

ACT Mental Health Advisory Council

Public Communique - Meeting of 9 May 2019

The ACT Mental Health Advisory Council convened on 9 May 2019. The meeting was chaired by Chair, Ms Sue-Ann Polden.

The topic for discussion at the meeting was **Mental Health and Wellbeing of the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex and Queer (LGBTIQ) community**. The Council welcomed representatives from A Gender Agenda, the Aids Action Council, the LGBTIQ Ministerial Advisory Council.

It was noted that it is important to recognise there are a range of experiences, strengths and vulnerabilities amongst the different groups within LGBTIQ communities.

Mental health and wellbeing

The Council heard that people who identify as LGBTIQ have an elevated risk of mental illness and suicidality. People who identify as LGBTIQ can experience chronic stress through discrimination, rejection, violence and homophobia.

Transgender people aged 18 and over are nearly eleven times more likely, than the broader population, to attempt suicide in their lifetime. They are four times more likely to have ever been diagnosed with depression than the general population. One reported study found 42% of Intersex people thought of self-harm and 60% had thought of suicide. 18% did not finish secondary school compared to 2% of general population.

Services and supports

The LGBTIQ community raised concern about accessing affirming mental health care and that many services are not well tailored to the specific needs and experience of LGBTIQ people. The LGBTIQ community would like to see a more proactive approach in providing appropriate mental health care to those who identify as LGBTIQ.

Transgender and intersex people may have significant interactions with the health system and see multiple doctors and other clinicians. Studies report that the healthcare system generally requires further development to meet the needs of transgender people.

There was discussion about the significant benefits of peer support and peer workers. This reflects the broader benefits and growth of peer workers.

Data collection and research

It was noted that data collection is not in place to enable robust analysis of the needs of the LGBTIQ community and the services and supports they receive. Further research is needed on the needs of LGBTIQ community with a focus on the impact of stigma and discrimination and what wrap around services can provide to ensure their needs are met.

Key messages from the guest presenters

- There is an ongoing need to raise the visibility of the LGBTIQ community and acknowledge the differences between LGBTIQ people.
- There is a need to further tailor the supports across the health service and in schools to better respond to the specific needs of different groups in the LGBTIQ community.
- No medical intervention should be undertaken without medical / health grounds.

The Council considered the presentations and identified the need to highlight the mental health issues for people from the LGBTIQ community, develop and promote peer support and peer workers and for increased training for workers in mental health services and improve data collection.

Next meeting

The next meeting will be held on 11 July 2019 and the topic will be the Mental Health Services Workforce.

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