

23 September 2024

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Dear Keeping Children Safe,

[Working It Out](#) (WIO) has provided this feedback on the consultation draft of the Change for Children: 10-year strategy. As Tasmania's sole dedicated support, advocacy, and education service for the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, queer, and asexual (LGBTIQ+) community, WIO is committed to fostering change through education grounded in lived experience. Our goal is to empower LGBTIQ+ Tasmanians to lead fulfilling lives.

What is understood about the experiences of abuse among LGBTIQ+ children:

- *"Gender or sexually diverse children are more likely to experience child sexual abuse. More than half (51.9%) of all LGBTIQ+ children experience child sexual abuse"* (Keeping Children Safe 2024, p.17)
- *"The prevalence of physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional abuse, neglect and exposure to domestic violence was very high for those with diverse sexuality and/or gender identities. Maltreatment was most prevalent for participants in the youth cohort with diverse gender identities (90.5% experiencing some form of child maltreatment; 77% multi-type maltreatment) or diverse sexualities (85.3% reporting any child maltreatment; 64.3% multi-type maltreatment)"* (Higgins et al. 2024).
- Research identifies a proven correlation between experiencing child maltreatment and experiencing mental health conditions in Australia, and that *'More than 1.8 million cases of depressive, anxiety, and substance use disorders could be prevented if childhood maltreatment was eradicated'* (Grummitt et al. 2024 p.E1).

At present, while Child and Youth Safe Principles include LGBTIQ+ safety in Standard 4 the strategy itself does not include specific measures to protect LGBTIQ+ children and young people. This omission is a significant gap in the draft, given the higher rates of abuse and maltreatment experienced by LGBTIQ+ children and young people compared to the general population. Incorporating targeted actions would align with the strategy's goal of addressing the needs of specific groups, including those who identify as LGBTQIA+ (p.14).

Actions the strategy must include:

- Initiatives aimed at confronting systemic societal discrimination and the silencing of LGBTIQ+ children, who are frequently targeted due to the shame imposed by adults and systems. This

discrimination renders these children invisible and vulnerable across communities, homes, and institutions.

- Providing resources and establishing accountability structures for community organisations to address and transform cultural attitudes and beliefs that discriminate against LGBTIQ+ populations.
- LGBTIQ+ inclusion standards in funding contracts for child and youth-based services.
- Creation of a specialised training package developed in consultation with the LGBTIQ+ community for safeguarding LGBTIQ+ child and youth populations to satisfy upholding Standard 4 regarding LGBTIQ+ children and young people.
 - WIO is currently exploring developing a training package speaking to this.
- Mandated core knowledge training is delivered on LGBTIQ+ cultural safety (see: p.84) by a LGBTIQ+ community-led organisation.
- Therapeutic service systems and related services offer culturally safe and competent services to victim-survivors who identify as LGBTIQ+.
- Ensure the document does not conflate innate variations of sex characteristics (IVSC or intersex) with gender and sexuality (see: p.32).
- Add LGBTIQ+ Cultural Safety to the column *'Relationships, connections and power'* to encourage sustained change with your document's systems change approach (see p.36)
- Ensure LGBTIQ+ cultural safety is included in minimum requirements on professional development and core knowledge when implementing recommendation 9.11 and 15.15 (see: p.93)
- Ensure inclusion of LGBTIQ+ content in DECYP's mandatory child sexual abuse prevention curriculum content when implementing recommendation 6.1. (see: p.105)
- Include LGBTIQ+ Whole-of-Government Framework in the list of *'Related strategies and policies'* (see: p.124)

Incorporating these actions would more effectively safeguard LGBTIQ+ children and young people by proactively addressing systemic issues and upholding Child and Youth Safe Standard 4, which states, *"Equity is upheld and diverse needs respected in policy and practice."* As outlined in the Change for Children's strategic intentions (p.11), integrating specific measures to protect LGBTIQ+ children and tackle systemic inequalities ensures that no LGBTIQ+ child is left questioning, "Who is looking after me?" and that every child is assured safety.

With Regards,

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Working It Out

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References:

- Keeping Children Safe (2024), Consultation draft Change for Children: Tasmania's 10 year Strategy for upholding the rights of children by preventing, identifying and responding to child sexual abuse. Tasmanian Government, Australia
- Higgins, D. J., Lawrence, D., Haslam, D. M., Mathews, B., Malacova, E., Erskine, H. E., Finkelhor, D., Pacella, R., Meinck, F., Thomas, H. J., & Scott, J. G. (2024). Prevalence of Diverse Genders and Sexualities in Australia and Associations With Five Forms of Child Maltreatment and Multi-type Maltreatment. *Child Maltreatment*, 0(0). <https://doi.org/10.1177/10775595231226331>
- Grummitt, L., Baldwin, J.R., Lafoa'I, J., ; Keyes, K.M., Barrett, E.L., (2024), Burden of Mental Disorders and Suicide Attributable to Childhood Maltreatment, *JAMA Psychiatry*, doi:10.1001/jamapsychiatry.2024.0804