



LGBTIQA+ HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

An awareness of the history of the LGBTIQA+ community is helpful in understanding the lived experience of LGBTIQA+ clients, especially those who lived through a time when homosexuality was illegal. The following is a historical snapshot.

It's hard to believe that during the lifetime of many of us, and indeed some of the older clients of our service, homosexuality was illegal in Victoria, punishable by a prison sentence, and classified as a mental disorder.

Timeline to Recognition and Equality

- 1968: The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual (DSM) that defines medical conditions, redefined homosexuality from a 'Sin' to a 'Mental Disorder'.
- 1973: The term 'Mental Disorder' was removed in DSM and replaced by 'Sexual Orientation Disturbance'.
- 1981: Homosexuality decriminalised in Victoria.
- 1987: The DSM removes the term homosexuality completely.
- 1990: The World Health Organisation (WHO) removes homosexuality from its International Classification of Diseases.
- 2015: The Victorian Government announces the expungement of historic convictions for homosexual activity that would not be a criminal offence today.
- 2017: The Australian Government writes same-sex marriage into law.
- 2018: The WHO reclassified 'Transgender' from a mental illness, renaming it 'Gender Incongruence' and including it under 'Sexual Health Conditions'.
- 2019: The worldwide fight for equality and recognition continues, particularly in the Middle East and Africa, where stigma surrounding gender identity and sexuality still exist.

With the above in mind, the consequences for many clients, especially older clients, of this history included: being arrested and sent to prison, being rejected by biological family, by religious institutions or the community; being targeted and beaten up by police and others, subjected to 'cure' or 'conversion therapy'; forced to use survival sex; being sacked from jobs and deemed unemployable; having suicidal tendencies; never feeling safe to be open about their gender identity or sexual orientation. Although much has changed from a legal perspective, many of the social, emotional and psychological issues remain.

As a result of the above, LGBTIQ+ clients may be fearful of medical and social services, and of institutions in general; distrustful of police and the legal system; fearful of losing children/contact with children and at risk of triggering historical trauma. They may have developed internalised homophobia and be estranged from family.

Younger clients have grown up in a different social and political context. This has made it easier for them to be openly LGBTIQ+, and many are coming out at an earlier age and finding acceptance and support from family, friends and school.

However, this is certainly not the case for all young people and depending on their circumstances they may experience name-calling and bullying at school; denial of their identity; rejection from family of origin; referral to religious practitioners for 'conversion' or 'cure'; violence from family members and others; being kicked out of home; couch surfing and homeless; self-harming and/or suicide.

Young people who were coming to terms with their gender identity or sexual orientation during the period of the Marriage Equality Postal Survey (2017) were particularly vulnerable to the negative commentary around issues of sexuality. This may have reinforced feelings of internalised homophobia, made some reluctant to come out, or entrenched negative attitudes within their family, friends and community at large.

To show our organisations commitment in providing an LGBTIQ+ family violence inclusive service help celebrate "Wear it Purple Day - 30th August 2019" morning tea 10.30 - 11am in Suite 3 (Mildura office) and in the Board Room (Swan Hill office). The organisation will provide morning tea for this celebration for our valued staff and partners.

