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10 December 2020

Honourable Stephen Wade MLC
Minister for Health and Wellbeing
GPO Box 2555
Adelaide SA 5001
Email: HealthMentalHealthFeedback@sa.gov.au

By email

Dear Minister Wade,

We're writing to express our disappointment in the **South Australian government's failure to provide essential healthcare to transgender and gender diverse children and young people.**

Community organisations and families of gender diverse youth have written to you on multiple occasions expressing concerns regarding overstretched and under resourced public health services for transgender and gender diverse people, especially in regards to the support provided at the Women's and Children's Hospital. We wrote to you on this issue on 24 May 2020 and are yet to receive a response.

Demand for lifesaving gender affirming healthcare has increased dramatically in recent years. Combined with limited funding and resources, this means at risk children and young people wait 12-18 months on average for an initial psychiatric appointment at the Women's and Children's Gender Clinic, causing unnecessary and preventable distress to these members of our community at a time of particular vulnerability.

We know that SA Health recognises these issues, having drafted a business case to build a gender dysphoria clinic over 2 years ago. In August this year your Department publicly stated 'it was reviewing a business case for an "enhanced" gender service'.¹ It therefore came as a great disappointment last month to note that the SA Budget 2020 makes no mention of trans or gender diverse people, trans healthcare or a gender clinic.

¹ ABC News, 26 August 2020, 'Demand for gender dysphoria services is surging, but advocates say supply is lagging', available at <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2020-08-26/advocates-call-for-gender-dysphoria-clinic-to-meet-demand/12596480>.

This setback coincides with the recent release of Private Lives 3, Australia's largest national survey of the health and wellbeing of LGBTIQ+ people to date.² This important study adds to the ever expanding body of research clearly showing that transgender and gender diverse people experience significantly poorer mental health outcomes. The positive news though is that the mental health of transgender and gender diverse people improves dramatically when they're able to access gender affirming healthcare.

In light of this latest research and the ongoing pleas from families of gender diverse children, we are once again **calling for the establishment of a properly funded Gender Clinic at the Women's and Children's Hospital.**

While we emphasise that a Gender Clinic is not the only service that is required to meet the health needs of LGBTIQ+ South Australians, we see it as a priority action to meet the needs of a particularly vulnerable part of our community.

We understand your Department has been under increased strain due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Our community knows firsthand the impact of COVID-19, with interruptions to elective gender affirming surgeries, travel restrictions limiting our ability to travel interstate to access gender affirming healthcare, and overall increased negative impacts on mental health outcomes. The impacts that COVID-19 has had on our community demonstrate even further the urgent and essential need for dedicated public health services for transgender and gender diverse children and young people.

We want our transgender and gender diverse children and young people to be able to access the vital health services they need in a timely manner, and our community is eagerly awaiting these long-overdue improvements to public health services.

We therefore ask that you please respond as a matter of urgency outlining your government's plan to implement an enhanced Gender Clinic at the Women's and Children's Hospital.

In the interim we will make this correspondence publicly available to ensure our members and supporters are aware of our position on this matter. We will also be forwarding a copy of this correspondence to the Shadow Minister for Health and Wellbeing Chris Picton.

Kind regards,

Matthew Morris
Chair, South Australian Rainbow Advocacy Alliance

² Hill, A. O., Bourne, A., McNair, R., Carman, M. & Lyons, A. (2020). *Private Lives 3: The health and wellbeing of LGBTIQ people in Australia*. ARCSHS Monograph Series No. 122. Melbourne, Australia: Australian Research Centre in Sex, Health and Society, La Trobe University.