



## Position Statement

14 September 2017

# Marriage equality - safeguard LGBTIQ community mental health and wellbeing

VICSERV, the peak body for community managed mental health services, endorses the calls of mental health advocates, service providers and community leaders for the Australian Government to put an end to marriage inequality, and uphold the human rights of all Australians regardless of sexual orientation.

At VICSERV, we strongly believe that all people are entitled to good mental health, and to social and emotional well-being. We oppose structural discrimination and call for its elimination in all of its forms.

While we urge all Australians to support changing the law to allow same-sex couples to marry, we consider that the survey process presents a significant risk to the mental health and well-being of LGBTIQ people, their communities and families. Regardless of your position on this important issue, we ask everyone to avoid divisive and harmful language and behaviour.

We know that LGBTIQ Australians already experience poorer health and mental health outcomes than the wider Australian community.<sup>1</sup> The mental health needs of this group of Australians is likely to be further negatively impacted by the divisive and harmful process of the survey.

We endorse the positions of our members and stakeholder organisations who have committed to supporting their LGBTIQ consumers and patients during this period, by upholding their rights, and addressing adverse impacts on their mental health and health needs.

Discrimination, stigma, social exclusion, violence are contributing factors to the significantly higher rates of psychosocial distress, suicidality and depression amongst the LGBTIQ community:

- Same sex attracted Australians have 3.5-14x higher rates of suicide attempts than their heterosexual counterparts;
- 20% of people who are transgender and 15.7% of those who are gay, lesbian and bisexual report current thoughts of suicide;
- In those who are gay, lesbian and bisexual, the average age of a first suicide attempt is 16;
- 47% of people who identify as transgender have attempted suicide;
- 36.2% of people who are transgender and 24.4% of people who are gay, lesbian and bisexual currently meet the criteria for major depression. This compares with 6.8% of the general population.<sup>2</sup>

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For all media enquiries, contact Mr Angus Clelland, CEO VICSERV on 03 9519 7000.

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<sup>1</sup> 'Private Lives 2: The second national survey of the health and wellbeing of GLBT Australians', Australian Research Centre in Sex, Health and Society, La Trobe University, 2012 (available at [http://www.latrobe.edu.au/\\_\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0020/180425/PrivateLives2Report.pdf](http://www.latrobe.edu.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0020/180425/PrivateLives2Report.pdf))

<sup>2</sup> LGBTI mental health Fact Sheet, Australian College of Mental Health Nurses, 2012 (available at [www.acmh.org](http://www.acmh.org))