Responses to Violence against Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender Women

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Many lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) Australians share an experience of alienation and *unbelonging* with members of other minority and marginal populations and are subject to varying types and degrees of discrimination, abuse and violence.

In this presentation I focus specifically on the abuse and violence experienced by lesbian, bisexual and transgender women and girls – what we currently know from our research and where the gaps still lie. The focus includes overall experiences of heterosexist violence; sexual violence; contextual violence such as schools, workplaces, and aged care; family violence, and intimate partner violence. For instance, we know that, compared to heterosexual women, lesbian and bisexual women have experienced significantly more sexual coercion; 49% of transgender women experience harassment or abuse in a single year; 50% of same sex attracted young women aged 14 to 21 report experiencing homophobic physical and verbal abuse at home; lesbians are significantly more likely to report same sex partner violence than gay men as well as on-going harassment at the end of a relationship. These cumulative experiences of abuse and violence are linked to high rates of harmful alcohol and drug use, smoking, psychological distress and suicidality, and poorer than average physical health among LGBT women. Additional factors - living with disability, social and geographical isolation, and immigrant and refugee backgrounds - compound the risks and harms of violence.

Gay and Lesbian Health Victoria (www.glhv.org.au) was funded by the Victorian Government to help address the impact of heterosexist discrimination and violence on LGBTI people’s health and wellbeing. We use evidence-based strategies in seeking to improve the quality and accessibility of services provided by the health, community, aged care and education sectors.

In the last two years we have developed national standards and a national service accreditation program – the *Rainbow Tick* – which support organisations to understand and implement LGBTI-inclusive service delivery. This initiative was developed in partnership with QIP, Australia’s largest national accreditor of health and human services, including general practice, community health, crisis accommodation, mental health, family violence and refuge services. The program is also applicable to local councils, government bodies, universities, sporting clubs and private businesses.