



# WILL YOU BE SAFE?

**Navigating Home Care Services |**

**A guide for the LGBTI+ community**

**Things to consider when choosing providers**

***“While many LGBTIQ+ people live happy and healthy lives, others continue to experience discrimination, stigma, isolation, harassment and violence - all of which lead to poorer (physical) health and (poorer) mental health. The sector called on the Government to develop an action plan, we listened and we have acted. The plan will guide the reforms needed to ensure LGBTIQ+ Australians are given every chance to live healthier lives.”***

***- The Hon Mark Butler MP, Minister for Health and Aged Care 2023***

Everyone in Australia has the right to access quality, inclusive and culturally safe Home Care services that cater to their individual needs and respect their background and life experiences. When choosing Home Care providers, there are a lot of things to consider. People have different needs. This brochure is designed to help Lesbian, Bisexual, Gay, Transgender and Intersex people choose the services that best meet their needs. It outlines what you might want to consider - as LGBTIQ+ consumers - in choosing a Home Care provider.

## **1. DO YOU KNOW IF THE HOME CARE PROVIDER THAT YOU ARE CONSIDERING HAS AN LGBTIQ+ DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION POLICY?**

By law, organisations cannot discriminate against LGBTIQ+ people. Knowing this is important. It is very useful to go online and investigate an organisation's LGBTIQ+ Diversity and Inclusion Plan and equity stance. If you feel comfortable asking directly, contact the organisation and ask about their policies. You will want to know that the service has - and actually implements - Diversity and Inclusion policies and is compliant with the Aged Care Quality Standards for the protection of your consumer rights and your dignity. Look for policies that demonstrate that the organisation values all sexualities, relationships, genders, bodies and that it will support your chosen relationships and need for intimacy. Look for signs that you will not be misgendered, that the provider understands the importance of using a person's preferred pronouns and that the language used is respectful and inclusive. Ideally, you will also want to see that the board has some LGBTIQ+ representation.



## 2. Do staff routinely and regularly receive LGBTI+ training?

Many organisations offer their staff Silver Rainbow LGBTI+ Diversity and Inclusion Training in Aged/ Home Care. This speaks volumes about them wanting to provide the fairest and most equitable service to all their clients. Such training indicates an understanding of the various needs and life experiences of people from the LGBTI+ community and should mean that staff are educated and aware of the needs of LGBTI+ people and behave sensitively and respectfully as a result. Such staff understand that older LGBTI+ people may be more vulnerable due to a lack of family or estrangement from family and quite possibly, a history of significant social, community and institutional discrimination.



## 3. Should you declare your LGBTI+ status?

For some people, perhaps especially for those who are transitioning, there may be no choice. For others, there is. Think about whether you want to declare your LGBTI+ status or not. Some people do, some people do not, for a myriad of reasons. If you do declare your status on official forms or in person, you will want to feel comfortable and safe in sharing this information.

## 4. If you do declare, will you be safe?

While many organisations are genuinely welcoming, sadly some are not. You have the right to feel safe and not to have to deal with poor or disrespectful behaviour, up to and including feeling stigmatised and discriminated against. Homophobia has no place in health care. Consider if you will you be safe in disclosing your LGBTI+ status. What would the implications of this be? If you are transitioning, can you expect the support to do this? Will there be understanding that you have probably already experienced a lifetime of trauma and that this has an impact on you and the services you feel safe accessing? Is there a Code of Conduct, in the event that you, your partner or friends experience homophobia or discriminatory behaviour from your Home Care service provider?





## 5. If you do declare, will your privacy be respected?

Will you be afforded respect and privacy and not questioned about your choices regarding who you connect with or have relationships with (be it one or more persons)? Will you know your care provider respect your right to connect with people regardless of their gender? If, for example, your family does not know your sexual orientation or even your HIV status, can this information be kept confidential by your service provider? Likewise, if you do not want this information to be shared with other clients, do you feel that your privacy will be respected? On a different level, privacy also means having the right to decorate your home or your space as you see fit, in a way that reflects who you are, what your tastes and interests are including whatever art, culture, media, books etc. that you want, LGBTI+ or otherwise.

## 6. If you do declare, will your wishes be carried out?

Will your wishes be respected in terms of official documents like Advanced Care Directive and your Will? Also, will your Palliative Care and end-of-life wishes be respected?



## 7. If you do declare, will your health care needs be respected?

If you have particular health care needs, do you feel confident that they will be respected? This is particularly important if you have a hormonal regime which must be continued in order for you to maintain good health as you age as a trans, gender-diverse or intersex person. You will want to know that there is policy around this so that your medical needs will be respected, particularly in any transition from one doctor or service to another. Consider if you will be able to choose the gender of your Home Care provider. Might they even come from the LGBTI+ community? Will they understand that you may have experienced sexual violence? If you happen to be transitioning, will you be offered the medical and social support that you will need?

If there is a high turnover of staff you need? will you have to constantly explain yourself and your body to new people? Will the Home Care providers that come into your home be used to working with people with diverse bodies or will you have to deal with their reactions, time and time again?



## 8. If you do declare, will you feel welcome?

Organisations signal their values in different ways. Look for rainbow flags in the reception, on the website and in marketing materials. This is the easiest way for an organisation to signal that it is LGBTI+ open, inclusive and welcoming. Check if there is information about any alliances with LGBTI+ government or community services. Ask if significant LGBTI+ days or events are acknowledged or celebrated. Ask if there are any LGBTI+ groups, activities or LGBTI+ staff members. Check forms for inclusive language, respect for preferred pronouns and inclusion of options that allow you to identify as non-binary or LGBTI+. Ask about how the organisation supports same sex partnerships and families of choice. Not only should you feel welcome - like everyone else - but your partner, carer, family and friends should also feel welcome.

## 9. If you do declare, will you feel included?

The best services are inclusive and respectful. They value their clients and strive to be inclusive, appreciating that inclusion is good for everybody's mental and physical health. While not many organisations have Rainbow Tick Accreditation yet, those that do, will have highly skilled staff who have been through LGBTI+ Diversity and Inclusion Training. This means that you should expect to see these values reflected in the organisation's policies and the standard of service you receive. In short, you should feel included.

## 10. Is there a clear Conflict Resolution process in place in case things go wrong?

If something does go wrong, is there a pathway to redress the situation? Does the Code of Conduct provide the possibility of assistance or mediation? Will it be safe for you to provide feedback? Is there support for complainants and whistleblowers? Will there be someone knowledgeable and Diversity and Inclusion trained that you could speak to, to resolve the situation?





## Further reads

**My Aged Care LGBTI+ information**

<https://www.myagedcare.gov.au/support-lesbian-gay-bisexual-transgender-and-intersex-people>

**Aged Care Quality Standards**

<https://www.myagedcare.gov.au/aged-care-quality-standards>

**Charter of Aged Care Right**

<https://www.myagedcare.gov.au/your-right-quality-care>



For more information contact COTA SA

T | (08) 8232 0422

E | [cotasa@cotasa.org.au](mailto:cotasa@cotasa.org.au)



This publication was drafted in collaboration with the Rural City of Murray Bridge

E | [council@murraybridge.sa.gov.au](mailto:council@murraybridge.sa.gov.au)