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**Eastern Health**

**Rainbow eQuality**

**Action Plan**

2019 - 2022

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**1. Message from the Chief Executive**

Eastern Health is committed to being an inclusive health service that is responsive to the health and wellbeing needs of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex and queer (LGBTIQ) people and their families.

This Rainbow eQuality Action Plan articulates our commitment and details the actions we will take to improve the accessibility of our health service to LGBTIQ people.

Despite many LGBTIQ people living happy and healthy lives, this group in our community have poorer health and wellbeing outcomes than other Victorians in areas including mental health, suicide, general health, as well as alcohol and other drug use.

These poorer outcomes are due to LGBTIQ people experiencing discrimination from healthcare services on the basis of their sexual orientation or gender identity. As a result, their access to appropriate and timely health care can be negatively impacted and can lead to poorer health and wellbeing outcomes.

Eastern Health commits to:

* Providing a welcoming environment for LGBTIQ people across all sites and programs
* Ensuring all staff and volunteers are aware of the specific needs of LGBTIQ people and are able to provide appropriate services
* Ensuring processes and systems allow for safe disclosure and confidentiality of personal information for LGBTIQ people.

Through this commitment, Eastern Health will strive to be recognised as a leader in the provision of inclusive services for LGBTIQ people and to be the healthcare service of choice for LGBTIQ people from our local communities.

I would like to acknowledge the members of the Eastern Health Rainbow eQuality Working Group for their work to date to provide an inclusive, safe and accessible health service for all LGBTIQ service users, their carers, our employees and volunteers, and our visitors, and for the development of this plan.

I encourage all Eastern Health staff to bring this plan to life and provide welcoming and inclusive care to those people who identify as LGBTIQ.

David Plunkett

Chief Executive Officer

1. **Our Commitment**

Eastern Health supports the diversity of our staff, volunteers, patients and their families, and our communities. We are committed to identifying and adopting inclusive practices and becoming more responsive to the health and wellbeing needs of LGBTIQ people.

The Eastern Health Rainbow eQuality Action Plan 2019 – 2022 was developed through:

* Consultation with key stakeholders.
* Data analysis – feedback (Victorian Health Incident Management System) and the Victorian Healthcare Experience Survey.
* Legislative and corporate alignment.
* Best practice research, including The Rainbow Tick and the Victorian Government’s Rainbow eQuality guide.

**Rainbow eQuality Action Plan 2019 – 2022: Outcomes**

* Provide a welcoming, accessible, comforting and culturally sensitive environment
* Seeing the person for who they are and not their label or LGBTIQ identity
* Tailor services to individuals’ needs
* Staff receive awareness training so they understand the lived experience of LGBTIQ patients
* Utilise knowledge of patients, carers and staff with a lived experience of identifying as LGBTIQ or supporting someone who identifies as LGBTIQ
* Regular community consultations to remain informed about the needs of the community
* Celebrate the diversity of staff, volunteers, consumers and visitors to our services

**We will implement, monitor and evaluate the Rainbow eQuality Action Plan 2019 – 2022:**

* The Rainbow eQuality Action Plan will be made available to our staff and the community.
* Actions identified in the Rainbow eQuality Action Plan are documented in Appendix A.
* A Rainbow eQuality Action Plan Self-Assessment Tool will be used to help local areas assess their service and identify areas for improvement – assisted by the Rainbow eQuality Working Group.
* Actions will be documented on and monitored via the IIPs.
* The Rainbow eQuality Working Group will support the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of this action plan. Progress will be reported to the Patient Experience of Care Expert Advisory Committee and the Community Advisory Committee.
* Eastern Health will also report the plan’s progress to the community via the annual Quality Account.

**What will make our Eastern Health Rainbow eQuality Action Plan successful?**

* It has been developed in close partnership with people who identify as LGBTIQ and with organisations providing services for people who identify as LGBTIQ.
* It will be a core part of planning for all services and programs in their service provision, projects and policies.
* It has solid support from Eastern Health Board, Executive and Senior Management.
* The Rainbow eQuality Working Group will constantly review and monitor the Rainbow eQuality Action Plan, to make sure it is appropriate, current and its goals are being achieved.

1. **Introduction**

The fear of being discriminated against, or having previously experienced discrimination in a healthcare setting, is perhaps the main reason why one third of LGBTIQ Australians still hide their sexuality or gender identity when accessing healthcare. Discrimination is one barrier, but there are other individual, interpersonal and structural barriers that are faced by 1 in 3 LGBTIQ people when accessing, or attempting to access, healthcare. This puts LGBTIQ people at greater risk of mental, sexual and chronic illnesses, resulting in poorer health and wellbeing outcomes than the general population.

**3.1 LGBTIQ Facts**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Q:\Pt Exp of Care\Diversity\Research and Tools\LGBTI\FTFLGBTI-large.jpg**11% of Australians are of diverse sexual orientation, sex or gender identity** | Q:\Pt Exp of Care\Diversity\Research and Tools\LGBTI\FTFLGBTI-large.jpg | Q:\Pt Exp of Care\Diversity\Research and Tools\LGBTI\FTFLGBTI-large.jpg  **of children born in Australia are estimated to be intersex** |
| Q:\Pt Exp of Care\Diversity\Research and Tools\LGBTI\FTFLGBTI-large.jpg | **ATTEMPTED SUICIDE RATES**  **3.2%**  **General Population 16+ yrs**  **8% Same gender attracted & gender diverse 14-21 yrs**  **16%**  **LGBTIQ 16-27 yrs**  **19%**  **Intersex 16+ yrs**  **35%**   **Transgender 18+ yrs** | Q:\Pt Exp of Care\Diversity\Research and Tools\LGBTI\FTFLGBTI-large.jpg  **% of gay and transgender people who experienced verbal abuse in 2012** |
| **Higher incidence of chronic diseases e.g. asthma, diabetes**  Related image Image result for diabetes icon | **% of LGBTIQ people who hide their sexuality or gender identity at certain events**  Q:\Pt Exp of Care\Diversity\Research and Tools\LGBTI\FTFLGBTI-large.jpg  Image result for healthcare icon **33%**  **HEALTHCARE** | Image result for healthcare icon  ***In healthcare…***  **27% of transgender patients and**  **8% of gay patients have been refused treatment** |

*Table 1: LGBTIQ statistics*

*(Source: Face the facts: Lesbian, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex People. Australian Human Rights Commission, 2014)*

**3.2 Understanding the LGBTIQ Acronym**

In Victoria LGBTIQ is the accepted acronym for the disparate group that is often just called the ‘gay community’. The acronym is always evolving and can and does mean different things to different people, including being offensive to some yet inclusive for others. The following is the current general understanding of what LGBTIQ means:

* **Lesbian:** A woman whose primary emotional/romantic and sexual attraction is toward other women.
* **Gay:** A person whose primary emotional/romantic and sexual attraction is toward people of the same sex. Most commonly used by men.
* **Bisexual:** A person who is sexually and emotionally/romantically attracted to both men and women.
* **Transgender or Trans or Trans\*:** Term for a person whose gender identity is different to their assigned sex at birth, who may or may not take steps to transition.
* **Intersex:** Refers to people born with genetic, hormonal or physical sex characteristics that are not typically ‘male’ or ‘female’. Intersex people have a diversity of bodies and identities.
* **Queer or Questioning:**
  + Queer: An umbrella term for sexual and gender minorities, with a variety of meanings.
  + Questioning: Refers to a person who is in the process of exploring their sexuality and/or gender.

**3.3 Health Issues for LGBTIQ People**

There is a wealth of research demonstrating that LGBTIQ people have poorer health and wellbeing outcomes than the general population. This can include:

* Poorer mental health
* Low preventative screening rates
* Higher incidence of chronic diseases e.g. asthma, diabetes, cardiovascular disease
* Poorer coping mechanisms
* Higher rates of substance abuse
* Lesbians: higher risk of cervical cancer
* Men who have sex with men: higher rates of HIV, increased risk of anal cancer, hepatitis B, HPV and herpes
* Trans women: higher rates of HIV prevalence.

Barriers to care include:

* Access to hormonal and/or surgical interventions for trans people
* Non-consensual genital mutilation surgery for intersex infants
* Health professionals not comfortable treating LGBTIQ people
* Health professionals lack of awareness and knowledge of unique health needs of LGBTIQ people
* Structural administrative challenges e.g. Next of kin (NOK)
* Being forced to ‘out’ themselves in response to questions assuming heterosexuality
* LGBTIQ people having to educate healthcare professionals
* Stigma & discriminatory behaviours of staff e.g. Misgendering, invasive or offensive questioning
* Patients having to educate clinicians
* Inaccurate medical records
* Lack of gender-neutral facilities
* Gender-specific spaces e.g. Gynaecologist clinics, pap smears
* Specific care needs not met e.g. LGBTIQ people in aged care requiring HIV/AIDS or hormone treatments
* Pathologising of LGBTIQ identities
* Financial costs of surgeries, hormone therapies.

**3.4 Eastern Health’s Catchment Area**

The Eastern Health catchment extends across an area of 2800 km2, covering the largest geographical space of any of the Melbourne metropolitan health services. The location of each major Eastern Health facility within the primary and secondary catchments can be seen in the map below.



*Figure 1: Eastern Health catchments and locations of major Eastern Health sites*

Eastern Health’s primary catchment extends from the densely populated inner-eastern suburbs of metropolitan Melbourne, to the sparsely populated and rural outer-east. The primary catchment includes the six local government areas (LGAs) of Boroondara, Knox, Manningham, Maroondah, Whitehorse and Yarra Ranges (N.B. Boroondara and Knox LGAs are only partially included in the catchment).

The following figure demonstrates the estimated LGBTIQ population for the Eastern Metropolitan Region (EMR) and within Eastern Health. This highlights the significant number of LGBTIQ people in Eastern Health’s catchment area, and within our own workforce, who may experience poorer health and wellbeing outcomes and therefore may benefit from the actions initiated within this action plan.

**Eastern Health Staff**

**9,437**

**EMR Population**

**815,147**

**Eastern Health Staff LGBTIQ \***

**1,038**

**EMR LGBTIQ\* population**

**89,666**

\*based on 11%, Australian Human Rights Commission 2014

*Figure 2: Estimated LGBTIQ population in the Eastern Metropolitan Region (EMR) and Eastern Health*

**3.5 Eastern Metropolitan Region Health Profile**

The Eastern Metropolitan Region has one of the most diverse populations across Victoria, with 35% of people born overseas. In addition, the community profile across the region is quite varied between and within Local Government Areas (LGAs). For example:

* Disadvantage, as measured by the Australian Bureau of Statistics SEIFA Index of Disadvantage shows the Eastern Region as having lower disadvantage then Greater Melbourne, Victoria and Australia. However, comparing across our local LGAs, Boroondara has the lowest level of disadvantage and the Yarra Ranges has the highest level of disadvantage.
* People living in the Eastern Metropolitan Region have lower rates of all doctor-diagnosed chronic disease than all of Melbourne as well as Victoria. Despite this, 16% of adult females and 13.4% of adult males living in the Eastern Metropolitan Region have been diagnosed with two or more chronic diseases.
* Although the rates are better than elsewhere there are still one in five people living in the Eastern Metropolitan Region who rate their health as fair or poor.

1. **Development of the Rainbow eQuality Action Plan**

This Rainbow eQuality Action Plan has been developed with the support of Eastern Health’s Rainbow eQuality Working Group. Throughout the development of this document Eastern Health’s senior leaders and key staff members have consulted widely with internal and external stakeholders, including consumers, to deliver a comprehensive Rainbow eQuality Action Plan for Eastern Health.

In addition, research was undertaken to identify best practice for inclusive healthcare for LGBTIQ people. The action schedule (see Appendix A) is informed from both the Rainbow Tick Accreditation Program and the Victorian Government’s Rainbow eQuality guide.

Much work has already been done by the eQuality Working Group over the past 2 years to progress Eastern Health’s approach to our service delivery for LGBTIQ people. This has included:

* Public and staff spaces display LGBTIQ-inclusive posters and information e.g. We are all Equal
* CEO and Chair of Board issued a statement encouraging tolerance and respect during the marriage equality referendum
* Eastern Health participates/partners with LGBTIQ community events including:
  + Pride Cup 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019 (sponsorship and participation)
  + Pride March 2018, 2019 (participation)
* Acquisition of an Eastern Health pride banner for use at public events
* People Matter Survey includes specific LGBTIQ content e.g. Stonewall survey (personal experiences, attitudes to LGBTIQ people, discrimination, self-identification, cultural safety)
* Progress reported in annual Quality Account (2017, 2018)
* Development of an Equal Employment Opportunity framework proposal with LGBTIQ content, including supporting staff who may be transitioning.

**4.1 Consultation**

Consultation was undertaken with key stakeholders including:

* Victorian Commissioner for Gender and Sexuality,
* Gay and Lesbian Health Victoria
* Lifeview Residential Care
* Uniting Care Australia
* National LGBTI Health Alliance
* Pride Centre Victoria
* Peninsula Health
* City of Stonnington
* Harbour Thorne (VAC)
* Matrix Guild
* Transgender Victoria
* Vintage Men.

**4.2 Data analysis**

Thematic data analysis was conducted on a range of data with the aim to identify key themes and incorporate the recommendations into the goals and actions of Eastern Health’s Rainbow eQuality Action Plan Schedule (Appendix 1). Data from the following sources was analysed:

* Rainbow eQuality Working Group workshops; and
* Victorian Healthcare Experience Survey (Eastern Health data); and
* Victorian Health Incident Management System (Eastern Health data).

**4.2.1 Rainbow eQuality Working Group workshops**

Over the last two years, the Rainbow eQuality Working Group has held several workshops with the aim to identify key priorities and actions. These themes and actions have now been incorporated into the Rainbow eQuality Action Plan Schedule (Appendix A) and include:

* Welcoming environment e.g. lanyard rainbow ribbons, rainbow flag on Eastern Health’s webpage
* Staff training and awareness e.g. LGBTIQ awareness training provided by LGBTIQ people, inclusive language
* Disclosure and confidentiality e.g. Care and Support of LGBTIQ Patients Guideline.

**4.2.2 Victorian Health Incident Management System (VHIMS) Data**

Although identifying feedback specifically from people who identify as LGBTIQ is difficult, thematic analysis of all feedback to Eastern Health from January 2016 to December 2018 was conducted. Using 25 key search words, eight feedback/complaints were identified with the following themes:

* Respectful manner of staff: ‘unfazed by my LGBTI status’; parent of transgender child wanted to thank staff for the friendly, respectful way their daughter was treated
* Disrespect: nurse called patient’s fiancé ‘friend’ despite being asked multiple times by the patient to refer to her partner as fiancé; staff dismissive of written and verbal requests to use correct pronouns for transgender patients
* Discrimination: female transgender patient felt discriminated against by the health system; lack of acknowledgement of patient’s needs and concerns regarding her male genitalia
* Privacy: patient ‘shocked and distressed to see homosexual relationship with partner’ written on a letter to her GP – information she did not want to share with her GP.

**4.2.3 Victorian Healthcare Experience Survey (VHES) Data**

A review of Eastern Health’s recent Victorian Healthcare Experience Survey (VHES) data indicates that although most patients feel they were treated fairly, there are a number of people who felt they were not treated fairly due to their sexual orientation. Analysis of Eastern Health’s ‘all periods’ data is detailed below.

What the data shows is that although the percentage rates are low, it still equates to 22 males and 17 females who felt they were treated unfairly because of their sexual orientation when they attended Eastern Health as inpatients, and five males and four females in our Emergency Departments (ED) over the last 3 years.

The data also shows that 93.5% of males and 92% of females attending the ED or as an inpatient did not feel that they were treated unfairly for any of the listed reasons (age, sex, ethnic background, religion, sexual orientation, disability, marital status, something else). However, this equates to 906 males and 1,078 females who felt they were treated unfairly in the ED or as an inpatient for one of the listed reasons.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| ***Were you ever treated unfairly for any of the reasons below? Age, Sex, Ethnic Background, Religion, Sexual Orientation, Disability, Marital Status, Something Else*** | | |
|  | **Sexual orientation** | **No to all reasons** |
| **Adult Emergency *n=3749*** | Males 0.14% Females 0.12%  (5) (4) | Males 94% Females 92%  (3,524) (3449) |
| **Adult Inpatient *n=9729*** | Males 0.23% Females 0.17%  (22) (17) | Males 93% Females 92%  (9048) (8951) |

*Table 2: VHES patients who felt treated unfairly 2016-2018*

**4.2.4 Patient Experience Survey Report**

In January 2019 Eastern Health introduced an additional question in the monthly Patient Experience Survey which asks current inpatients questions relating to the 10 principles of care. The new question, which is now asked as a standard optional question, asked respondents if they identified as LGBTI. The following graph demonstrates the results of the January – March 2019 survey comparing LGBTI responses with those across Eastern Health’s program groups.

Although the data shown below is only for January 2019 – March 2019, it shows that the LGBTI experience is similar to all other patients including on measures of compassion and respect.

*Figure 3: Patient Experience Report January – March 2019*

**4.3 The legislative context**

Eastern Health’s Rainbow eQuality Action Plan has been developed with reference to:

* *Aged Care Act 1997* (Cth)
* *Australian Human Rights Commission Act 1986*
* *Same-Sex Relationships (Equal Treatment in Commonwealth Laws – General Law Reform) Act 2008* (Cth)
* *Sex Discrimination Act 1984* (Cth)
* *Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006* (Vic)
* *Equal Opportunity Act 2010* (Vic)

**4.4 Corporate alignment**

Alongside the information gained through stakeholder consultation, development of this plan included a review of Eastern Health’s existing policies/standards/guidelines, services and plans, including but not limited to:

* Appropriate and Effective Care Standard
* Child Safety Standard
* Code of Conduct Standard
* Diversity and Inclusion Framework
* Diversity and Inclusion Standard
* Equal Opportunity Guideline
* Grievance Policy and Procedure
* MHP Gender Sensitive Practice in the Mental Health Inpatient Units Guideline
* Partnering with Consumers Standard (Consumer, carer and community participation)
* Patient and Family-Centred Care Standard
* Patient Experience of Care Policy
* Patient Rights (Australian Charter of Health Care Rights)
* Privacy Standard
* Privacy of Employee Records Guideline
* Recruitment Standard
* Resolution of Complaints from Consumers and Carers Standard
* Rights and Responsibilities of Patients, Clients and Residents
* Staff Health and Wellbeing Standard
* Volunteers Standard
* Workforce Management Policy
* Workplace Bullying Prevention and Management Guideline
* Workplace Mental Wellbeing Guideline

**4.4.1 Eastern Health Strategic Plan**

The Eastern Health Strategic Plan 2017-2022 defines Eastern Health’s vision, mission, strategic initiatives and values. In particular, this planning document supports the delivery of ‘Great care, Everywhere, Every time’ and the overarching value of ‘Patients First’. This strategy guides the services provided by Eastern Health and ensures they align with the strategic objectives of the organisation.



*Figure 4: Eastern Health Strategic Plan*

**5. Next steps**

Eastern Health’s Rainbow eQuality Action Plan aims to provide our consumers with an excellent healthcare experience that is relevant and appropriate for their needs. This approach aligns to Eastern Health’s core values as outlined in our Strategic Plan. This Action Plan will continue to deliver actions over the next three years to 2022 and will see Eastern Health be recognised as a leader in the provision of inclusive services for LGBTIQ people and to be the healthcare service of choice for our local communities.

Appendix A provides the program of actions that will be delivered over the next three years. Actions will be progressively implemented across the three years with progress reported regularly.