



THE RAINBOW PORTFOLIO

A whole-of-government approach to LGBTIQ+ issues in WA

[Rainbow Futures WA](#) is a collective of WA based LGBTIQ+ community organisations and individuals concerned with the long-term well-being of the community in the state. One of our priorities, developed in 2020 in consultation with member organisations and over 300 LGBTIQ+ community members, was a *whole-of-government strategy to eliminate discrimination and disadvantage, planned in collaboration with LGBTIQ+ communities*. Here we propose a model based on best practice around the country.

BACKGROUND

The WA Government has recently started delivering on long overdue LGBTIQ+ equality in the state in the form of law reforms and increased engagement with the LGBTIQ+ community. However, given our [high risk in health and social measures](#), we are still not appropriately considered in Government initiatives that address these issues. This manifests in a number of ways:

- **Calls for tenders are written in ways that mean LGBTIQ+ organisations are unable to fulfill their criteria.** For example, due to the privileging of heterosexual relationship structures, a recent family and domestic violence prevention grant process perpetuated the invisibility of LGBTIQ+ families and domestic relationships.
- **Consultation processes for policies and laws directly affecting LGBTIQ+ people are ad hoc,** with the level of input from LGBTIQ+ advocacy groups being largely dependent on whether the Minister's office has any prior knowledge of those groups and how much they consult with community.
- **Securing long term funding for ongoing service provision can be difficult.** The dependence on annual funding arrangements and one-off project grants inhibits LGBTIQ+ organisations capacity building or long-term planning.

Our community's issues are spread through different government portfolios: health, education, regional WA, workplace relations, law, etc. In principle, everyone is responsible for ensuring the needs of LGBTIQ+ people are met and their interests considered. In practice, it means *no one* is responsible.

Without a mechanism to ensure that LGBTIQ+ people are included across portfolios, significant opportunities to improve health and social outcomes have been missed. For example, the [LGBTI Health Strategy](#) never reached the implementation and report-back phase. And the [WA Strategy to Reduce Family and Domestic Violence](#) identifies trans and gender diverse people as being an especially vulnerable group, but does not plan for the provision of appropriate services or make any mention of LGBTIQ+ people in its first action plan.

RECOMMENDATIONS

We would like to work with the Western Australian Government to develop a whole-of-government model for LGBTIQ+ policy on the basis of these recommendations:

1. What gets measured gets done.

Government agencies report to Government on a range of metrics relevant to their function. This ensures a degree of accountability as well as focus on those metrics. We believe it is essential to ensure that the Government has clear indicators of success or failure in LGBTIQ+ policy via appropriate performance measures.

Secondly, to be able to adequately respond to the needs of the LGBTIQ+ community, the Government needs to be able to have a clear understanding of what those needs are. At present, LGBTIQ+ people are still forgotten at inception by both service providers and policy-makers, and their experiences erased through omission. We believe this must be overcome through improved - and more inclusive - data collection.

2. Consistent, transparent consultation.

It is our belief that the Government needs a consistent means - and a mechanism - of consulting with the LGBTIQ+ community. We believe this could be best achieved by setting up an **LGBTIQ+ advisory group**, comprised of service provision and advocacy organisations and/or individuals with relevant lived experience advocacy expertise. Issues such as recruitment, conflicts of interest, and membership of this body will need to be addressed through further discussion.

3. The buck must stop with someone. We believe it is essential to address issues of accountability by ensuring it is clear who has ultimate responsibility for LGBTIQ+ policy issues. To this end, we recommend the Government establish a Ministerial officer with ultimate responsibility for reporting on LGBTIQ+ issues. This would operate as per current Ministerial portfolios that incorporate the issues of other marginalised groups (e.g. Aboriginal, multicultural, disability, seniors, youth, women, and veterans). This office would work with the Advisory Group to:

- Develop appropriate departmental KPIs on LGBTIQ+ inclusion in policy making.
- Develop “business as usual” guidelines for government departments to ensure that service delivery models, calls for tenders, and issue-specific campaigns consider LGBTIQ+ issues from conception to implementation.
- Develop a long term plan to build the capacity of the LGBTIQ+ services sector in WA, in concert with the responsible Minister and in consultation with the LGBTIQ+ community.

Our detailed proposal for the WA model will be developed based on best practice models in Victoria, Tasmania, SA, and the ACT, as well as the CALD community model in WA (see the [Office of Multicultural Interests](#)).

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