexual, queer, asexual and questioning (Victorian Department of Health and Human Services, 2017).

Transgender –Relating to someone whose sense of personal gender identity differs with the gender assigned at birth.

Transphobia – The irrational and unfounded fear, hatred or discriminatory treatment of a transgender person or towards the transgender community.

REFERENCES & RESOURCES

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