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Media Release

LGBTI Alliance releases mental health report: shocked by mainstream services' attitudes

Australia's LGBTI Health Alliance has released a report which provides a snapshot of services, gaps and awareness concerning LGBTI people in Australia.

"Of most concern is the finding that less than half of mainstream mental health services agree to the need to have services targeted to LGBTI people and only one in five have specific reference to LGBTI people in their goals or plans", said Alliance Chair, Paul Martin.

"We have known for some time that there are higher levels of depression, anxiety and other mental health problems in the LGBTI populations, with evidence suggesting attempted suicide is 3.5 to 14 times," Mr Martin said.

"At the same time we knew that mainstream mental health and suicide prevention initiatives rarely target LGBTI people and are poorly resourced. What we didn't know was the level of awareness and identified needs amongst LGBTI people themselves, LGBTI health and welfare services and mainstream mental health services."

Mr Martin said that the report, undertaken by PwC (Price Waterhouse Coopers) provides a baseline for work in the future years.

"The Alliance has received a grant of \$1.0m from the Federal Government to help address service needs and gaps by building the capacity of the LGBTI community members and mainstream health services to respond more effectively", Mr Martin said.

Major survey results

Three surveys were undertaken:

Individual LGBTI people (1,939)

- 92% strongly agreed/agreed that mental health is one of the most significant issues in the LGBTI community, but only 46% strongly agree/agreed that they would feel confident dealing with the situation if someone close to them had a mental health problem.
- 76% of respondents strongly agreed/agreed suicide and self-harm is one of the most significant issues in the LGBTI community but only 40% of respondents strongly agreed/agreed they would be confident dealing with the situation if someone close to them had thoughts of suicide or self-harm

- 86% strongly agreed/agreed that having LGBTI specific mental health and suicide preventions services is important
- The top 3 things community members felt the LGBTI community could do to make a positive difference to mental health and suicide prevention were: awareness training for GPs on LGBTI health issues, awareness training for mainstream mental health and suicide prevention service providers on LGBTI health issues, and targeted LGBTI mental health and suicide programs and services

LGBTI Community - 54 organisations

- 89% strongly agreed/agreed that mental health is one of the most significant issues in the LGBTI community but only 43% strongly agreed/agreed staff and volunteers would be confident and competent in dealing with someone who presented with a mental health problem
- 72% strongly agreed/agreed that suicide and self-harm is one of the most significant issues in the LGBTI community but only 46% strongly agreed/agreed that staff and volunteers would be confident and competent in dealing with someone who presented with risk of suicide and self-harm

Mainstream mental health and suicide prevention services – 143 services

- Only 18% stated their organisation currently included the LGBTI community specifically in their goals and/or strategic plan
- 71% strongly agreed/agreed that mental health is one of the most significant issues in the LGBTI community and 65% strongly agreed/agreed that suicide and self-harm is one of the most significant issues in the LGBTI community
- 85% had an anti-discrimination policy with a positive statement of care, 56% have patient intake forms that include options inclusive of transgender, intersex and other gender diverse people
- Only 28% have had LGBTI awareness training for client-facing/direct-care staff and volunteers
- Less than half (46%) strongly agreed/agreed it is important to have LGBTI targeted mental health and suicide preventions services

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The Final Report is available at www.lgbihealth.org.au

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