



LGBTIQ+ Strategy

‘Our bodies, our genders and our relationships’

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National Disability Insurance Agency's LGBTIQ+ Strategy

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The NDIA acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of Country throughout Australia and their continuing connection to land, sea and community. We pay our respects to them and their cultures and to Elders both past, present and emerging.

1. Introduction

The National Disability Insurance Agency (the Agency or NDIA) is committed to ensuring that lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, queer and questioning, and asexual (LGBTIQA+) people with disability (see **Appendix 1 - Glossary** for full definitions) have an equal and equitable chance to benefit from the world leading National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS).

The NDIA invited key peak organisations and participants to a series of workshops to discuss access to, and experience of, the NDIS for people with disability from LGBTIQA+ communities. Based on this input, and the feedback from a participant survey, the Agency has developed the LGBTIQA+ Strategy (the Strategy), to address challenges and strengthen opportunities so that LGBTIQA+ people achieve the best outcomes from their NDIS plan.

The Strategy seeks to ensure cultural safety for all participants and to create an environment that is spiritually, socially, emotionally and physically safe. Cultural safety is about shared respect, shared meaning, shared knowledge and the experience of learning together.¹

The Strategy focuses on ensuring the NDIS is delivered in a manner that respects and takes into account the social, cultural, language and body, gender, sexuality and relationship needs and strengths of LGBTIQA+ individuals, to ensure their full participation in the NDIS. It is in line with contemporary work by other Commonwealth and State Government Departments.

Underpinning this strategy are common principles relating to people's inclusion and personal rights, which mean that every participant should be:

- Treated with dignity and respect;
- Accepted, without judgement or fear of disrespectful behavior;
- Understood as having autonomy over their own body and how it is described
- Respected for their choices, needs and relationships and not asked intrusive questions.

The NDIA has identified four Strategic Aims and 11 Priority Actions to drive implementation of the Strategy.

¹ Developed from Williams, R. (1999). Cultural safety – what does it mean for our work practice? Australian and New Zealand Journal of Public Health, 23(2), 213-214.

2. What we heard

A consistent theme that we heard throughout workshops and engagement with LGBTIQ+ stakeholders and participants was:

“Don’t talk to us like we are an acronym. Talk about our bodies, our genders and our relationships.”²

This reflects the importance of an empathetic and understanding approach when seeking to improve the experiences of LGBTIQ+ participants, and is how the NDIA has put together this strategy.

2.1 Our bodies

“We are the ones who decide how our bodies are treated, and the ways in which they are described.”

The NDIA will respect the words people use to talk about their bodies, sexual orientation, sex characteristics and gender identities.

2.2 Our genders

“Not everyone who identifies as ‘Queer’ is linked to the LGBTIQ+ community. I don’t subscribe to binary gender identities like ‘him’ or ‘her’—ask me how I want to be referred to.”

The NDIA recognises that there are diverse ways in which people understand, describe and embody gender and that this has deep connections to health, wellbeing, self-expression and self-determination. The NDIA affirms that a person’s biological sex characteristics do not define their gender identity.

2.3 Our relationships

“Being able to have photos of me and my ex up on the wall without fear that staff visiting my home would judge me negatively. Having not to self-censor with staff would be a relief.”

The NDIA commits to affirming the relationships of those who participate in the NDIS without prejudice or judgement and recognises that relationships are an important part of the richly diverse LGBTIQ+ community.

2.4 Intersectionality

Intersectionality describes how different parts of a person’s identity or circumstances – such as age, race, culture, disability, gender, location or religion – intersect and combine to shape people’s individual life experiences, including of discrimination³.

² The quotes used in this strategy were from a survey conducted by the National LGBTI Health Alliance, workshop participants from LGBTIQ+ communities and other sources.

³ LGBTIQ Inclusive Language Guide (2019) p7 Victorian State Government.

The NDIA recognises the unique challenges that LGBTIQ+ Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and CALD people with disability face, and acknowledges the need for culturally sensitive support and safety.

3. What we've done so far

A range of actions have already been taken to improve the experience of LGBTIQ+ participants which are having a significant impact. Our Strategy will build on these foundations to ensure the best outcomes for LGBTIQ+ participants and communities.

Table 1

Action	Impact
LGBTIQ+ cultural awareness training	<p>In 2019, the Agency released a Cultural Awareness Training module, Celebrating Diversity: LGBTIQ+ Inclusion. By March 2020, 6975 NDIA staff and partners had completed the training. A webinar is also in development for all service delivery staff, focused on LGBTIQ+ inclusion in the workplace.</p> <p>Increase in participant satisfaction will be measured through participant survey results, number of complaints and requests for unscheduled review (excluding change in circumstances).</p>
Targeted NDIA community engagement initiative	<p>Since October 2019, community engagement teams have focused on ensuring that LGBTIQ+ communities are aware of, and feel safe to access and use the NDIS. This has included establishing and strengthening relationships with key stakeholders in the LGBTIQ+ community, presentations, meetings, and participation in pride events.</p> <p>Effectiveness of community engagement events will be measured through the number of events the Agency participates in and emerging themes and trends from key stakeholder engagement.</p>
Information, Linkages and Capacity Building (ILC)	<p>In the latest ILC grant round, 10 organisations received funding for initiatives specifically aimed at people with disability from LGBTIQ+ communities, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inclusion Melbourne – who are developing accessible information to support the inclusion and connection of LGBTIQ+ communities to universal services • Raising Children Network – who are creating online resources to support parents and families, including LGBTIQ+ parents

Action	Impact
	Effectiveness will be measured through ILC evaluation reports.
Promotion of LGBTIQ+ days of significance	<p>The NDIA has taken opportunities to actively engage with important events in the LGBTIQ+ calendar to raise awareness and promote inclusion, including through dissemination of a range of NDIA branded LGBTIQ+ focused materials. The NDIA has been actively present at:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mardi Gras Parade, 2017, 2018 & 2019. • International Day against Homophobia, Transphobia and Biphobia (IDAHOBIT) Day, May 2019. • Wear it Purple Day, August 2019. • Geelong Rainbow Festival Fair Day, February 2020. • ChillOut Festival, March 2020.
NDIA Allies Network	<p>An NDIA LGBTIQ+ Allies Network is being established for employees to provide expert knowledge and share experiences, and to further support people who identify with LGBTIQ+ communities.</p> <p>Effectiveness will be measured through annual census results in relation to diversity and any themes that are presented from the Network.</p>

4. Our intent

To ensure the Agency serves LGBTIQ+ participants, their families and communities with dignity, our Strategy has four strategic aims:

- **Improving our organisational culture and attitudes** through greater workforce competency and practice of all NDIA staff, partners and providers.
- **Improving our approach to engagement** through working closely with LGBTIQ+ participants, peak bodies, communities, the broader disability sector and all governments to better respond to the needs of LGBTIQ+ people with disability.
- **Increasing representation and participation** of LGBTIQ+ participants through tailored and culturally appropriate information, the promotion of fully inclusive supports and providing culturally safe opportunities to provide feedback.
- **Enhancing data collection and evaluation** to better understand the diversity and experience of participants accessing the Scheme and evaluate the impact of the actions we take in driving improvements over time.

4.1 Improving our organisational culture and attitudes

Through greater workforce competency and practice of all NDIA staff, partners and providers.

LGBTIQ+ people with disability have told us of concerns about non-inclusive attitudes and behaviours from people and organisations involved in the NDIS. The NDIA is clear that intentional or unintentional prejudice is not acceptable and understands that negative experiences influence whether or not a person accesses the NDIS and their experience of it.

The NDIA also heard that LGBTIQ+ people with disability want more choice about the way they disclose personal details; feel that services and providers often ask too many irrelevant or intrusive questions; and are frustrated in having to 'educate' people about the diversity of expression of relationships, sex characteristics, sexual and gender identities.

4.2 Improving our approach to engagement

Through working closely with LGBTIQ+ participants, peak bodies, communities, the broader disability sector and all governments to better respond to the needs of LGBTIQ+ people with disability.

LGBTIQ+ people with disability have told us about their diverse experiences in understanding and engaging with the NDIS and key organisations have expressed their appetite and willingness to work more closely with the NDIA in meeting their stakeholder's needs.

4.3 Increasing representation and participation

Through tailored and culturally appropriate information, the promotion of fully inclusive supports and culturally safe opportunities to provide feedback

We understand that the NDIA needs to provide information and supports that reflect and respect the diversity of LGBTIQ+ participants and communities.

4.4 Enhancing data collection and evaluation

To better understand the diversity and experience of participants accessing the Scheme and to evaluate the impact of the actions we take in driving improvements over time.

It is difficult to get an accurate picture of the number of LGBTIQ+ people with disability in Australia due to the lack of national population-based data collections with relevant data items⁴. We are committed to improving the NDIA's systems and processes for the collection,

⁴ Australian Institute of Health and Welfare 2018. Australia's health 2018. Australia's health series no.16. AUS 221. Canberra: AIHW

monitoring and evaluation of relevant data to address this issue, noting that structured data will take time to define, capture, and analyse.

5. Detailed Priority Actions

The priority actions we have outlined are the specific changes we will make to deliver on our strategic aims, closely aligned with the established values of the NDIA and reflecting the feedback we received from stakeholders during consultation. By implementing the priority actions NDIS participants who identify with the LGBTIQ+ communities will be given the best opportunity to achieve their goals in employment, education and social participation.

Table 2

Action	Outputs	Completed by
Improving our organisational culture and attitudes		
1. Establish an LGBTIQ+ advisory group	Established working group to provide ongoing consultation on strategy delivery and evaluation	October 2020
	Started quarterly virtual working sessions to discuss progress and share ideas/issues	November 2020
2. Improve inclusive practices so that:	Conducted audit of Agency using 'LGBTI Inclusive Practice Audit Tool' from Rainbow Health Victoria	December 2020
• Our frontline staff understand how to interact respectfully with LGBTIQ+ participants.	Upgraded Celebrating Diversity: LGBTIQ+ online training from 'recommended' to 'mandated'	July 2020
• That registered service providers understand the Agency's LGBTIQ+ strategy and expectations on how to interact respectfully with LGBTIQ+ participants	80% of staff have completed training	December 2020
	Confirm PITS undertake the Agency's online training in LGBTIQ+ Cultural competency, or show evidence of having completed equivalent training	March 2021
	Provide all registered providers with an electronic copy of the LGBTIQ+ Strategy	July 2020
	The LGBTIQ+ Champion is confirmed	August 2020

3. Establish a recognised LGBTIQ+ Champion at the Senior Executive level.	Attended at least one external event as the NDIA's LGBTIQ+ Champion	December 2020
	Attended at least one meeting of the LGBTIQ+ working group	December 2020

Improving our approach to engagement

4. Develop a communications and engagement plan with the LGBTIQ+ community.	Finalised communications and engagement plan	September 2020
5. Conduct a confidential online survey of participants identifying as LGBTIQ+ to better understand their experience of the NDIS and identify further improvements needed.	Added questions to the Agency participant experience survey to capture to the LGBTIQ+ experience	November 2020
	Developed baseline satisfaction results for our LGBTIQ+ community	January 2021
	Report prepared and submitted	March 2021

Increasing representation and participation

6. Ensure cultural appropriateness of Agency internal and external information and sources for LGBTIQ+ people with disability and communities.	Defined principles for writing and communicating inclusively within Agency style guides	September 2020
	All external-facing documents reviewed and updated as required	February 2021
	All internal-facing documents reviewed and updated as required	February 2021
7. Ensure feedback, review and complaints mechanisms are culturally safe by enabling these to be made confidentially.	Feedback, review and complaints mechanisms have an option for 'I prefer my response to be confidential' in submission options	March 2021
8. Develop a search function for participants to identify which local services have capacity to provide LGBTIQ+ friendly supports.	Feasibility study of developing a function conducted	December 2021
	Function prototyped and launched (subject to feasibility)	December 2022
9. Aligned with the ILC Investment Strategy 2019-2020, continue to invest in ILC activities which target LGBTIQ+ people with disability and evaluate the impact.	ILC Investment Strategy and evaluation	Ongoing

Enhancing data collection and evaluation

10. Update NDIA data systems to record accurate information, and ensure self-descriptions, titles and gender options for participants are consistent with other Commonwealth government departments.	NDIS business systems can be searched for data relating to LGBTIQ+ people with disability	December 2021
	NDIA improves data collection relevant to LGBTIQ+ cohort, which allows for improved measurement of LGBTIQ+ participant numbers; their experience of NDIS; and the impact of any Agency-led programs or engagement	December 2021
11. Undertake analysis of currently available data and seek input from the LGBTIQ+ community to create a snapshot of LGBTIQ+ participants in the Scheme.	Data analysed and report prepared	December 2021

6. Measuring the impact

In delivering the Priority Actions listed above, success of this strategy will be measured by:

- The satisfaction rate of our LGBTIQ+ cohort at or above the Agency average
- The participation of LGBTIQ+ cohort at or above the Agency average:



Participants in meaningful employment
(for those of working age)



Participants involved in social and community activities by 2023

To pursue progress against these items, the NDIA intends to have completed:

By December 2020

- Launched the LGBTIQ+ advisory group
- Finalised the communications plan
- Assessed our inclusive practices
- Participated in four community events nationally

- Circulated the LGBTIQ+ Strategy to our Partners in the Community (PITC)
- Established an LGBTIQ+ Champion at the SES level

By December 2021

- Developed baseline for satisfaction survey for LGBTIQ+ cohort
- All external and internal facing documents reviewed and updated for LGBTIQ+ representation
- Finalised confidential complaints and feedback mechanism
- PITC complete online training in LGBTIQ+ cultural competencies
- Confidential survey with participants report
- Commenced feasibility study that provides a participant search function to identify LGBTIQ+ friendly supports
- Finalised NDIA data systems to record gender options and titles for participants
- Finalised LGBTIQ+ snapshot of NDIS participant

7. Acknowledgements

The NDIA has consulted with (and been given invaluable support from) the following sector specialist organisations:

- Bisexual Alliance Victoria
- Black Rainbow
- Family Planning NSW
- First Peoples Disability Network
- Gay and Lesbian Health Victoria (GLHV) at the Australian Research Centre in Sex, Health & Society (ARCSHS) at La Trobe University
- National Association of People Living with HIV/AIDS Australia (NAPWHA)
- National Ethnic Disability Alliance (NEDA)
- National LGBTI Health Alliance
- Intersex Human Rights Australia
- People with Disability Australia
- Positive Life NSW
- Pride Foundation Australia (formerly GALFA)
- Pride Disability Services Pty Ltd
- Sydney & South Western Sydney Local Health Districts.
- Transgender Victoria
- Victorian Commissioner for Gender and Sexuality
- Victorian Department of Health and Human Services Diversity Unit
- Women with Disabilities Australia
- WWILD Sexual Violence Prevention Association.

The NDIA would also like to acknowledge the individual participants who have shared their stories in the survey and at our workshops. Individuals have not been named due to privacy

reasons, however this does not diminish their role in developing the Strategy. Their feedback on the Strategy has been invaluable, and their time and commitment is commended.

8. Appendix - Glossary

'LGBTIQA+' refers to a broad collection of communities and populations, which includes people living with a disability. The letters of the acronym refer to:

- **Lesbian:** A woman whose primary emotional and sexual attraction is toward other women.
- **Gay:** A person whose primary emotional and sexual attraction is toward people of the same gender identity. The term is mostly applied to men, although some women and non-binary people use it.
- **Bisexual:** A person who is sexually and/or emotionally attracted to people of more than one sex or gender.
- **Trans and gender diverse (TGD):** An umbrella term used to describe anyone whose gender identity or expression is different from that which was assigned at birth, or is expected of them by society. This includes people who identify as: trans, transgender, transsexual, genderqueer, non-binary, cross-dressers, Sistergirls, Brotherboys, and other culturally specific identities, as well as a variety of other gender labels. TGD people may or may not access services to medically transition. This is different for everyone and there is no requirement for medical transition in order to be transgender and/or gender diverse.
- **Intersex:** Intersex people are born with sex characteristics (including genitals, gonads and chromosome patterns) that do not fit typical or expected binary notions of male or female bodies. Intersex is an umbrella term used to describe a wide range of natural bodily variations. In some cases, intersex traits are visible at birth, while in others they are not apparent until puberty. Some chromosomal intersex variations may not be physically apparent at birth and may not be identified until puberty, or later in life when starting a family.
- **Queer:** An umbrella term that includes a range of diverse sexual and gender identities, including gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender and others.
- **Asexual:** Asexual people do not experience sexual attraction. Asexual people have the same emotional needs as everybody else and are just as capable of forming intimate relationships. There is considerable diversity among the asexual community—each asexual person experiences things like relationships, attraction and arousal somewhat differently.⁵
- The '+' acknowledges that no single acronym can capture the full and rich diversity of people's lives and identities.

⁵ Asexual Visibility and Education Network

Contact us

The NDIA welcomes feedback on our LGBTIQ+ Strategy.

For more information about this publication, contact us at enquires@ndis.gov.au

