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Dear SA Housing Authority,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide feedback about the Housing and Homelessness Strategy for South Australia.

I am writing to you on behalf of the South Australian Rainbow Advocacy Alliance, a not for profit organisation that advocates for the health, rights and wellbeing of LGBTIQ+ South Australians.

I also previously worked at a frontline homelessness service for six years, providing support to people across South Australia who were experiencing homelessness or domestic violence and I have subsequently been involved in various projects to develop and implement resources, guidelines and training focusing on LGBTIQ+ inclusive practice for the homelessness and domestic violence sectors here in South Australia.

SARAA strongly supports the strategic intent to create culturally and socially inclusive housing and we applaud the intent to deliver an Aboriginal Housing Strategy. We acknowledge that diverse communities can have different needs and that formulating strategies with these communities in mind can help to create improved outcomes for all South Australians. With this in mind though, we highlight the importance of including LGBTIQ+ communities as a discrete population group with unique needs and priorities requiring defined and targeted responses.

In particular, there are two issues that must be considered: increased risk of homelessness, and reduced access to housing (including emergency housing).

## **Increased risk of homelessness**

While many LGBTIQ+ people live happy, healthy lives with minimal experiences of discrimination, this sadly isn't the case for everyone. Many LGBTIQ+ people continue to experience discrimination in various forms, and for some this can put them at an increased risk of homelessness due to:

- Being kicked out of home by family, housemates or a partner as a result of 'coming out' as LGBTIQ;
- Lack of/loss of employment due to homophobia or transphobia;
- Increased rates of mental health issues or substance use;
- Domestic and family violence.

While South Australian data is lacking (the H2H system does not collect data about LGBTIQ+ status for people seeking support and no local research has occurred), I have heard directly from youth homelessness services that as much as 30 per cent of young people experiencing homelessness are part of the LGBTIQ+ community. Research from the University of Melbourne<sup>1</sup> provides more information about the overrepresentation of the LGBTIQ+ community in homelessness statistics.

All of these factors contribute to a situation where LGBTIQ+ people are more likely to need crisis support due to homelessness, however culturally safe and acceptable support isn't always available.

## **Reduced access to housing (emergency accommodation)**

At present, homeless shelters in South Australia are generally gendered in their nature and provide support for either men or women. This is common in youth shelters as well, who will often have beds allocated for male and female clients. While the provision of gendered services can be understood as a way to provide safe spaces for women (for example), it can also create barriers for members of the LGBTIQ+ community. This is particularly true for transgender, non-binary and intersex members of our community who may not fit into what individual workers or service providers may consider as 'male' or 'female'.

Likewise, the gendered nature of the domestic violence sector can pose a challenge for LGBTIQ+ people who have experienced family and domestic violence - an issue that is increasingly being recognised as requiring improved responses in states such as Victoria and New South Wales.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.lgbtihomeless.org.au/>

To their credit, many service providers in both the homelessness and domestic violence sectors have started to explore how they can provide more inclusive services - but there is more work to be done at a sector wide and government policy level and we would encourage ongoing efforts to engage with these sectors and with other relevant bodies to develop appropriate policy. We would also encourage the implementation of LGBTIQ+ inclusive practice guidelines (currently being developed by the University of Melbourne) as well as inclusive practice training for all homelessness and domestic violence services, such as the Rainbow Tick Accreditation<sup>2</sup> developed by Rainbow Health Victoria.

### **Reduced access to housing (private rental markets)**

In addition to the homelessness sector, another barrier to housing exists within the private rental market.

At this time there is no South Australian research to specifically support this, however same-gender couples and transgender people have described discrimination from landlords and real estate agents when trying to apply for private rental accommodation. Further research is needed to understand the extent and impact of these issues.

### **The needs of older LGBTIQ+ people**

Older LGBTIQ+ represent a specific population of concern. See attached for the LGBTIQ People Ageing Well Report, a joint project by SARAA and COTA SA that asked older LGBTIQ+ South Australians about issues that were important to them.

Specifically, older people who participated in this project expressed concern about entering into aged care services and were inclined to remain in independent accommodation (whether owned or rented) for as long as possible. They recommended that strategies and housing models be explored that would allow them to maintain this independence.

### **Summary & Recommendations**

For the most part, LGBTIQ+ South Australians require the same support as any other community member and, therefore, most aspects of the Housing and Homelessness Strategy do not require an LGBTIQ+ specific approach. It is, however, important to consider at every stage of the Strategy whether policy is inclusive in its nature or whether LGBTIQ+ specific considerations are required.

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.qip.com.au/standards/rainbow-tick-standards/>

SARAA encourages the South Australian Housing Authority to consult with service providers and LGBTIQ+ communities in the development of the Strategy to ensure that the needs of LGBTIQ+ South Australians are met. We also recommend that interstate and international research and service models are considered to assist in finding the best approaches to supporting our communities.

SARAA would welcome the opportunity to consult further with SAHA about the development of this Strategy, and we are prepared to offer assistance in holding community consultation workshops if desired.

We look forward to seeing an inclusive Strategy developed that supports the housing needs of all South Australians.

Kind regards,

Matthew Morris  
Chair  
South Australian Rainbow Advocacy Alliance