



Prevention of Sexual Violence Pilot Projects

Final Report

June 2025

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Acknowledgements

LGBTIQ+ Health Australia acknowledges the Traditional Owners of country throughout Australia, their diversity, histories and knowledge and their continuing connections to land and community. We pay our respects to all Australian Indigenous Peoples and their cultures, and to Elders of past, present and future generations.

The report authors acknowledge the contributions and guidance of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community members throughout the sexual violence co-design process including the think tank activities, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander yarning circle and through the development of essential resources.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander LGBTIQ+, same-gender attracted, Two Spirit, Sistergirl, Brotherboy people experience sexual violence and harassment and other types of violence in the context of structural, lateral and systemic violence and discrimination. It is a direct result of colonisation, disconnection from culture, family and community and sexual violence prevention requires community-driven approaches designed and delivered by people with lived experience.

This was, is and always will be Aboriginal land.

Content Acknowledgement

This document discusses sexual violence at the intersection with other forms of violence including racism, colonialism, sexism, endosexism, homophobia, cisnormativity, transphobia, biphobia and ableism.

If anything in this report raises personal concerns for you, please access support. Options include the following services:

- 1800 Respect (1800 737 732) 24/7 support and counselling
- Lifeline (13 11 14) 24/7 crisis support
- 13 Yarn (13 92 76) 24/7 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander crisis support
- QLife (1800 184 527) 3pm-midnight, every day LGBTIQ+ peer support and referral

If you are unsafe, contact 000 in an emergency.

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We thank the Department of Social Services (DSS) for their commitment to the project, their active participation, and their dedicated focus on achieving the best possible outcomes.

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Executive Summary

This report presents the outcomes and key learnings arising from three sexual violence prevention pilot programs delivered between July 2023 and June 2025. Funded by the Department of Social Services (DSS) and managed by LGBTIQ+ Health Australia (LHA), the pilots sought to build evidence, address the drivers of sexual violence, and strengthen the capacity of services to respond effectively to the needs of LGBTIQ+SB communities. A formal evaluation of the project will be conducted by the Gendered Violence Research Network, UNSW Sydney, in the second half of 2025, and will provide additional learnings as well as recommendations to inform future programs and initiatives.

The three pilots were:

1. **The Roundabout Project** – peer support for LGBTIQ+ people with disability experiencing isolation.
2. **Protecting Personal Autonomies of Intersex People** – co-designed resources and psychosocial support to strengthen bodily autonomy, consent, and healthy relationships.
3. **Safety, Acceptance and Identity on Country** – culturally grounded primary prevention for LGBTIQ+SB same-sex attracted, Two Spirit, Sistergirl and Brotherboy Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Across the pilots, outcomes included:

- 23 peer support matches and monthly accessible community events for LGBTIQ+ people with disability, with participants reporting increased social connection, confidence and ongoing friendships beyond the project period.
- 130 individuals accessing psychosocial support through InterLink, with 671 individual and 122 group counselling sessions delivered. Parents reported improved confidence discussing bodily autonomy and consent with their children, and intersex participants rated the program 4.8/5 for safety and relevance.
- 47 new publicly available resources specifically created for people with innate variations of sex characteristics, co-designed by people with lived experience, improving access to information on consent, relationships and bodily autonomy.
- An ethically approved, culturally safe yarning circle model and a suite of five co-designed resources to strengthen identity, connection to culture, and safety for LGBTIQ+SB Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.
- A literature review on primary prevention of sexual violence specifically within First Nations LGBTQIA+SB communities and the “Our Voices, Our Ways” discussion paper which provides a culturally informed and community-led critique of mainstream prevention frameworks and outlines actionable recommendations for systemic change.

Key reflections emphasise that pilots should only be used to test approaches where there is clear evidence and a pathway to sustained funding. Short-term timeframes, the need to build trusting relationships, and limited evaluation opportunities pose risks of unintended harm and undermine community confidence. Long-term investment is critical to embed learnings, build workforce capability, and integrate this work into broader national strategies on sexual violence prevention.

The pilots highlight a significant gap in research on the drivers of sexual violence in LGBTIQ+SB communities, particularly for trans and gender diverse people, Queer Aboriginal, Brotherboy and Sistergirl populations, and people with innate variations of sex characteristics.

Sustained government funding is essential to continue building this evidence base, maintain workforce capability, and ensure that LGBTIQ+SB community-controlled organisations can continue delivering effective, culturally safe, and inclusive prevention programs.

Acronyms and Terminology

Term	Definition
Blak	A term used to describe Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in a way that is empowered, self-determined, and distinct from the historical use of "black" to describe Indigenous peoples. It emphasizes cultural identity and sovereignty and is often used to challenge colonial and mainstream narratives about Indigenous Australians. The term celebrates pride in Indigenous heritage and is often associated with political and social activism.
Cisgender/cis	A term used to describe people whose gender corresponds to the sex they were assigned at birth.
Cis-normativity	Assumes that everyone is cis-gendered and that all people will continue to identify with the gender they were assigned at birth.
Endosexism	Treating particular bodies as valid, and others as disordered or in need of 'fixing' (NSW Health, 2025).
Gender	Refers to the socially constructed and hierarchical categories assigned to individuals on the basis of their apparent sex at birth.
Gender Binary	The spectrum-based classification of gender into two categories of either man or woman based on biological sex
Gender pronoun	These refer to how a person chooses to publicly express their gender through the use of a pronoun, whether it is a gender-specific or a gender-neutral pronoun.
Gender questioning	Used in reference to a person who is unsure which gender, if any, they identify with.
Heteronormativity	The view that heterosexual relationships are the only natural, normal and legitimate expressions of sexuality and relationships, and that other sexualities or gender identities are unnatural and a threat to society.
Homophobia and biphobia	Refer to negative beliefs, prejudices and stereotypes that exist about people who are not heterosexual.
Intersex/ Innate variations of sex characteristics	Intersex refers to people with innate genetic, hormonal or physical sex characteristics that do not conform to medical norms for female or male bodies. Intersex people are a diverse population with many different intersex traits and other characteristics. Individual people with intersex variations use a variety of different terms, including being intersex, having an intersex variation or condition, having an innate variation of sex characteristics, or naming specific traits. Intersex as a population includes people with innate variations of sex characteristics of any age (including infants and children); and parents and carers.

LGBTIQ+SB	An evolving acronym that stands for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, queer, sistergirl, brotherboy and other terms that people use to describe their gender, and sexual orientation/s.
Non-binary	An umbrella term describing gender identities that are not exclusively male or female.
Sex characteristics	A person's sex characteristics are their physical sex features, such as their chromosomes, hormones and reproductive organs.
Sex recorded at birth	Sex recorded at birth refers to what was initially determined by sex characteristics observed at birth or infancy.
Sexual violence	Sexual violence may include (but is not limited to) rape, sexual assault, indecent assault, sexual coercion, being forced to watch or engage in pornography, enforced prostitution, sex trafficking, unwanted touching, and the non-consensual sharing of intimate images (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare [AIHW], 2019). Sexual violence is sexual activity that happens where consent is not obtained or freely given. It occurs any time a person is forced, coerced or manipulated into any unwanted sexual activity, such as touching, sexual harassment and intimidation, forced marriage, trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation, sexual abuse, sexual assault and rape (Our Watch, 2015). Sexual violence may include but is not limited to coercion (persuasion by using force or threat), being forced to watch or engage in pornography, enforced prostitution, being made to have sex with other people, unwanted touching, non-consensual sharing of intimate images and physical force, rape, and sexual assault with implements (World Health Organisation (WHO), 2002). Sexual violence may be interrelated with other forms of violence. Sexual violence may occur within current and former intimate partner and family relationships and may also be a standalone form of violence outside of dating and marriage. Sexual violence can also contribute to reproductive coercion – behaviour that interferes with the autonomy of a person to make decisions about their reproductive health (WHO, 2002).
Sexual Harassment	The Sex Discrimination Act 1984 (Cwlth) defines sexual harassment as any unwelcome sexual advance, request for sexual favours or conduct of a sexual nature in relation to the person harassed in circumstances where a reasonable person would have anticipated the possibility that the person harassed would be offended, humiliated or intimidated. Sexual harassment includes but is not limited to indecent communication (unsolicited sexual images, comments, phone calls, text messages, emails or social

	media posts), indecent exposure and unwanted sexual touching (Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), 2017).
Sistergirl/Brotherboy	Terms used for gender diverse people within some Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander communities. Sistergirls and Brotherboys have distinct cultural identities and roles. Sistergirls are Indigenous people who were classified male at birth but live their lives as women, including taking on traditional cultural female practices. Brotherboys are Indigenous people who were classified as female at birth but who have a male spirit.
Transgender/Trans/Gender diverse	Terms used to refer to people whose assigned sex at birth does not match their internal gender and sense of who they are, regardless of whether their gender is outside the gender binary or within it. Transgender/trans or gender diverse people may identify as non-binary, that is: they may not identify exclusively as either gender; they may identify as both genders, they may identify as neither gender; they may move around freely in between the gender binary; or they may reject the idea of gender altogether.
Transphobia	Refers to negative beliefs, prejudices and stereotypes that exist about transgender/trans and gender diverse people.
Variations of sex characteristics	Refers to people with innate genetic, hormonal or physical sex characteristics that do not conform to medical norms for female or male bodies. It refers to a wide spectrum of variations to genitals, hormones, chromosomes and/or reproductive organs.

Background

Under the Fourth Action Plan of the National Plan to Reduce Violence Against Women and their Children 2010-2022 (the National Plan 2010-2022), the Australian Government committed funds in 2019-20 to 2021-22 to a program of work focused on the prevention of sexual violence. The sexual violence prevention pilots were designed to build on the broader prevention approaches under the National Plan 2010-2022 and focus on raising awareness and changing behaviours that drive sexual violence and sexual harassment.

In June 2021, the Department of Social Services (DSS), Commonwealth Government engaged LHA to undertake a co-design process with member organisations and community representatives across Australia to provide recommendations on sexual violence prevention and harassment activities that meet the specific needs of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, queer, asexual (LGBTIQ+) and other sexuality, gender and bodily diverse people and communities.

This co-design and consultation process included:

- Development of a project advisory group consisting of a broad range of national jurisdictions, expertise, and intersectionality.
- Survey exploring current approaches to responding and preventing sexual violence experienced by LGBTIQ+ people; and priorities for future focus.
- Think-tank sessions completed through a series of closed consultation workshops to bring together practitioners, policymakers, researchers, and community members with lived experience to share knowledge and determine sexual violence priorities. Thirty-six people attended the Think Tank workshops from the following communities:
 - People with innate variations of sex characteristics
 - Trans and gender diverse people
 - Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people
 - People with disability
 - Culturally and linguistically diverse people/forcibly displaced people

The co-design and consultation process identified nine proposed pilots to prevent sexual violence in LGBTIQ+SB communities. All proposed pilots were underpinned by La Trobe University's Narrative Theory of Change framework. The Narrative Theory of Change identifies different prevention strategies to respond to the range of contexts in which sexual violence prevention occurs, including, education for behaviour change, early supportive relationships, creating safe environments and transforming social norms.

Early Supportive Behaviours	Prevent LGBTIQ+ sexual violence and harassment and challenge stereotypes by deconstructing heteronormative and cis normative assumptions about gender, sexual orientation/s, bodies, sex, consent and relationships for children, young people and adults through the development of supportive relationships.
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Education for Behaviour Change	There's a lack of consistency in the application of respectful relationship education (RRE) across Australian jurisdictions and a co-existing contention about the inclusion of LGBTIQ+ people and relationships in RRE. LGBTIQ+ people's experiences of sexual violence and harassment (SVH), relationships, bodies and the places where LGBTIQ+ people experience SVH are not included in mainstream prevention education approaches.
Safe Environments	LGBTIQ+ people experience sexual violence and harassment in schools, institutional settings, families, intimate relationships, workplaces, online, public spaces, in LGBTIQ+ community and general community settings. Mainstream sexual violence prevention research and practice tells us that there are a number of critical places where prevention activities can be tested.
Transforming Social Norms	People with diverse sexualities, genders, and/or variations of sex characteristics experience discrimination and stigma. Additional forms of oppression, including (but not limited to) racism, ableism, classism, transphobia, and ageism can compound experiences of sexual violence and harassment.

In June 2022, the DSS funded three of the nine proposed pilots for development and delivery:

- Peer support for LGBTIQ+ people with disability experiencing isolation.
- Protecting personal autonomies of intersex people.
- Safety, Acceptance and Identity on Country and LGBTIQ+, Two Spirit, Sistergirl and Brotherboy Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Mob Yarns.

Sexual Violence

The pilots described in this report used the following understandings of sexual violence:

“Sexual violence covers a wide spectrum of behaviours that are perpetrated against adults and children, including sexual harassment; stalking; forced or deceptive sexual exploitation (such as having images taken and/or distributed without freely given consent); using false promises, insistent pressure, abusive comments or reputational threats to coerce sex acts; unwanted exposure of genitals; indecent assault and rape.”

Source: Salter M; Breckenridge J; Lee- Ah Mat V; Whitten T; Kaladelfos A; Suchting M; Breckenridge V; Dubler N; Griffin A (2024) National Survey of LGBTQIA+SB Experiences of Sexual Violence – Report 1, Gendered Violence Research Network, UNSW Sydney.

“While sexual violence can overlap with, and be a feature of, family and domestic violence, the dynamics of sexual violence incidents can be very different and occur in the context of a wider range of relationships between perpetrators and victims (e.g. where the victim and perpetrator are not known to one another).”

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics. (2018). Directory of Family, Domestic, and Sexual Violence Statistics, 2018.

LHA understands the prevention of sexual violence to include strategies, programs and projects that specifically aim to prevent sexual violence for a whole of LGBTIQ+SB population; as well as programs and projects that focus on specific cohorts or target groups; or which aim to prevent further sexual violence and harm against LGBTIQ+SB people and communities.

Language

Throughout this document the words: *LGBTIQ+SB* and *Queer*, interchangeably throughout the document. The author would like to respectfully acknowledge that these terms and initialism reflects Western understandings and privilege.

Just as women and children are not a homogenous group, neither are LGBTIQ+SB people, rather we are a collective of discreet groups with overlapping and intersecting shared experiences. The real people within these terms and categories possess diverse backgrounds, experiences, and social positions, necessitating a wide range of understanding and support options.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and *First Nations* is also used interchangeably, though it is important to note that these terms may have different meanings depending on the specific context, region, and community being referred to and some people and communities have preferences between these terms.

LHA acknowledges that diversity and personal experience can never be fully reflected in a single term or initialism.

Overview of Pilots

Drivers of violence including:

- rigid gender roles and stereotyped constructions of masculinity and femininity
- controlling people with disabilities' decision-making and limiting independence
- ongoing impacts of colonization for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, families and communities

Intersecting oppressions and discrimination (including racism, colonialism, ableism, cisnormativity, homophobia)

Challenge social isolation by matching LGBTIQ+ people with disability with an LGBTIQ+ community volunteer to facilitate access to social engagement opportunities.

Develop sexual violence prevention resources for intersex people and their families with a particular focus on consent and boundary setting.

Engage with LGBTIQ+ Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to identify local issues relating to sexual violence prevention. Develop localised responses, engaging families, Elders and service providers through yarning circles and resources.

Figure 1: Pilot overview mapped to drivers of violence

Theory of Change underlying pilots

La Trobe's Narrative Theory of Change was commissioned by DSS to identify effective primary prevention SVH interventions and analyse other forms of data that may inform a Theory of Change and future research on the primary prevention of sexual violence and harassment (SVH).

This project's co-design and consultation process has used this framework to structure and position the pilot projects. The narrative theory of change was chosen because whilst it isn't specifically an LGBTIQ+ framework, it was the latest evidence commissioned by government that spoke directly to the primary prevention of sexual violence and it explicitly recognises that LGBTIQ+ sexual violence and sexual harassment prevention must be aligned with and build upon broader work developed in the space.

However, it is important to note that many of the pilots sit across more than one area and respond to multiple tiers. As La Trobe's report notes, "the process for primary prevention is circular, not linear, and should consider other levels of prevention." (2021, p.33).

Principles of Implementing Change

- Focus on gender equality and drivers of perpetration
- Use an intersectional lens
- Co-design interventions with target audiences
- Include victim– survivor voices in all co-design
- Implement evidence-based interventions only
- Use a life-course and developmental approach
- Do no harm
- Ensure continuity across settings
- Ensure a system-supportive approach
- Focus on sustainability
- Evaluate and monitor interventions

Source: Hooker, L., Ison, J., Henry, N., Fisher, C., Forsdike, K., Young, F., ... Taft, A. (2021). Primary Prevention of Sexual Violence and Harassment against Women and Girls: Combining Evidence and Practice Knowledge - Final Report and Theory of Change. La Trobe.

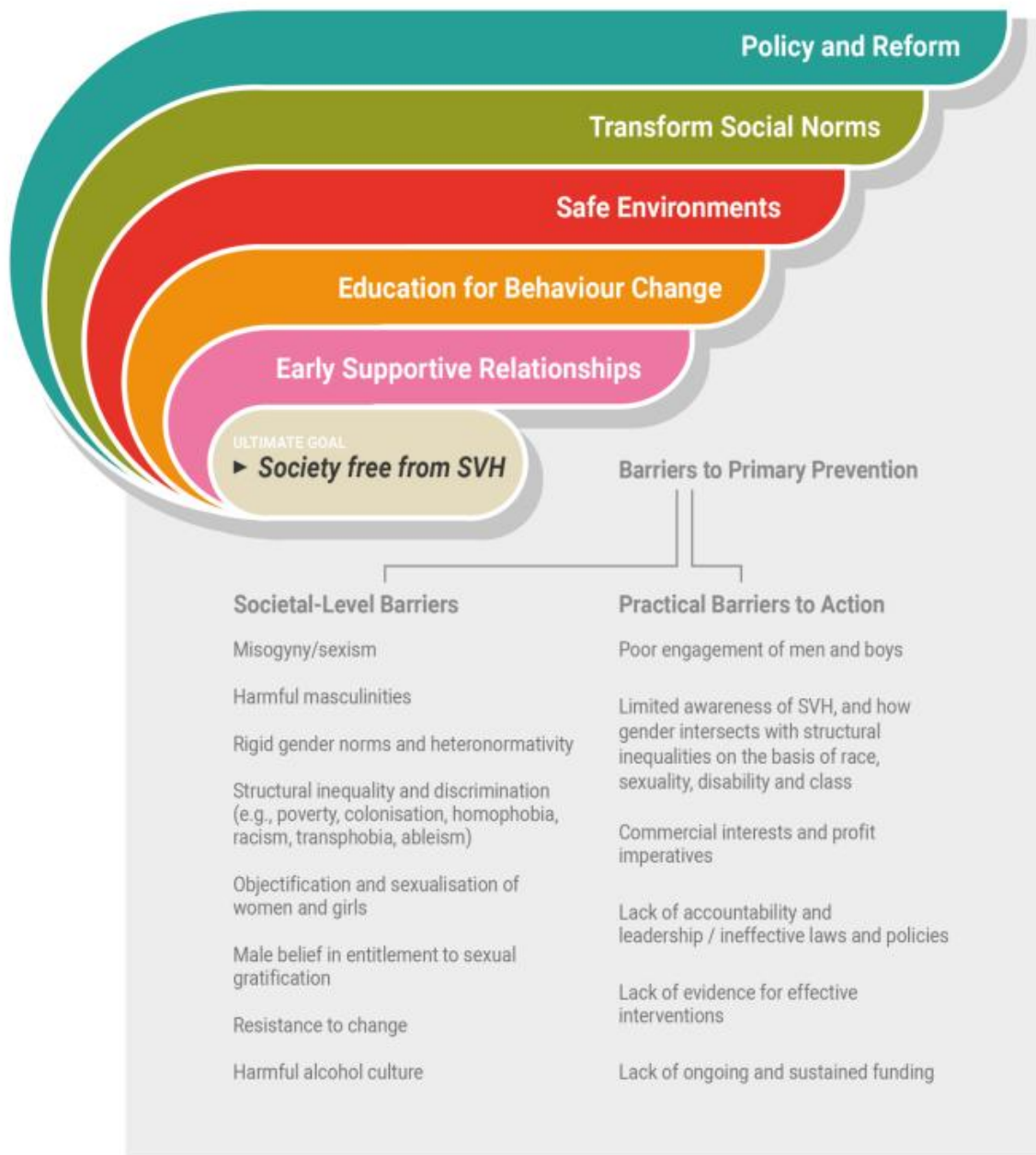


Figure 2: Theory of Change Hooker, L., Ison, J., Henry, N., Fisher, C., Forsdike, K., Young, F., ... Taft, A. (2021)

Overarching Aims of the Sexual Violence Prevention Pilots

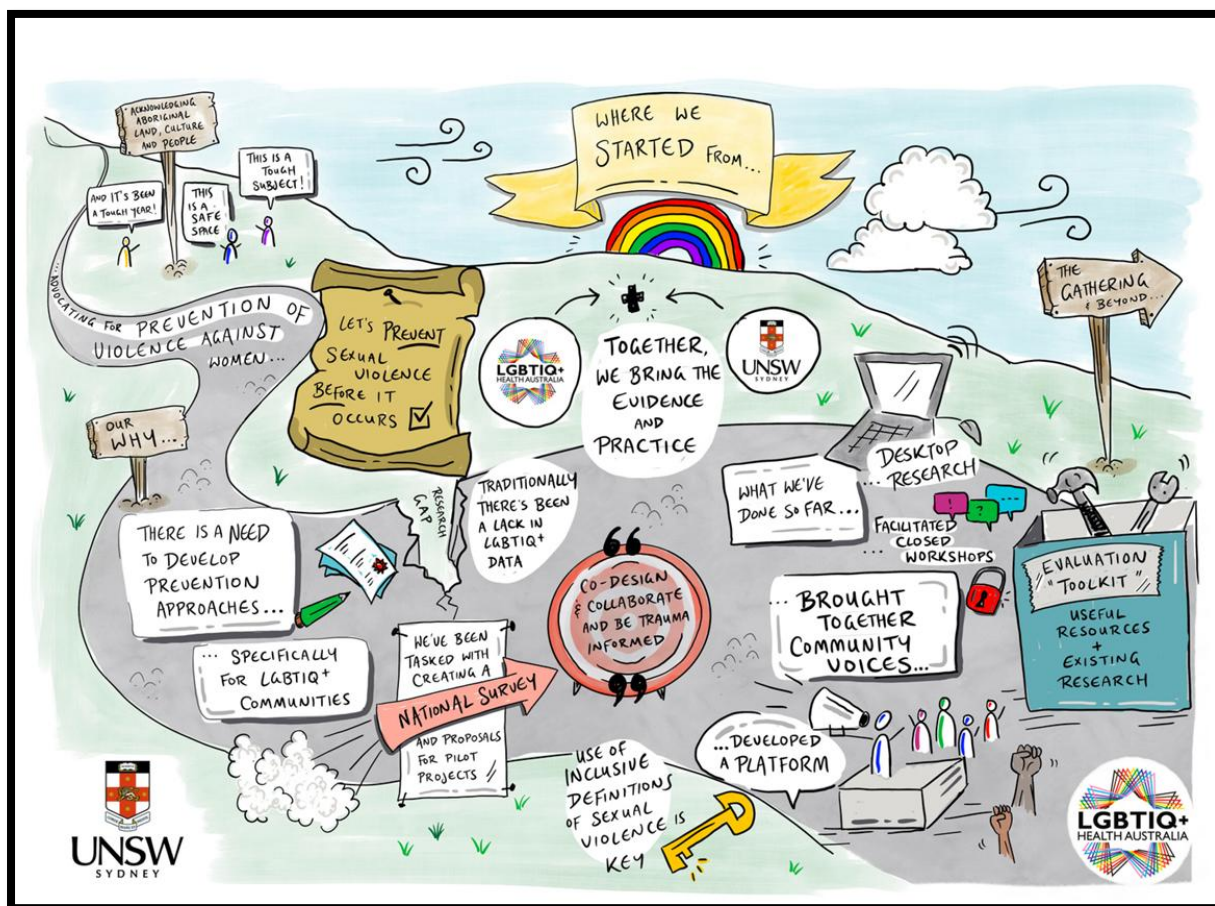


Figure 3: Original Think Tank Infographic of Aims

The pilots aimed to adopt an intersectional approach that acknowledged and respected the rich diversity within LGBTIQ+SB communities. Recognising that the experiences of same-gender attracted people, trans and gender diverse individuals, people with innate variations of sex characteristics, those who are Queer and non-binary people are all distinct, the project sought to develop tailored strategies to meet these varied needs. Central to this approach was the emphasis on choice and control for each individual.

To effectively prevent sexual violence across LGBTIQ+SB communities, the pilots focused on both building specialist, LGBTIQ+SB-specific responses and improving the ability of mainstream services to offer inclusive, competent support. Acknowledging the lack of research into the drivers of sexual violence experienced by LGBTIQ+SB people and communities; and documented evidence of what works, the pilots also aimed to generate knowledge and build this evidence base.

Overarching Aims

Aim 1:	Build the evidence on how to prevent sexual violence in different LGBTIQ+SB communities
Aim 2:	Address the drivers of sexual violence in LGBTIQ+SB communities
Aim 3:	Build capacity of services to prevent and respond to sexual violence experienced by LGBTIQ+SB people and communities
Aim 4:	Start to achieve positive outcomes for identified LGBTIQ+SB people and communities, by working to prevent sexual violence and harassment.

Role of LHA

LGBTIQ+ Health Australia (LHA) took a central role in guiding and supporting the project across multiple stages. Initially this included facilitating the think tank workshops (in-person and/or virtually) with LHA member organisations and LGBTIQ+SB community representatives across Australia to identify promising activity models and areas of interest. Building on these discussions, LHA developed a comprehensive suite of potential pilot projects, including developing scope, program logic, activities to be undertaken, hypotheses to be tested, anticipated outcome measurement, data collection strategies, detailed budget and timelines for delivery.

As project managers, LHA oversaw contracts and sub-contracting arrangements, managed the call for expressions of interest (EOI) among member organisations to lead the projects, and provided regular support to contract holders, such as monthly meetings, to ensure successful project delivery. LHA also took charge of reporting responsibilities, compiling progress updates, financial reports, and drafting the final project report.

In collaboration with the Gendered Violence Research Network (GVRN) at UNSW Sydney, LHA contributed to the design of a tailored evaluation toolkit to assess the pilots' impact. Through these coordinated efforts, LHA ensured that each stage of the project, from initial development to final reporting, was thoughtfully managed and aligned with the overarching aims of preventing sexual violence in LGBTIQ+SB communities.

To support the coordination of the pilots, LHA recruited independent contractor Erin Cahill. This work included supporting the delivery of all three projects through regular contact with the three pilot leads, the development of the evaluation framework and secretariat functions of the Pilot Advisory Group.

LHA's Role on the Safety, Acceptance and Identity on Country Project

Initially, all pilots were sub-contracted to LGBTIQ+SB community-controlled specialist organisations through an Expression of Interest process. Due to unforeseen circumstances, BlaQ - the organisation sub-contracted to deliver the Safety, Acceptance and Identity on Country pilot withdrew from the project with just one year left to deliver. At this point, LHA's role changed. Given the lost time and expenditure that was the result of this, LHA made the decision to change the delivery model for this pilot, recruiting an appropriately skilled and experienced peer-identified consultant to work for LHA and bringing on 2Spirits (QLD) as a partner organisation. The consultant was recruited by LHA because of her experience establishing and running Restorative Yarns.

Under the new model, LHA was responsible for delivering project outputs, including budgets and risks. However, as LHA is not a First-Nations organisation, we made the conscious decision of having minimal input in the development of community engagement strategies, content and resources and instead supported the recruitment of a team of professionals to undertake this work. As the project developed, LHA's role reduced significantly, having a larger amount of input in early activities such as the ethics approval for yarning circles, and no involvement in the delivery of the yarning circle or production of the literature review, discussion paper or any of the project's resources.

LHA's Reflections on Project Structure and Governance

Although LHA was not directly involved in the development of project resources, the literature review, discussion paper, or yarning circle, we nonetheless encountered challenges related to the project's governance model - particularly the implications of a non-Aboriginal organisation, LHA, being responsible for delivering a First Nations-led initiative.

Noting that LHA had originally subcontracted BlaQ Aboriginal Corporation to deliver the project, the new arrangement was not the preferred delivery model for LHA.

Key concerns that arose during project delivery included:

- LHA's requirement to manage the project budget and approve all expenditure
- The use of LHA's standard contracting templates, which do not adequately reflect principles of Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property
- LHA retaining project data to manage potential organisational risk, which conflicted with community expectations regarding data control and Indigenous Data Sovereignty

In response, several mitigation strategies were implemented:

- Restricted shared folders were created to limit access to project files to a small number of senior LHA staff
- Written objections to the intellectual property clauses in subcontractor agreements (which state that IP is owned by LHA) were accepted and acknowledged
- No spending requests from project staff were denied
- No resources or outputs have LHA branding
- 2Spirits is responsible for the management and distribution of hard copy resources

LHA also sought advice and quotes from First Nations law firms to support the development of an Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property (ICIP) and Indigenous Data Sovereignty (ID-Sov) management plan. This work would have included a review of subcontractor agreements, and formal guidance to embed ICIP and ID-Sov protections across the organisation. Unfortunately, the cost of this work exceeded the available budget for this project.

Despite these limitations, LHA remains committed to decolonising our internal frameworks and processes and is actively undertaking work to improve our approaches to ICIP and ID-Sov across the organisation. LHA has a First Nations Board member, partnerships with multiple First Nations organisations and maintain an active First Nations advisory group. Given that LHA works closely with many First Nations individuals, communities and contractors, embedding best practice in this area is a priority.

One of the most significant concerns raised during the project was that LHA subcontracted an evaluation team that did not include an Aboriginal researcher. This directly contradicted the principle of self-determination in research, which affirms that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples must be able to lead and shape research agendas, methodologies and outcomes. For this reason, 2Spirits and Restorative Yarns elected not to participate in the evaluation. The evaluation findings will therefore reflect the experiences of the two remaining pilot sites only.

The following statement was provided by the project staff from Restorative Yarns and 2Spirits for inclusion in this final report. It has been included in full, exactly as submitted, with no edits or alterations by LHA. LHA acknowledges and respects the importance of including their voices in this report and supports their right to speak to their experience in their own words.

"Restorative Yarns and 2-Spirits have made the decision not to participate in the evaluation of the completed project due to ongoing experiences of structural and interpersonal racism. Despite providing clear recommendations that the evaluation be led by a First Nations organisation - or, at minimum, include a First Nations academic - these recommendations were not implemented. This continues a pattern where non-Aboriginal organisations and individuals fail to truly listen to or act on the input of First Nations communities.

The decision not to advocate for a culturally appropriate evaluation reflects a broader issue of western systems disregarding the rights of First Nations peoples to self-determination, data sovereignty, and the value of lived experience. Given the limited power held by the contracted organisations to influence these decisions, Restorative Yarns and 2-Spirits have chosen to withdraw from the evaluation process. This is a deliberate act of resistance, intended to protect cultural safety, as this evaluation would most likely not meet ethics requirements for work with our mob; and to stand against the ongoing harm caused by being ignored and marginalised within non-Indigenous frameworks, We hope this decision sets a precedent where organisations are held accountable for how they engage with and respond to First Nations voices, and where culturally safe, self-determined processes are prioritised and respected from the outset."

Project Evaluation

The Gendered Violence Research Network (GVRN) at UNSW was engaged in 2021 through a public expression of interest process to build evaluation capacity during the pilot establishment phase.

Throughout the project, GVRN worked with LHA to develop the *Sexual Violence Prevention in LGBTIQ+ Communities Pilots Evaluation Framework*. All pilot sites were consulted to refine the draft program logic and evaluation questions. The draft evaluation plan was presented to the Professional Advisory Group and all three project leads in September 2024, and all feedback received was incorporated. The final Evaluation Framework was submitted to the Department of Social Services (DSS) in March 2025.

In April 2025, DSS advised LHA to use the projects recently identified underspend to engage an external evaluator to conduct an evaluation of the Sexual Violence Prevention in LGBTIQ+ Communities Pilots.

With only two months remaining to recruit an evaluator and complete all interviews with relevant project staff - whose contracts were ending in June 2025, LHA was not in a position to conduct a full public EOI process. Instead, LHA invited the two research partners already engaged in the project (GVRN and La Trobe University – who were both originally selected via a public EOI process) to submit a formal proposal. These were the only research bodies familiar with all three pilot sites and therefore would require minimal input from project staff, who would soon be unavailable.

The EOIs were assessed by a panel of three who chose GVRN to undertake the evaluation based on their demonstrated understanding of the project, developed through their work on the evaluation framework. Contracts were finalised in June 2025.

While an evaluation framework had been developed across the life of the project, it was not implemented until the final stages. Given the importance of rigorous evaluation to build evidence on effective sexual violence prevention interventions and the lack of ongoing funding to implement these pilots further, it was considered essential to proceed with an evaluation, despite the suboptimal timing and context.

Ideally, a comprehensive evaluation would include data collection at baseline, mid-point, project completion, and potentially at follow-up intervals. As this was not feasible within the scope and timeline of this project, there will be some limitations in the application of the evaluation framework.

The evaluation is due to be complete in two parts, the first focussing on project implementation by September 2025, and the second addressing the Evaluation Framework by November 2025.

Pilot Advisory Group

LHA was also responsible for the coordination of the Pilot Advisory Group (PAG) for this project. PAG members were invited for their subject matter and/or content expertise, connections to community and to ensure diverse and intersectional voices were included and reflected throughout the project delivery. Department of Social Services staff were in attendance of the meetings to observe, learn and offer insights. Further information on the PAG can be found in Appendix 1 of this report.

The PAG commenced in July 2023 and met eight times across the pilot implementation timeframe. Meetings were an opportunity to leverage the experiences and insights of the group to support the planning and implementation of the pilots; as well as providing a forum to share learnings between pilot projects. The PAG made recommendations relating to all aspects of the three pilots. These covered a range of areas of consideration, including:

- Volunteer and Staff Training
- Inclusive Participation
- Capacity Building and Sustainability
- Safety and Wellbeing of staff, volunteers and participants
- Communication and Media
- Transition Planning
- Evaluation Approaches

Pilot Advisory Group Members¹		
Erin Cahill	Jess Ison	Petrea Messent
Margherita Coppolino	Sam Ivancsik	Kai Noonan
Bonnie Hart	Eloise Layard	

The Department of Social Services

A core team of staff from the Intersectionality & Prevention Implementation Section of the Ending Gender-Based Violence Group remained dedicated to the successful outcomes of the pilots. They actively participated in meetings, responded promptly to all requests, and proactively supported the necessary adjustments throughout the projects. Their consistent input positively contributed to the successful completion of the pilots.

¹ This list represents the final Pilot Advisory Group membership. LHA acknowledge and thanks all members of the PAG across the timeline of the pilot implementation period. Representatives from DSS attending in an observational capacity.

Key Reflections

This report provides an account of the process and achievements of the three pilot programs funded under the sexual violence prevention project. A formal evaluation of the project will be conducted by the Gendered Violence Research Network in the second half of 2025.

This project has been unique, challenging, and rewarding. It explored innovative ideas and areas that had not been previously tested or researched in depth. The outcomes discussed in this report reflect the dedication, wisdom, and extraordinary commitment of our sector to the safety and wellbeing of our communities and one another.

The reflections below offer an overview of key considerations from LHA's perspective and do not pre-empt the pending evaluation.

- **Nuanced Approaches to Prevention:** Our communities are diverse, and while some core experiences may overlap, it is essential to acknowledge that our experiences of the world, and of sexual violence specifically, are not the same. This diversity exists both within our communities (across and within each group in the LGBTIQ+SB acronym) and at the intersection with other forms of oppression and discrimination (such as racism and ableism), as well as through unique lived experiences (e.g. rurality). As such, there is no one-size-fits-all approach to preventing sexual violence in LGBTIQ+SB communities. Prevention models must be adaptable to the local context of each community and location and driven by those communities.
- **Pilot programs should be reserved** for situations where there is a clear need to test specific approaches informed by existing evidence. They should not be used as a default funding model, as short-term timeframes, the need to build meaningful relationships, and the limited opportunity for proper implementation and evaluation can create risks and unintended negative outcomes. Running pilots without a clear pathway to transition successful initiatives into longer-term programs undermines their value and can reduce trust across the system.
- **Integration into Broader Prevention Efforts:** This work should not exist in isolation. It must be integrated into the broader sexual violence prevention efforts within the wider violence against women sector. This can be achieved by embedding smaller pilot projects within the work of larger organisations, or by continuing to fund existing community organisations to carry out ongoing sexual violence prevention work. This will ensure the learnings from these projects are not lost and can benefit work across the sector.
- **Insufficient Existing Research:** The knowledge base for all three pilots was limited, with existing literature primarily addressing the drivers of domestic and family violence in LGBTIQ+ communities. However, this only covers part of the sexual violence our communities experience. Literature also addresses gendered violence in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities but fails to consider the experiences of men and boys, as well as trans, gender-diverse, Brotherboy, Sistergirl, and non-binary individuals. Additionally, the experiences of LGBTIQ+SB communities often exclude heterosexual people with innate variations of sex characteristics under the "I"

of the acronym. As a result, the drivers of sexual violence in our communities remain inadequately articulated, complicating prevention efforts.

- **Need for Funded Research:** Ongoing funded research is essential to get this work right and should be integrated into prevention activities. Our communities possess valuable wisdom that must be leveraged to inform sexual violence prevention. Understanding how marginalisation and discrimination intersect with experiences of sexual violence requires further exploration, which is crucial to advancing work in this area.
- **Appropriate Placement within the LGBTIQ+SB Sector:** The exclusion, misrepresentation, and misunderstanding of LGBTIQ+SB people in mainstream service provision contributes to the marginalisation and invisibility that exacerbates sexual violence. This became apparent throughout the pilot discussions and through the educational roles that organisations undertook in partnership with mainstream services. The unique positioning of LGBTIQ+SB organisations, with strong community trust and investment, is critical to the success of this work.
- **Importance of Relationship Building:** Building relationships is crucial to this work, but it requires time and resources. This work occurs at the intersection of multiple forms of violence and oppression, and embedding safe practices takes time. Relational trust is essential to maintaining safety within these efforts.
- **Capability and Capacity Building for Professionals:** Sexual violence prevention work is not typically part of the core business for most community organisations. Therefore, ongoing training, support, and capacity building for professionals in this area are essential. Developing and embedding this knowledge will require significant time and resources.
- **Ongoing Funding is Essential:** This work cannot be sustained by community organisations without specific, ongoing funding. This reflects both the resource-intensive nature of sexual violence prevention work at the intersection of oppression and the complex funding landscape of the community sector.

Pilot 1: Peer support for LGBTIQ+ people with disability experiencing isolation (The Roundabout Project)

Introduction

[Meridian ACT](#) is a community-controlled, peer-led organisation that provides health and social support services. Community, health and action are the core of Meridian and how they work. They use peer-based, evidence-informed approaches to develop and deliver effective programs and services that respond to the needs of their communities:

- People living with and impacted by HIV.
 - People of diverse sexual orientation/s, including people who are gay, lesbian, bisexual, queer, pansexual, and asexual.
- Men who have sex with men.
- People of diverse gender identities, including people who are trans, gender diverse, and nonbinary.
- People at risk of HIV, STIs, and other BBVs, including sex workers, people who inject drugs, and people in custodial settings.
- Intersecting communities with lived experience of disability, including psychosocial disability.
- Intersecting communities who are also Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and people from diverse cultural backgrounds, including those who have sought asylum.
- Organisations who work with our communities and have shared goals and objectives.

The purpose of the project was to challenge social isolation by matching LGBTIQ+ people with disability (PWD) with an LGBTIQ+ community volunteer to facilitate access to social engagement opportunities. Being connected to community is vital for our mental, physical and emotional wellbeing. It promotes a sense of belonging and acceptance while providing a place of safety and support and enabling the sharing of knowledge and resources. Community also encourages empowerment and self-determination and collectively supports the welfare of all its members.

Within the LGBTIQ+ community, people living with disability are particularly vulnerable to isolation and diminished social connection leading to greater levels of stigma and discrimination. They are more likely experience verbal, physical and sexual harassment and assault, exploitation and abuse which in turn contributes to increased marginalisation and reduced access to support services.

One of the most beneficial ways to overcome social isolation is through peer support. Peer support is at the heart of Meridian's identity and was forged in response to the AIDS epidemic in the 1980s. Local groups affected by HIV rallied together to provide support and care, share information and worked to establish AIDS Councils and organisations across the country. Today, Meridian continues to deliver unique peer support programs to a broad range of LGBTIQ+ people and community groups within Canberra, including the Roundabout Project.

Working collaboratively with both community stakeholders and other Meridian-based programs, the Roundabout Project aimed to provide a safe and inclusive social environment where peer support volunteers could foster hope, participation and the empowerment of participants. By building trusting relationships and sharing a common journey, everyone

Why The Roundabout Project?

Using the term Roundabout for the project name not only pertains to the many roundabouts for which Canberra is famous for but also the diverse range of paths and options people choose to get to a particular destination. Sometimes we take the roundabout path to get to the place where we belong – in this case, less isolated and more connected to the vibrant and supportive members of our LGBTIQ+ Community.

involved in the project can benefit from the connections created, whether they are giving or receiving the support, whilst also contributing to the overall wellbeing of the LGBTIQ+ community.

The Roundabout Project was mapped against contemporary knowledge of drivers of domestic, family and sexual violence and violence against women including Our Watch's *Change the Story* (2021) and *Changing the Landscape* (2022) as well as Rainbow Health Victoria's *Pride in Prevention* (2020). This mapping can be found in Appendix 3 of this Report. Drawing on this mapping and the original pilot proposal, the Roundabout Project was based on the following assumptions:

- Social segregation creates the conditions which support ableism, and more generally, condone violence against people with disability.
- Discounting the sexual orientation/s or gender of people with disability and not providing the opportunity for peer-to-peer learnings, heightens vulnerability to sexual violence.
- Building social connection within the LGBTIQ+ community decreases social isolation and increases opportunities to discuss and disclose concerns regarding their sexual orientation/s and relationships.
- Challenging ableism and increasing social connection enhances the agency of LGBTIQ+ PWD including their capacity to make their own decisions about sexual encounters.
- Drivers of sexual violence against LGBTIQ+ people with disability intersects with:
 - Drivers of violence against LGBTIQ+ people more broadly
 - Drivers of violence against people with disability more broadly
 - Drivers of domestic and family violence
 - Drivers of violence against women and children.

Based on these assumptions, the pilot aimed to situate itself within the following practices of sexual violence prevention:

- decrease the social isolation, segregation and exclusion of LGBTIQ+ people with disability
- support people with disabilities' independence
- increase positive community connections
- support positive, equal and respectful LGBTIQ+ communities

This was to be achieved through delivery of the following actions:

- Engage with people with disability living in vulnerable accommodation or circumstances.
- Develop, or build on, existing peer support models to support the project principles.
- Employ a peer support model where an LGBTIQ+ person with disability experiencing isolation and marginalisation is linked with a local volunteer from the LGBTIQ+ community, to enhance community connection.
- Support access to LGBTIQ+ community, community groups and services and pride events.

THE Roundabout PROJECT

Introducing an exciting new peer program connecting isolated queer folk (18+) with disability to our vibrant LGBTIQ+ community.

How It Works:
Participants will be thoughtfully matched with a peer volunteer based on shared interests and preferences.
Engage in a range of social and community activities and events.
Foster a lasting friendship and make connections with LGBTIQ+ community.

Get Involved:
Participants: Reach out to us to be linked with a peer volunteer and be part of our supportive network.
Volunteers: Join us as a peer volunteer and embark on a transformative journey of connection.
Service Providers: Support our project by referring interested parties and contribute to a more connected and inclusive community.

To register: https://www.meridianact.org.au/roundabout_project
or email: roundabout@meridianact.org.au

Funded by the Department of Social Services

meridian
COMMUNITY ■ HEALTH ■ ACTION

Figure 4: Roundabout launch information - July 2023

Project Overview

Launched in July 2023, Roundabout is a pilot program designed to link isolated individuals with disabilities aged 18 years and older to our vibrant LGBTIQ+ community. Trained peer support volunteers are matched with participants for social activities, events, and connections with the aim of supporting participants to meet new people, try new things and have fun. This included providing support and connections to attend social activities, events, and the development of friendships.

The Roundabout project took place on the lands of the Ngunnawal people in the Australian Capital Territory (ACT). A brief timeline of the project can be found below.

March – July 2023: Meridian was contracted in March 2023 and initial work concentrated on recruitment of staff for the project as well as research, planning and project design. A project officer was employed as part of the project in April 2023.

During this time, a co-design process was undertaken with the Meridian Service Users Reference Group (SURG). Over two face-to-face workshops and off-line engagement, the SURG provided input into the development of:

- engagement strategies
- volunteer and participant onboarding
- policy and procedures for volunteers and participants and
- stakeholder engagement

Referral pathways into the Roundabout project were developed in consultation with the SURG as well as across teams and with external partner stakeholders. This pathway is described in the table below:

LGBTIQ+ Foundation Training

provides fundamental information to help organisations embrace diversity and to improve their service user experience. It provides fundamental information for organisations embarking on their inclusive practice journey or wanting to refresh their existing knowledge.

Touching Base is a full day in-person workshop aimed at disability service providers and support workers wanting to explore the issues they may face when assisting people with disability to access the sex industry.

July 2023 – June 2024: The Roundabout project went live in July 2023. Initial efforts focussed on raising awareness of the Roundabout Project through social media and through networking with existing partners. A mail-out to relevant organisations and businesses including stakeholders and services and community supports where isolated vulnerable people are known to access was undertaken, outlining the project and referral pathways.

This initial stakeholder work also involved proactive outreach offering training to disability support workers who were targeted as a key referral pathway for the project. This included an offer of free access to Meridian's online LGBTIQ+ Foundation Training and a

free training session of "Touching Base" for support workers within the Community Sector of the ACT. Stakeholder engagement also included a successful stall at the Canberra Disability Expo at exhibition Park in Canberra in September 2023, with the Meridian stall winning best booth for the exhibition.



Figure 5: Roundabout Best Booth Award Canberra Disability Expo September 2023

July 2024 – May 2025: The Roundabout project was extended for a further 12 months in this period. Engagement in the pilot picked up from June 2024 through expanding referral

pathways. From August 2024, Meridian introduced a monthly Saturday morning drop in as an opportunity for volunteers to come together and participants with and without matches to engage and potentially make some organic connections. These proved quite popular and addressed two key hurdles of the project:

- an imbalance of numbers between participants and volunteers
- how to engage with participants whilst they waited for the right match with a volunteer.

A description of this and other activities can be found below.

Other activities within this time frame focussed on supporting existing matches between volunteers and participants. The final 3 months of the program have been focused on maintaining visits, connections and opportunities as well as managing the winding down of the project in a way that maintained the safety of everyone who had been matched as part of the program. This included clear communication with participants about how they may choose to negotiate continued social contact beyond the project and without Meridian support. It also has included attempts to secure ongoing funding for the pilot, since it has been meeting a need which for many is ongoing. There has also been a focus on encouraging attendance at social events, providing a key LGBTIQ+ community organisation contact / resource list to keep informed of future social events and encouraging subscription to newsletters, social media channels.

Volunteer recruitment and training

The initial proposal of the pilot suggested a peer support model based on the Citizen Advocacy model where volunteers are matched with participants with disability and work to advocate for the needs of that person. Peer support, however, is a foundational practice of Meridian as an organisation and models of peer support for the HIV+ and LGBTIQ+ communities have evolved over time. The model that eventuated drew on existing volunteer frameworks embedded in Meridian, including principles of the successful Aged Care Volunteer Visitor Scheme facilitated through Meridian volunteers.



Figure 6: Examples of Social Media Advertising for Roundabout volunteers.

Recruitment for new volunteers was advertised on the Meridian website, Facebook and other social media avenues. The Meridian Community Engagement Team also promoted the program through a range of events. Examples of targeted event advertising included attendance and materials being distributed at Canberra Qwire evenings. Word of mouth from current volunteers also generated some new interest.

Volunteer onboarding included a suitability meet and greet followed by training sessions. Initial training included LGBTIQ+ Foundations training (see above). In 2024, an NDIS Orientation online training module was also added to the volunteer training program.

Volunteers expressed a desire for a group online chat forum to facilitate connections, meeting arrangements, and activity ideas with their respective participants. In response, bi-monthly volunteer meetings and regular drop-in opportunities at The Pride Hub were developed, providing a safe space for volunteers and participants to connect.

Peer-led services have roots in Australia's response to the HIV epidemic in the 1980s, where small groups of peers formed AIDS Councils to share information and support each other. These community-led organisations were pivotal in reducing HIV diagnoses before the first National HIV Strategy was introduced. Peer-led services have since been recognised for their role in improving health outcomes for people living with HIV, exemplified by the high uptake of Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis.

Today, AIDS Councils, now known by various names, continue to provide peer-led, community-controlled, and non-judgmental services to LGBTIQ+ individuals and other communities facing stigma and health inequity. Though these organizations have expanded their mission beyond HIV prevention, they remain deeply connected to the communities they serve.

For more information see: [The role of LGBTIQ+ peer-led services in meeting the health needs of LGBTIQ+ people in Australia.](#)

All volunteers were given opportunity to attend various trainings at Meridian throughout the project, but few took this opportunity up. The LGBTIQ+ Foundation training was considered most useful. For future or similar projects more informal opportunity to learn from each other would be potentially more beneficial (see volunteer suggestions discussed above) than additional formal training. More training could limit volunteer interest.

Intake Process

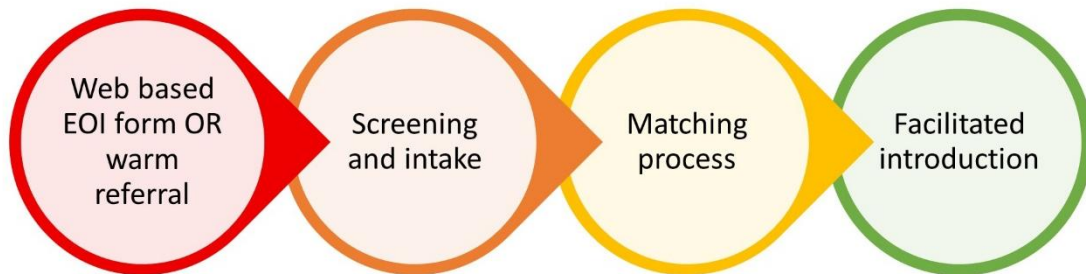
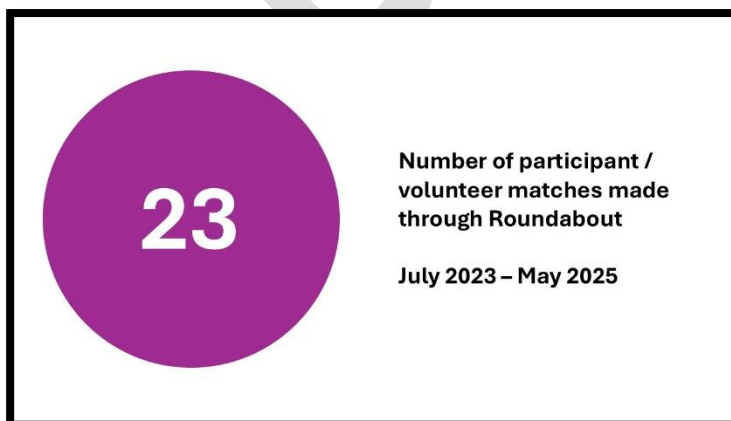


Figure 7: Roundabout Intake Process

Matches and Activities

A total of 23² matches were made between participants and volunteers across the lifespan of the pilot. Matches between volunteers and participants were based on common interests as well as pragmatic issues such as matching availability of times to connect and the level of involvement requested by participant matching the level of involvement a volunteer was available to provide. Matches also needed to accommodate particular needs and requests such as gender, age, and personality.

Within the first 12 months of the project a total of 20 participants and 14 volunteers registered for the program. This resulted in nine matches which is a successful match rate of approximately 45% (considering participants only).



Lack of access to transport was identified throughout the project as a barrier to both volunteers and participants. Volunteers without private transport relied on public transport which limited who they could be matched with. One of the key audiences for

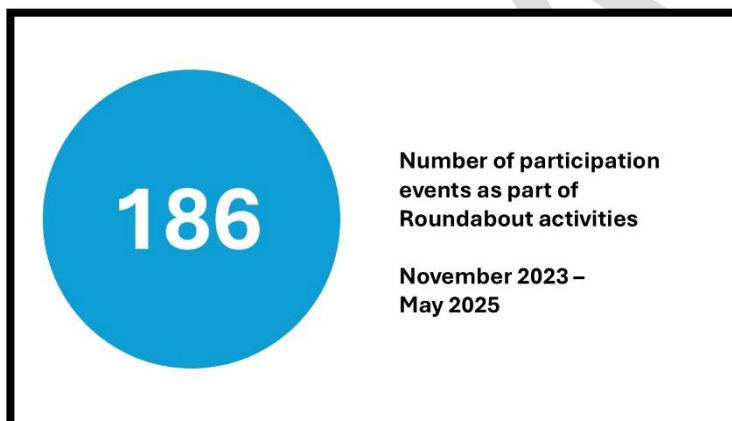
² Nine additional expressions of interest for matching were unable to be processed in the final months of the pilot due to the focus on the safe winding down of the project.

the pilot was participants who were isolated which meant that a cohort of participants were also not able to transport independently, could not afford to pay transport costs or did not feel safe to catch public transport. The program did not have resources to support transport needs.

Despite this, several successful matches eventuated from the program. Participants logged social activities attended as part of the match which included LGBTIQ+ events and groups such as the Ladies Board Games group, Monthly Trans Meet Up, SpringOUT Canberra Festival, Pride Grows Environmental Group, Queer Book Club, and art exhibitions.

A range of social events for LGBTIQ+ people with disability were also held as an additional activity of the pilot. These events performed multiple functions including:

- Providing social opportunities for participants and volunteers
- Providing supportive social opportunities for participants who were awaiting being matched with a volunteer as part of the program
- Creating safe spaces for LGBTQIA+ community engagement that were accessible to people with disability
- Offering opportunities for people who were interested in participating in the Roundabout project as either a volunteer or participant to find out more information about the project and gain insight into the experience of the project.



The social events were specifically held as part of the Roundabout project. Examples included a regular monthly Saturday morning drop-in at The Pride Hub (initiated in August 2024) where participants and volunteers brought along things such as craft projects and board games. These proved quite popular and created a safe and relaxed social group setting for people to come together. Other

examples included time specific events such as a Mardi Gras screening event in March 2024, Friday coffee catch ups, a craft day in preparation for Mardi Gras, and a pizza and movie night during the SpringOUT Pride festival.

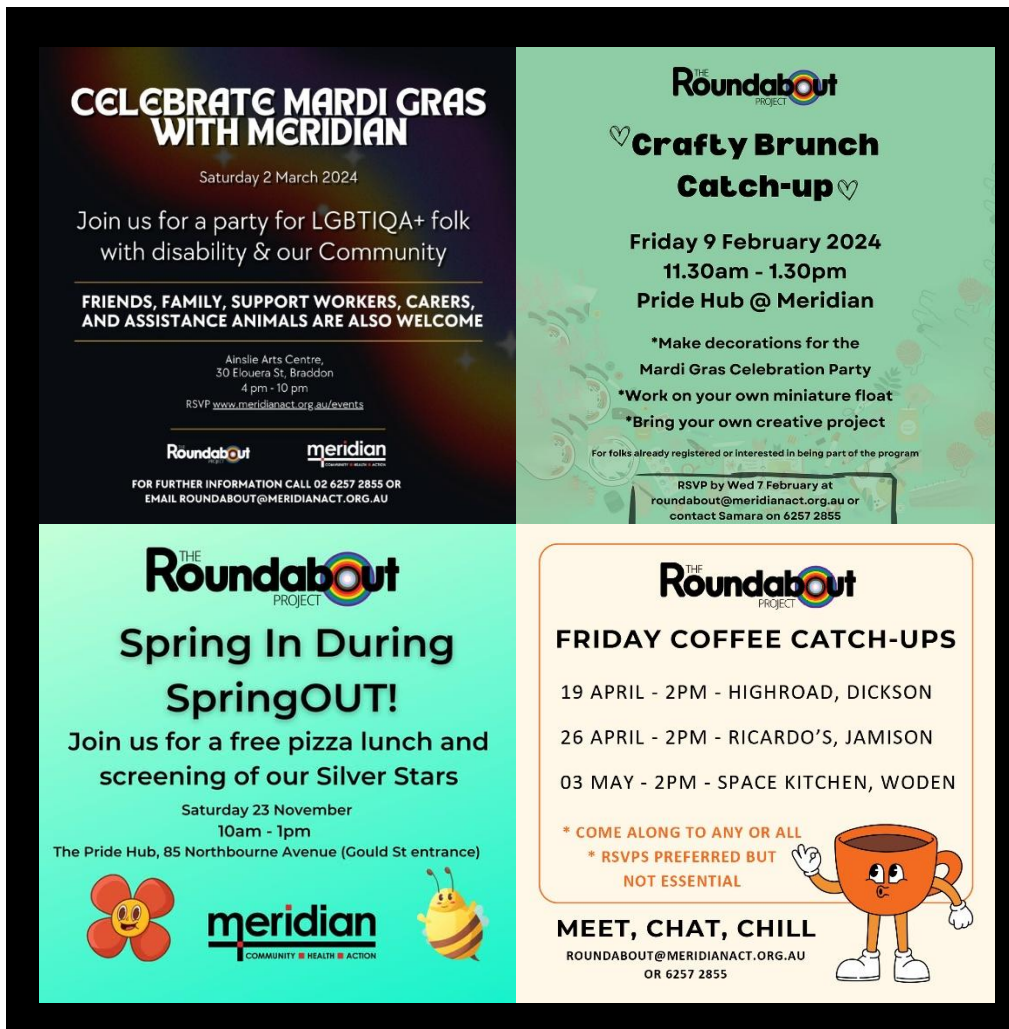


Figure 8: Examples of Social Event Advertising for the Roundabout Project

Other social events levered existing opportunities and Roundabout staff supported attendance through targeted advertising to participants and volunteers, as well as attendance and support at the events themselves. Examples of this included work with the Meridian Disabili-Tea social group for members of the LGBTIQ+ community with disabilities, including a visit to the Discovering Ancient Egypt exhibition at the National Museum of Australia.



Saturday 13 January 2024 Ancient Egypt Exhibition

National Museum of Australia, Lawson Acton Peninsula, Canberra



12.00pm Free lunch in the Broadbean café onsite
1.30pm Ancient Egypt exhibition

- This event is combined with Disabili-TEA to help people connect to community.
- Tickets to the exhibition are discounted to \$17.50. Please advise if cost is a barrier. Companion cards accepted.
- Accessibility- accessible parking, gender neutral accessible toilets, hearing loop, large print map, free wheelchair, and mobility scooters available- bookings recommended.
- Friends, family, support workers, carers, and assistance animals are all welcome

Please contact Meridian to discuss any accessibility requirements-
Email: roundabout@meridianact.gov.au Phone: (02) 6257 2855
RoundAbout is a social group for the LGBTIQ+ community also living with disability, chronic condition, mental health condition, or neurodiversity.

Image description: The image is a graphical user interface for an application called Roundabout. The interface contains the text "PROJECT" and "meridian" and features a green color scheme. Ancient Egyptian mural of person wearing necklace and striped clothing with background of hieroglyphs and objects.

Figure 9: Examples of Targeted Event Advertising for the Roundabout Project

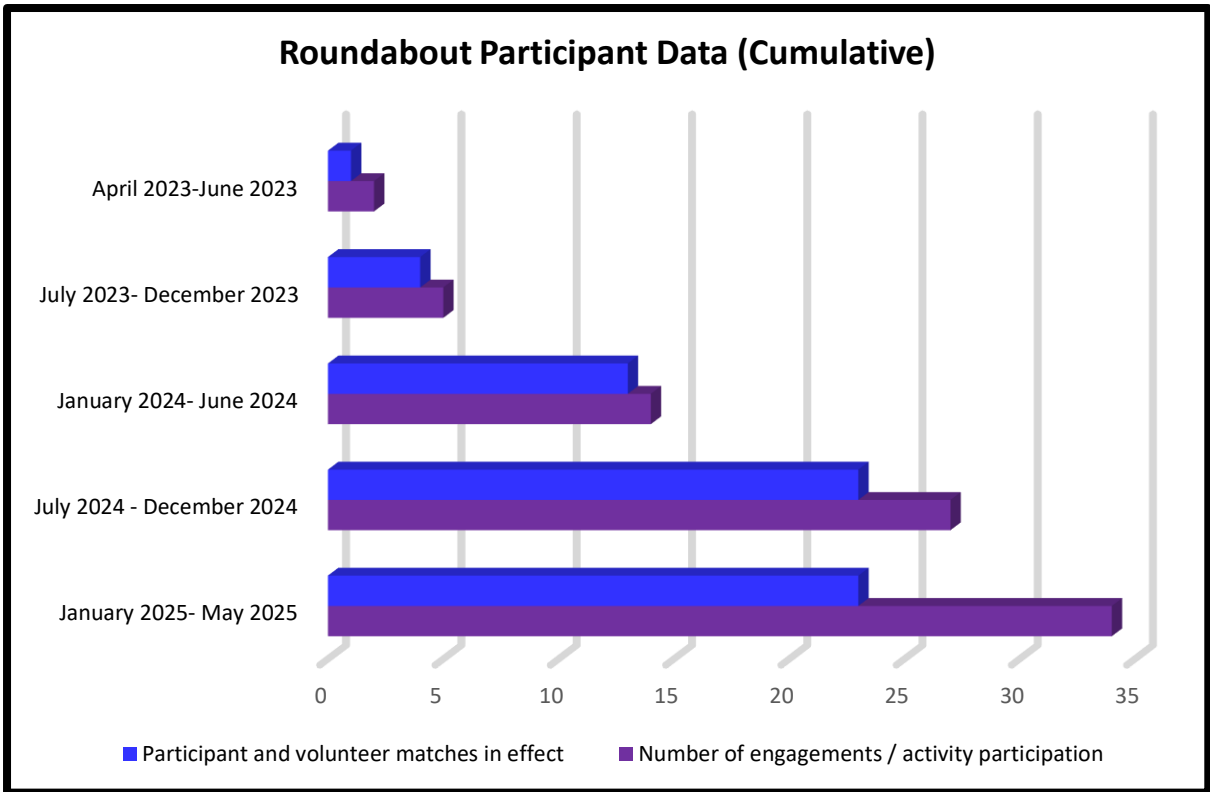


Figure 10: Roundabout Participant Data

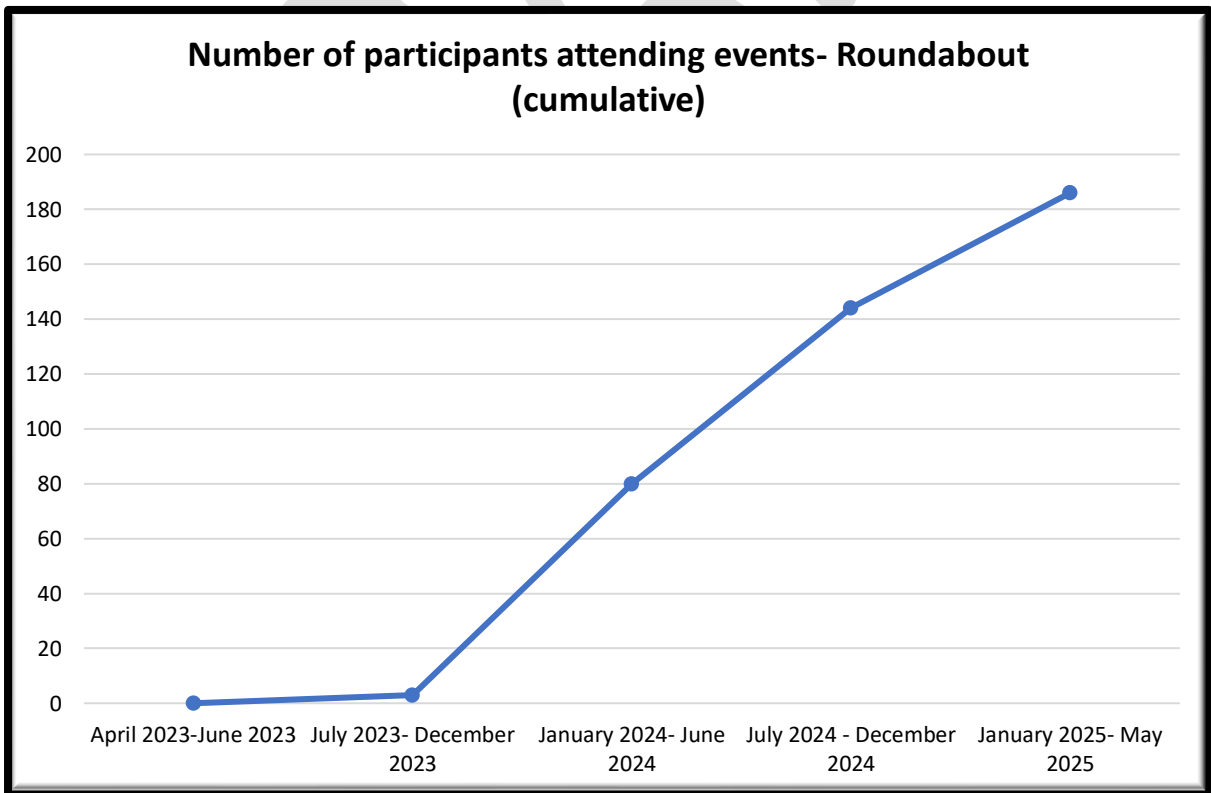


Figure 11: Roundabout event numbers

Feedback Received

Overall feedback from participants and volunteers involved in the pilot was positive. A snapshot of this feedback is provided below.

Participant and volunteer feedback indicated that successful matches were made and that many of the connections would extend beyond the time frame of the pilot:

- *We planned lunch at a bookshop cafe, and we talked for three hours over lunch and didn't even go into the bookshop! Peak queer neurodivergent socialising. We talked about lots of things to do with our neurodivergent experience and I said I felt it was a pretty equal exchange. X said it was spoon replenishing as much as it was spoon depleting, and like we had a spoon exchange in a way. We have decided we are now friends.*
- *Just wanted to say X has been awesome, we've been out in the community a few times and he is in contact with me regularly also.*
- *X and I met up at Meridian and then walked around Haig Park while talking about various things: our progress in getting a job, our interests, how we feel about the weather etc. X and I had a great time getting to know each other more and arranged to catch up again in about two weeks time.*
- *We met up for lunch and had a great catch-up. We just shared a bowl of chips and had a long conversation about our shared experiences as gay men with a physical disability.*
- *I've had a very positive experience with the Roundabout program and have enjoyed volunteering greatly - thank you for the fantastic opportunity! I will certainly strongly consider volunteering with Meridian in other programs in the future.*
- *I am still catching up with X and will absolutely continue to do so beyond the end of the program! It's been wonderful to get to know him, and I look forward to continuing to do so beyond the conclusion of this program.*

Feedback also indicated that matches supported ongoing social connection and community involvement:

- *Yes, we've had a couple of outings. It's going well, X is great :) The other week we went to a ladies' board game night. Having X there helped me to participate better than I probably would have otherwise, and I'll be going back there in future.*
- *We attended a coffee catch-up, held at the Gang Gang Cafe in Downer, organised by Women with Disability ACT. We met and enjoyed the company of the organiser, 2 peer workers, and several members. Despite being a very noisy venue (it was a Saturday lunch time), we enjoyed it very much and plan to attend regularly.*
- *My participant has advised me that when the Roundabout program concludes they would like to continue to meet up socially on a regular basis. I'm more than comfortable to meet up and continue the friendship that we have developed whilst involved in the program.*

Pilot 2: Protecting personal autonomies of intersex people

Introduction

[InterAction for Health and Human Rights](#) (Intersex Human Rights Australia Ltd) is a national body by and for people with innate variations of sex characteristics. They promote the health, human rights, self-determination and bodily autonomy of intersex people in Australia with the goal of helping to create a society where intersex bodies are not stigmatised, and where our rights as people are respected, protected and fulfilled. To do this, Interaction for Health and Human Rights build community, evidence, capacity, and education and information resources. This work is delivered through providing psychosocial support, peer support and advocacy programs, including via the [InterLink](#) project.

Intersex is a term for innate variations of sex characteristics (sexual anatomy, reproductive organs, hormonal patterns, sex chromosomes) from social or medical norms for female or male bodies. These physical traits can be associated with more than 40 underlying variations, each with their own characteristics and expression that may be apparent during pre-natal screening or at birth, or may become apparent later in life, such as at puberty or when trying to conceive. As a natural part of human biodiversity, intersex variations have occurred in people from every region of earth since the beginning of history.

Many variations can be described using clinical or diagnostic terminology (e.g. differences of sex development 'DSD', androgen insensitivity syndrome, congenital adrenal hyperplasia, XXY/Klinefelter, MRKH, hypospadias etc.). People with innate variations of sex characteristics may grow and express the same range of identities as those represented in the wider community. Many grow to express an LGBT identity (that is, to be same sex attracted or gender diverse) but equally many grow to identify in other ways (for example, heterosexual and/or cisgender women and men).

The purpose of this project was to develop sexual violence prevention resources for intersex people and their families with a particular focus on consent and boundary setting. Materials and approaches were to be developed through co-design approaches by intersex peers and tested with intersex people across Australia to understand effective strategies to support intersex people's personal autonomy, promoting self-confidence and self-determination, celebrating intersex bodies and supporting individuals to make fully informed choices about consent.

Because intersex bodies are perceived as different to endosex (non-intersex) bodies, people with innate variations of sex characteristics experience stigmatisation, discrimination and harmful practices. Although people with intersex variations have health needs, otherwise healthy intersex traits are routinely pathologized, which can result in medical interventions intended to make intersex bodies appear or function in ways that are more typically female or male. Experiences of medicalisation, particularly in early childhood before a child can provide full and informed consent, along with legacies of secrecy within clinical protocols and cultures of silence within family contexts create environments where individuals lack understanding of their bodies or language to describe their intersex experiences. Accessing adult healthcare and allied health service that are knowledgeable about intersex variations remains challenging. Shame and marginalisation are common, impacting

individual capacity to provide informed consent to medical protocols or express agency within social setting and interpersonal relationships.

Awareness of the existence intersex people and the issues they face has grown since community members began making themselves visible from the 1990s in order to get their human rights, healthcare and support needs addressed. However, most people with intersex variations, and their parents or carers, remain hidden from social view and largely absent from the focus of research, public policy or service delivery.

This pilot was mapped against contemporary knowledge of drivers of domestic, family and sexual violence and violence against women including Our Watch's *Change the Story* (2021) and Rainbow Health Victoria's *Pride in Prevention* (2020). This mapping can be found in Appendix 1 of this Report. Drawing on this mapping and the original pilot proposal, the Roundabout Project was based on the following assumptions:

- Heteronormativity (sex and gender role assumptions), endosexism and cisgenderism are key drivers of sexual violence perpetrated against people with innate variations of sex characteristics.
- Consent in medical settings and consent and boundary setting in personal relationships are linked (Ansara, p.103)
- The project is focused on the I of the LGBTIQ+SB initialism. There is not an expectation that the pilot addresses diverse sexualities or gender identities except where it is coincidental (ie: where a person with innate variations of sex characteristics also identifies as LGBTQ+SB).
- Intersex as community includes a population of people with innate variations of sex characteristics of all ages, and their parents and carers.

Based on these assumptions, the pilot aimed to situate itself within the following practices of sexual violence prevention:

- Foster positive personal knowledge and identities, and challenge gender stereotypes and roles
- Address the intersections between gender inequality and other forms of systemic and structural oppression and discrimination, and promote broader social justice
- Prevent exposure to violence and support those affected to reduce its consequences

This was to be achieved through delivery of the following actions:

- Create resources and accessible information for effective strategies to support intersex people's personal autonomy, promoting self-confidence and self-determination, challenging shame and stigma, celebrating intersex bodies and supporting individuals to make fully informed choices about consent.

- Provide support and guidance to families of intersex children and young people on concepts relating to consent, respectful relationships, bodily autonomy and agency using age-appropriate language.
- Conduct workshops to parents, caregivers, and extended families of intersex children and young people, medical and other professionals.



Figure 12: InterLink Poster Resource developed as part of the pilot. Artist Credit: [Gabrielle Niemeyer](#)

Project Overview

Commenced in July 2023, the Protecting Personal Autonomy pilot had two key goals - to develop a range of sexual violence prevention materials for people with innate variations of sex characteristics, with a focus on consent and bodily autonomy; and to provide support for families of children and young people with innate variations of sex characteristics.

This project took place across Australia with much of the project coordinated and delivered virtually. A brief timeline of the project can be found below.

March – July 2023: Intersex Human Rights Australia (IHRA) was contracted in March 2023 and initial work concentrated on adapting the existing InterLink program to fit the requirements of the Protecting Personal Autonomy pilot and recruitment of staff for the project. This included the development of position descriptions and recruitment for an InterLink Manager

Sexual Abuse

If you have an innate variation of sex characteristics (IVSC) it may be difficult to recognise some behaviours that count as sexual abuse. Any unwanted questioning, comments or attention around your genitalia or inappropriate comments about your body can fall under sexual abuse. In a relationship this may look like a partner disclosing your IVSC, describing your body or how you have sex to their friends or other people without your knowledge or consent, as well as sharing or threatening to share intimate photos of you. Importantly, the non-consensual sharing of intimate photos is illegal across Australia.

Interlink (2025) Understanding Abuse in Relationships Fact Sheet.

(0.6FTE), Mental Health Practitioner (0.6FTE) and three (3) casual Intersex Peer Workers. Engagement of InterLink’s Peer Advisory Group, which had been developed prior to this period, commenced to provide oversight of the development and delivery of the pilot. The advisory committee was comprised of people with lived experience representing key intersex-led organisations, representatives from partnered hosting organisation the Queensland Council for LGBTI Health and researchers from the University of Southern Queensland and the University of Queensland. The advisory committee met periodically throughout the pilot and provided intermittent input via email as required.

This period also saw the commencement of research, planning and project design including the initial mapping of existing intersex and sexual violence prevention resources, to understand the existing information available and the gaps.

July 2023 – June 2024: The mental health practitioner recruited as part of the initial preparation for this pilot, facilitated individual and group counselling through InterLink service provision. This process commenced in this period (see description of service provision below).

The InterLink+ Codesign Working Group was established with 10 external community experts, recruited through targeted invitation to focus on designing sexual violence prevention learning packages for intersex bodily autonomy and consent. A 12-week training and co-

design program was developed and delivered for this group, with the final co-design meeting agreeing on the resource development plan for the project.

July 2024 – May 2025: The InterLink psychosocial support service continued delivering individual and group counselling to adults and young people with an innate variation of sex characteristics (IVSC) and the parents of children with IVSC. This included collaboration with other social workers, clinical and community services to ensure adequate referrals were available to provide care coordination for young people with complex health and mental health presentations.

A Resource Drafting Group comprised of the InterLink Manager, InterLink Mental Health Practitioner and IHRA Senior Policy Officer, spent several months synthesising the raw content provided by the co-design working group during the co-design workshops within this period. The development of these resources was undertaken (see description below).

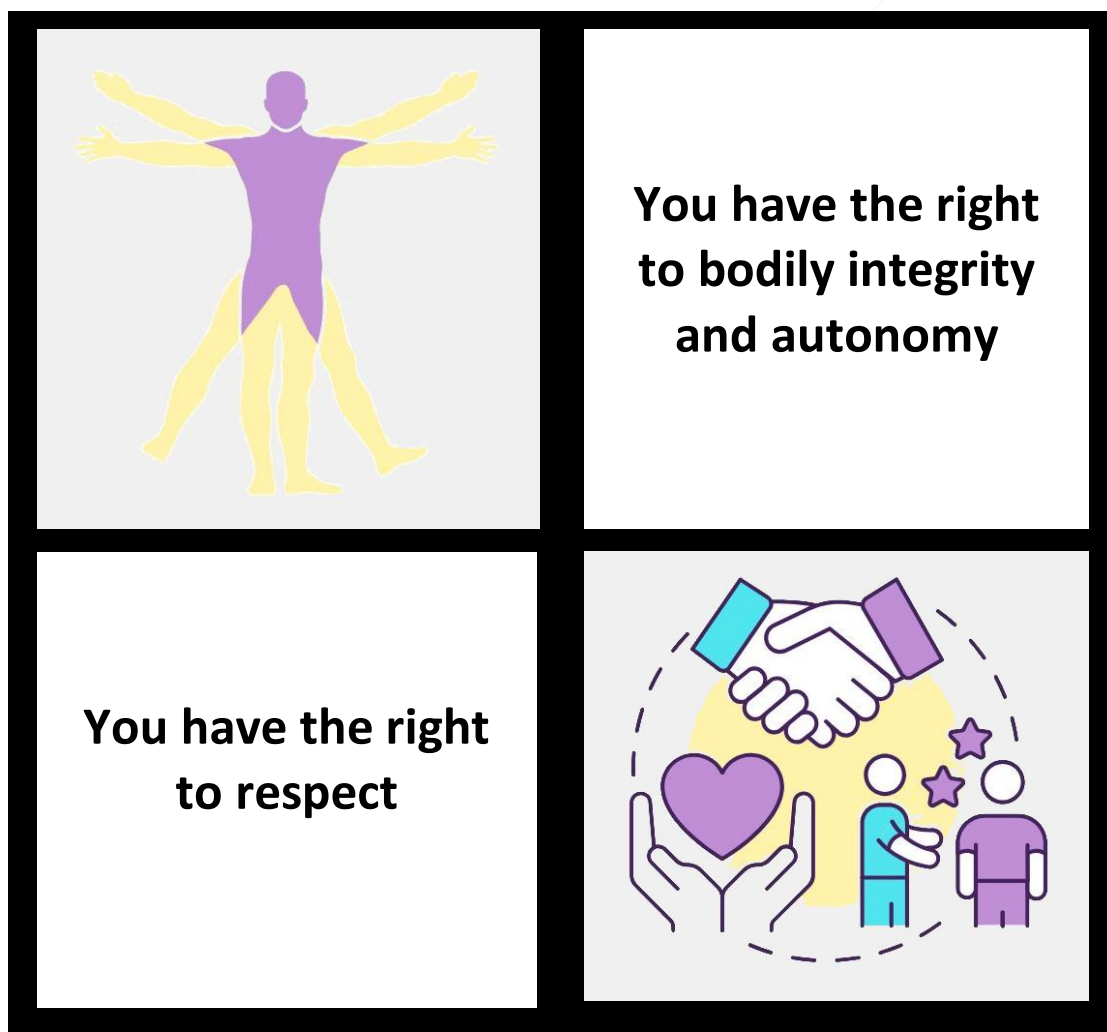


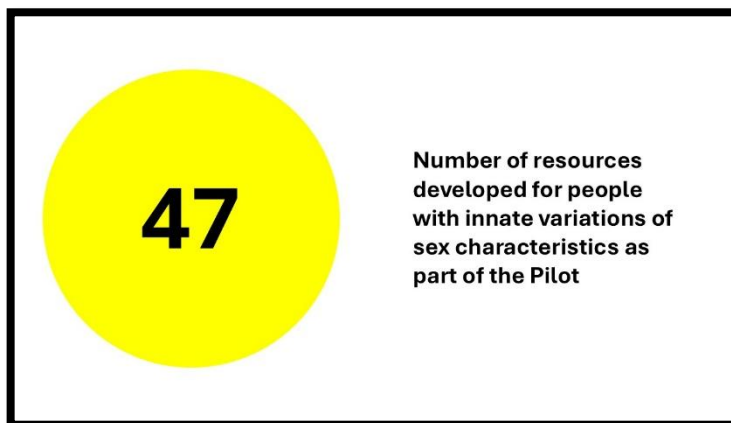
Figure 13: Examples of messaging in Interlink Fact Sheets and resources designed as part of this pilot

Resource Development

A significant deliverable of this pilot is a suite of co-designed resources specifically designed for people with IVSC. Resource development occurred across 3 thematic streams for presentation on the [InterLink webpage](#):

- Sexual violence prevention awareness
- Boundaries and relationships
- Consent in medical settings

The focus of these resources was to address drivers of sexual violence, including heteronormativity, endosexism and cisgenderism; to focus on consent across the lifetime continuum and in multiple settings including medical settings; to increase opportunities for



intersex people to improve their self-knowledge and agency, and to raise awareness of healthy, respectful relationships including addressing issues of coercion in relationships where one person has an IVSC. A total of 47 resources were published on [ilink.net.au](#) as part of the pilot, and are available through topic navigation portals under the following headings:

- Language
- Intersex Variations
- Health, Wellbeing and Rights
- Parents
- Youth and Teens
- Healthy Relationships
- Posters and Printed Resources

Resources were conceptualised, designed and developed by a the InterLink+ Codesign Working Group made up of community members with lived experience of having an IVSC, or being the parent of someone with an IVSC. Members of the working group dedicated a minimum of two hours per week for twelve weeks during the project co-design period in 2023, contributing to tasks such as reviewing draft resource materials, providing feedback on consultation strategies, attending virtual brainstorming sessions, and assisting in the development of dissemination plans. Key discussions and workshops focussed on the identification of gaps in sexual violence prevention materials; identification of additional resources that were needed to ensure that people with innate variations of sex characteristics were visible and provided with relevant information (relating to consent, disclosure, reporting); and discussions related to ensuring that resources were accessible and relevant in terms of both content and format. Additionally, the InterLink+ Codesign Working group

conducted a peer-review of existing IHRA health and wellbeing resources that had been drafted in previous years but had remained unpublished.



Figure 14: InterLink Poster Resource developed as part of the pilot. Artist Credit: Gabrielle Niemeyer

The InterLink+ Codesign Working Group played a vital role in the resource development project by ensuring that processes such as scoping, consultation, and co-design addressed the diverse needs of the intersex community. Their responsibilities included consolidating community and subject matter expertise to serve as a brains-trust for the project, identifying gaps in existing resources, drafting and conducting peer reviews of resources at various stages

of completion, and advising on frameworks for resource development and dissemination during the pilot. The process facilitated detail mapping of existing intersex and sexual violence prevention resources highlighting the gaps, priorities for new resources, style-guide and delivery format for the resources.

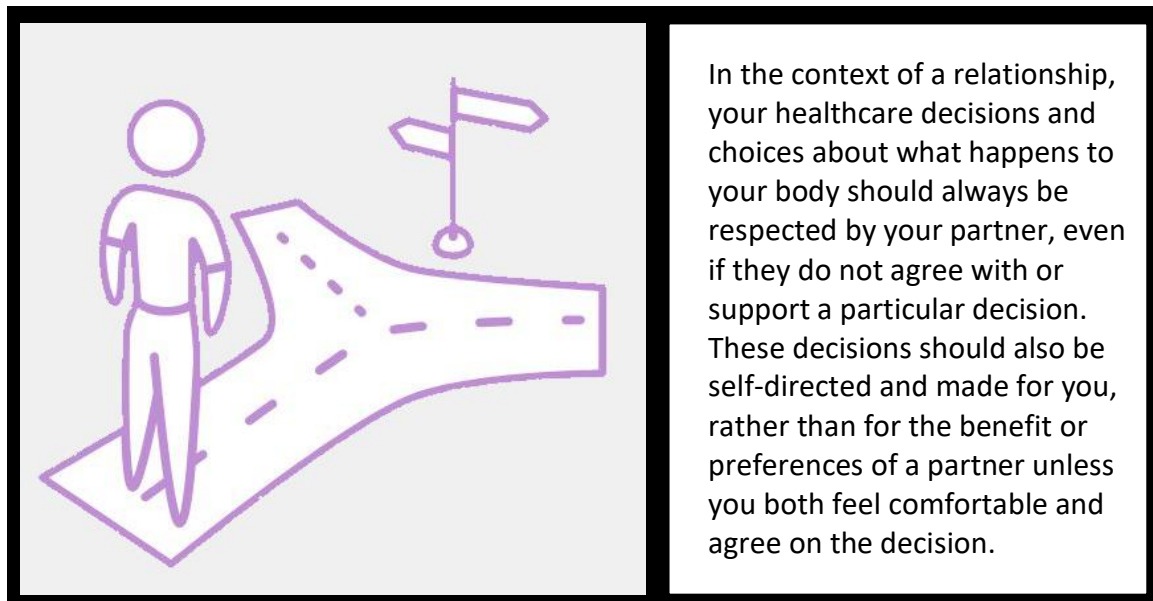


Figure 15: Excerpt from Interlink Resource developed as part of this pilot, supporting bodily autonomy (Source: Healthy relationship for people with intersex variations)

A large quantity of ideas for possible resource were identified through this process to meet the need of education, health & wellbeing, sexual violence prevention and cultural change. A Resource Drafting Group narrowed this scope, and a Resource Development Team wrote and designed the final resources in collaboration with the Co-design Working Group.

The resources were drafted by the Resource Drafting Group including creation of illustrations and graphic components, before being peer-reviewed by the Co-design Working Group. An artist and graphic designer with intersex lived experience was contracted to creatively render 13 health promotion and empowerment posters. Intersex patient appointment cards were also graphically designed before all posters and cards were printed in hardcopy, as folded business cards, A3 and A4 posters, and stickers. The resources were then published on the newly redesigned InterLink website: <https://ilink.net.au/posters-printed-resources/>.

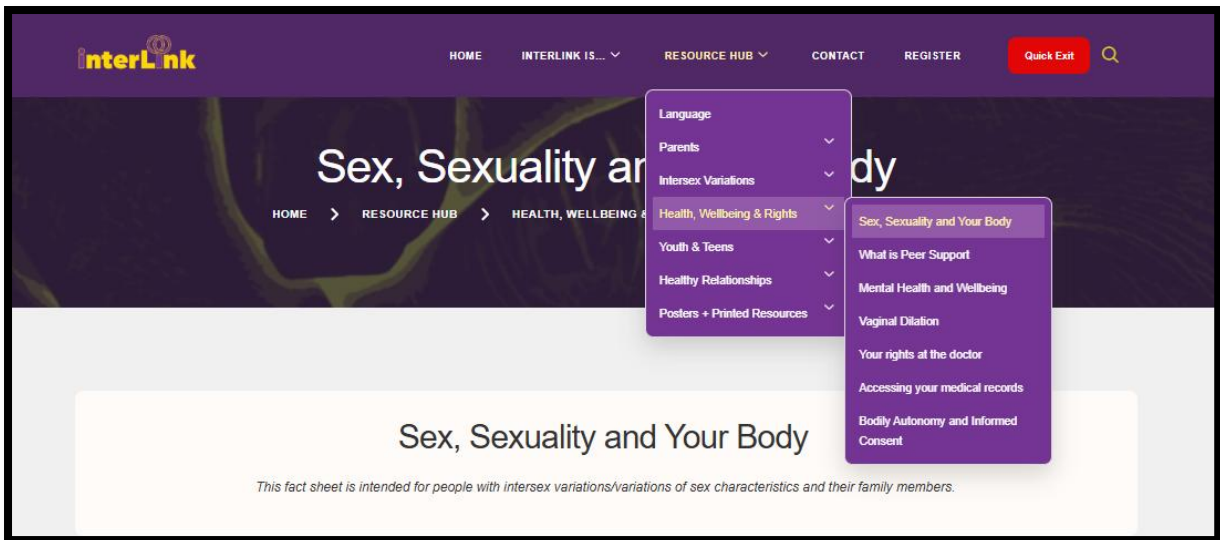
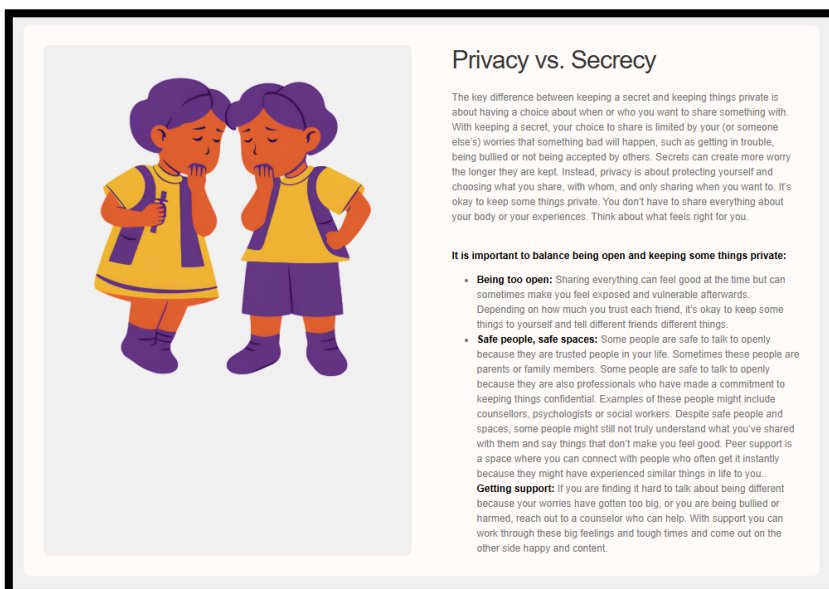


Figure 16: Screenshot of *ilink* resource hub developed for this project (source: ilink.net.au/)



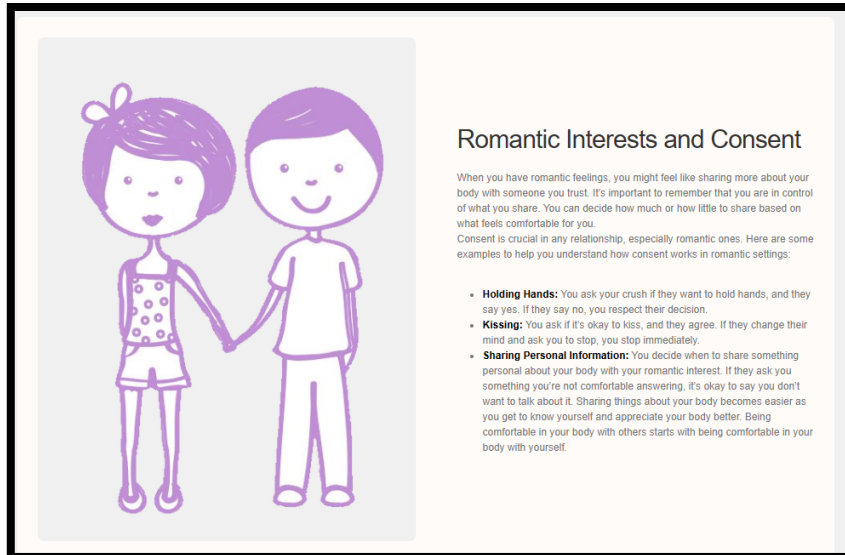


Figure 19: Screenshot of resource developed as part of this project (source: <https://ilink.net.au/consent-and-privacy-in-peer-relationships/>)

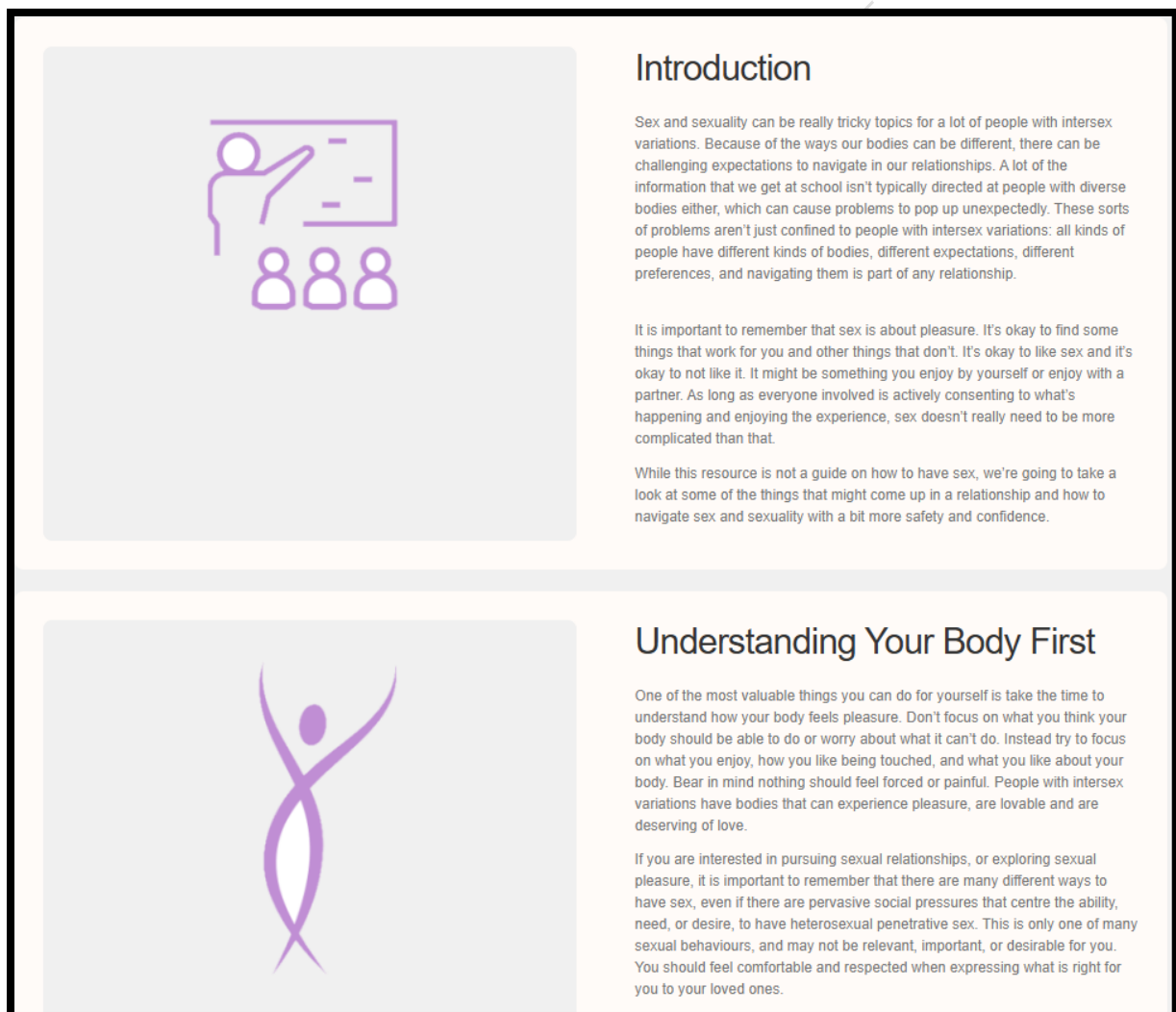


Figure 20: Screenshot of resource developed as part of this project (source: <https://ilink.net.au/sex-sexuality-and-your-body/>)

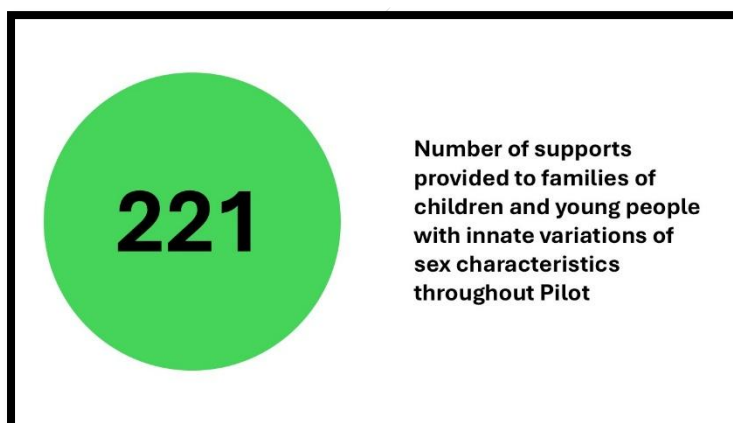
Resource Hub Launch and InterLink Live Workshops

InterLink's Resource Hub was launched on 20th May 2025 through a series of three hybrid workshops with a range of stakeholders. The first event was a closed event for community members including people with IVSCs of all ages, parents, carers, family members and partners which was held on Tuesday 20th May alongside simultaneous hybrid in-person events held around the country – Brisbane, Canberra, Hobart, Perth, Melbourne, Sydney. Each location's event was facilitated by a Co-design Working Group member in that area, who distributed the printed resources directly to attendees. The events provided an overview of InterLink services and the co-design process of the resource before providing a guided tour of the website and unpacking the various themes of the resources relating to IVSC knowledge, bodily autonomy, consent and healthy relationships. People from each location were engaged through their local facilitator conducting a Q&A session. In total 53 community members attended the InterLink Live Workshops around the country.

InterLink also offered two Lunch and Learn sessions, the first for medical and allied health professionals (Tuesday 27th May) and the second for social services, LGBTIQ+SB organisations and allies (Thursday 29th May). Each Lunch and Learn provided an overview of InterLink's services, education about IVSC, an exploration of the co-design process and sharing of the topics and resources presented in the new InterLink Resource Hub. In total, 88 people attended the Lunch & Learn for Medical & Allied Health Excellence and 80 people attended the Social Services, Rainbow Organisations & Allies Lunch & Learn.

Psychosocial support for families and young people

The InterLink psychosocial support service delivered short-term, online individual and group counselling to adults and young people with an innate variation of sex characteristics (IVSC) and the carers or guardians of children with IVSC throughout the pilot period.



Individual web-based counselling was provided to young people with intersex variations, online family therapy, and a combination of individual and group counselling was delivered to parents/carers of children with intersex variations. Individual sessions lasted 60 minutes and group sessions 120 minutes. Client care coordination, including to young people with

complex health and mental health presentations, was also offered. Care coordination provided assistance, affirmative referrals and information.

Group counselling was run with adults, parents and children (aged 10-13), exploring IVSC bodies and issues around health, wellbeing, self-acceptance, relationships, bodily autonomy, consent and peer support.

InterLink groups consisted of six sessions held fortnightly over 11 weeks. Participants began with a 60-minute one-on-one session with a counsellor or mental health worker, where they discussed their experiences, set personal goals, and received an introduction to the program. The next four group sessions, lasting two hours each, were co-facilitated by the same mental health worker and an intersex peer worker, who shared their lived experiences and provided resources for peer support and professional networks. Groups included 5 to 9 individuals, often matched by age (adolescents or older children), or shared experiences (parents and carers). Discussions centred on themes like awareness, understanding, acceptance, and communication, while workbooks encouraged deeper reflections between sessions. The program concluded with a final one-on-one session to revisit group conversations, address any emerging concerns, and plan for additional support when needed.

Additional services provided through InterLink as a result of the pilot, were new which meant that many services were unaware that intersex-specific psychosocial support was available. Initial referrals into the program were therefore limited. To address this, InterLink was promoted via information presentations, distribution of printed brochures/postcards and advocacy to stakeholders including:

- Department of Health and Aged Care Priority Populations
- State and territory pediatric hospital and multidisciplinary teams
- The PHN Cooperative
- National headspace forum
- Department of Health and Aged Care Priority Populations
- Richmond Wellbeing
- The ACT Health Directorate
- Rainbow Health Australia/ARCSHS
- LGBTI Legal Service

You have the right to consent to or refuse any medical treatment or intervention, ensuring that your autonomy and bodily integrity are always respected.

Consent is an active, free and voluntary agreement for something to happen. This could mean consent to a treatment, tests or even an examination. Consent in a medical setting is vital. Nothing should happen to you without your explicit say so, and when you say no that should be respected as well. Our consent can sometimes be undermined in ways that are difficult to understand until after the fact, especially if you were not provided with alternative choices or pressured into making a choice before you were ready. Consent is also undermined if you do not fully understand the nature, purpose or consequences of an action. Your consent can change or be withdrawn at any time.

Except in emergency treatment, consent must be fully informed and freely given.

Excerpt from Interlink (2025) [Your rights at the doctor](#) (fact sheet developed as part of this pilot).

- QTWAV
- QLife.

A focus on raising awareness of this service throughout the second half of 2023 resulted in a significant uptake in referrals with 22 new clients accessing services in the following six months, equating to 259 individual support sessions. This was a 47% increase of clients and 123% increase of counselling session than the previous six months. This trajectory continued for the remainder of the year with a further 21 new client registrations and 287 support sessions delivered in the final six months of 2024. In total over the duration of the pilot there were 130 registrations for psychosocial support resulting in 71 ongoing clients. InterLink delivered a total of 122 group counselling sessions and 671 individual counselling and care coordination sessions.

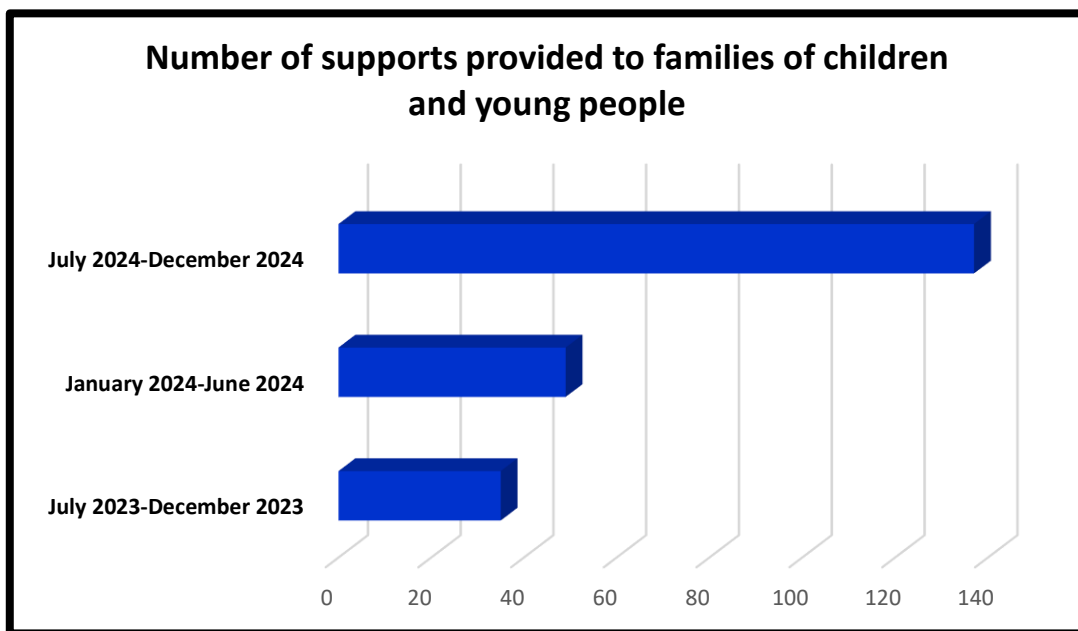


Figure 21: Support provided to families of children and young people with innate variations of sex characteristics

Feedback Received

Overall feedback from participants involved in the pilot was positive. A snapshot of these is provided below.

Individuals with IVSC rated InterLink as 4.8/5, stating:

- *“Listening to other’s stories gave me more confidence. I could feel normal around them and didn’t have to hide anything. I COULD JUST BE MYSELF.”*
- *“Sharing my experiences with people who actually get it. That made a massive difference to me. Thank you!”*

- *“I liked the opportunity to meet other intersex people, and to have access to a counsellor that knows what intersex is, the diversity among us, what intersex people may experience in life, and does not draw parallels to other people in the community who are not intersex, as though to assure us (me) that my challenges are experienced by many people in the community. Doing this is dismissive, not supportive, so I was pleased not to experience this again.”*

Individuals were asked what they would recommend (about InterLink) to other community members:

- *“Do it, it’s a safe space to meet other’s and seek support. The counsellor has some great experience with minority groups.”*
- *“Take a deep breath and just do it, nothing to regret, only positives.”*

Parents of children with IVSC rated InterLink as 5/5, and their feeling about their child’s body and ability to have conversations about their child’s body as ‘better’ or ‘much better’.

- *“As a parent I was mainly looking for connection with other parents and engaging with the intersex community to know my child can be supported and Interlink has given us that safe supportive environment, I will be forever grateful, thank you.”*

Parents liked:

- *“The honest conversations”*
- *“Feeling connected, knowing where to turn to for information and support, the expertise from lived experiences”.*

Parents said that InterLink counselling helped by:

- *“Gaining insight into what our child's needs are and will be”*
- *“Reduced feeling isolated, supported as a parent, knowing my child has a supportive community”.*

Regarding InterLink peer navigation, parents said:

- *“I have since been in contact with them regarding my child’s upcoming specialist appointment and answered some of my concerns regarding this. They were so understanding and encouraging in how I can talk to my child about it and now I feel much more confident going into the appointment.”*

You have the right to:

- **Bodily integrity and Autonomy**
- **RESPECT**
- **Privacy**
- **Support**
- **Consent**
- **Give feedback**
- **Not to be discriminated against**



interLink



Figure 22: InterLink Poster Resource developed as part of the pilot. Artist Credit: [Gabrielle Niemeyer](#)

Pilot 3: Safety, Acceptance and Identity on Country and LGBTIQ+ Same-Sex Attracted, Two Spirit, Sistergirl and Brotherboy Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Mob Yarns

Acknowledgement

We honour our old people, the holders of strength, courage, culture, and healing and pay our deepest respects to the Traditional Owners of Country across all lands, oceans, and waterways this project occurred on.

We walk gently, with reverence for the stories shared and the healing carried within them. Sovereignty has never been ceded. We recognise the survival, resistance, and enduring wisdom of LGBTIQ+ same-sex attracted, Two Spirit, Sistergirl and Brotherboy (LGBTIA+SB) First Nation peoples, the custodians of the world's oldest continuing cultures.

Introduction

Sam Ivancsik was recruited by LHA to coordinate the Safety, Acceptance and Identity on Country & LGBTIQ+SB Same-Sex Attracted, Two Spirit, Sistergirl and Brotherboy Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Mob Yarns pilot.³ Sam founded [Restorative Yarns](#) which is a therapeutic consultancy service rooted in a decolonial, social justice, and human rights framework. The agency weaves together Indigenous knowledges and contemporary practice to support healing, wellbeing, and recovery for individuals and communities. With over fifteen years of experience in the Prevention and Response to Violence Abuse and Neglect (PARVAN) space, Restorative Yarns brings deep expertise in child protection, domestic and family violence, sexual assault, and harmful sexual behaviours in children and young people. Passionate about working alongside Aboriginal and Queer communities, the agency centres lived experience, truth-telling, and culturally grounded approaches in all aspects of its work. Restorative Yarns provides a range of tailored services including high-level project management, research, community engagement, facilitation, and training designed to enhance social impact and support systemic change. At the heart of Restorative Yarns is a commitment to creating culturally safe, responsive, and strengths-based environments that honour the voices of those most affected by systemic harm. The agency works collaboratively with communities and organisations to build capability, challenge structural inequalities, and support collective healing. Restorative Yarns takes pride in promoting approaches that not only foster individual recovery but also contribute to long-term community wellbeing, justice, and transformation.

[2-Spirits](#) is a key partner agency in the Safety, Acceptance and Identity on Country & LGBTIQ+SB Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Mob Yarns pilot. The 2-Spirits Program aims to improve the health and wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, intersex, queer, sistergirl and brotherboy folks across the state of Queensland. 2-Spirits are committed to helping every member of their diverse communities feel safe, valued, represented and supported. 2-Spirits is committed to developing pathways to walk and work together in partnership with agencies to grow health and wellbeing outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander LGBTIQ+SB people across Queensland.

³ LHA also acknowledges and recognises the role of BlaQ in the early iteration of this pilot. BlaQ participated in the initial design and work planning of the pilot as a partner agency from May 2023 until withdrawing from the project in 2024 due to unforeseen circumstances.

The initial scope of the project was to engage with LGBTIQ+SB Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in seven communities to identify local issues relating to sexual violence prevention, developing localised responses, engaging families, Elders and service providers through yarning circles and training to build strong cultural approaches to prevent and respond to violence. The aim was to develop a framework and model that could be adapted to use in other Aboriginal community settings to prevent LGBTIQ+SB sexual violence.

LGBTIQ+, SB Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and their families face unique challenges and barriers in preventing and responding to experiences of child sexual abuse and sexual violence for young people and adults who identify as LGBTIQ+SB. In the 2021 Rainbow Knowledge report by Liddel and Hunt et al, it was identified that LGBTIQ+ Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people are at a greater risk of poor social and emotional wellbeing than their non-Indigenous peers, as well as increased risk for suicide, anxiety, and depression.

For those who have experienced sexual abuse, assault or harassment it can be extremely difficult to find safe support that acknowledges and affirms culture whilst supporting an individual's diversity of gender, sexual orientation/s or Two Spirit identity. When sexual violence or abuse has occurred, protective families and other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander LGBTIQ+ SB people can't always help because they face judgement, discrimination, systemic and institutional racism.

Where First Nations LGBTIQ+SB individuals do have connection to community, they do not

“An intersectional approach to preventing sexual violence must centre not only the compounding effects of intersecting oppressions, but also the unique strengths, agency, and knowledge of First Nations LGBTIQ+SB people. Supporting this community's leadership, self-determination, and cultural connection is not only essential to the prevention of violence, but to their well-being and human rights.”

Hickey, M & Day, M. (2025) Primary Prevention of sexual violence in First Nations LGBTIQ+SB Communities: A literature review.

always experience acceptance. The 2019 Gender Study community report shows that LGBTIQ+SB Mob experience homophobic and transphobic abuse both outside and within their own communities (Aboriginal Health Council of South Australia, 2019). Rejection and disconnection from spirit and community not only limits appropriate response or support following sexual violence but also adds risk factors such as homelessness and social isolation (Hill et al., 2021) that increase an individual's vulnerability to violence.

This pilot sought to engage with families, Elders and respected community leaders to increase awareness and acceptance of LGBTIQ+SB Mob using a community strengths model and respecting cultural protocols and responsibilities to keep Mob safe.

The Safety, Acceptance and Identity on Country Pilot was mapped against contemporary knowledge of drivers of domestic, family and sexual violence and violence against women including Our Watch's *Change the Story* (2021) and *Changing the Picture* (2018) as well as

Rainbow Health Victoria's *Pride in Prevention* (2020). This mapping can be found in Appendix 3 of this Report.

The pilot aimed to situate itself within the following practices of sexual violence prevention:

- Prevent exposure to violence and support those affected to reduce its consequences
- Strengthen pro-social behaviour
- Address the intersections between gender inequality and other forms of systemic and structural oppression and discrimination, and promote broader social justice
- Address the legacies and ongoing impacts of colonisation for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and families
- Strengthen positive, equal and respectful relations between and among women and men, girls and boys

This was to be achieved through delivery of the following actions:

- pilot approaches to build community acceptance, awareness and support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander LGBTIQ+SB people at risk of sexual violence
- engage local LGBTIQ+SB people through yarning circles to determine community priorities for future development of sexual/ violence prevention approaches for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people

Centring First Nations ways of Knowing, Being and Doing

Centring Country

We recognise that Aboriginal Country-centred learning is non-linear and reflective, connecting the past, present, and future. Building relationships through deep listening, mutual respect, and reciprocity within a culturally safe environment supports a deeper understanding of self in relation to others and to Country. This process contributes to the development of both individual and collective stories of place.

“In Aboriginal worldviews, Country (or the land) holds the stories of survival, and is consistently in relationship with us. When people are harmed, they are harmed on Country - this is against the law of the land” (2024, SNAICC). It is also important to acknowledge the parallel journey of healing occurring on Country as well.

Centring First Nations ways of knowing, being and doing to improve responses to LGBTIQ+SB experiences of sexual violence is critical to affecting systemic change through decolonial practices. Centring Country is vital when working with First Nations communities and undertaking meaningful consultation. Processes grounded in Country such as relationship building, critical reflection, and collective action are deeply relational, holistic, and culturally informed. These approaches are not static; they are shaped by lived experiences, cultural knowledges, and the needs of both individuals and communities. True engagement must begin with a genuine respect for and valuing of local Aboriginal voices and the authority of Country. This involves shifting the balance of power from institutions to communities,

allowing local knowledge to guide the way. Relationship building is at the heart of this work it is a goal, a method, and an ongoing journey. It supports sustained engagement through trust, purpose, and mutual respect, while grounding actions in values such as generosity, reciprocity, and integrity. By centring Country, we bring depth, meaning, and accountability to our work (Figure 1), staying connected to what matters most.

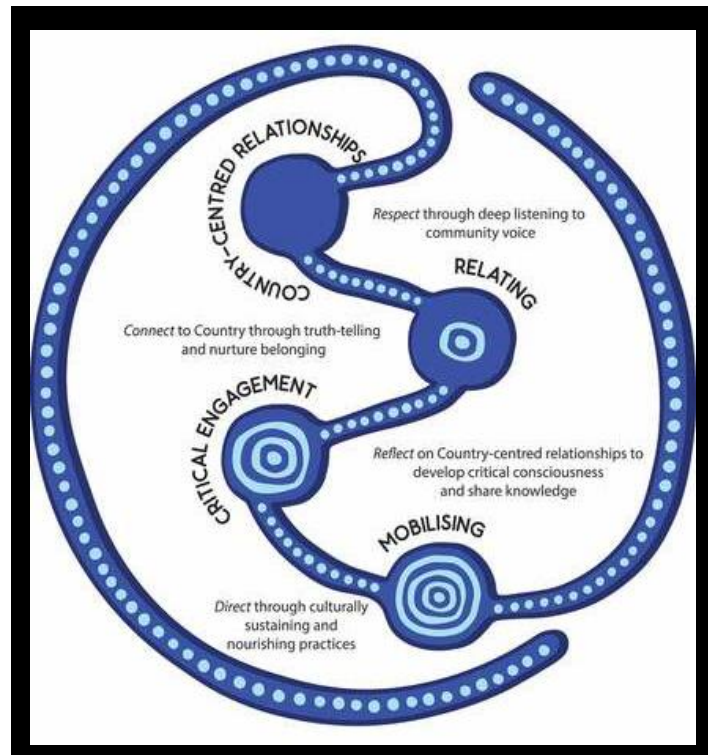


Figure 23: Centring Country. Source: Burgess, C., Thorpe, K., Egan, S., & Harwood, V. 2022

Decolonised and Anti Racist Approach

This project aimed to critically reflect and critique assumptions about knowledge, truth and rationality, which are often drawn from literature and practice developed at a particular time and place, through unequal and unjust power and knowledge relations. Given the context of colonisation in Australia, the ongoing racism experienced by First Nations peoples and the discrimination experienced by LGBTIQ+SB people, it was important to centre this approach as part of not only truth telling but also truth listening.

This work is political, there is no space for neutrality. Lived experiences of First Nations and LGBTIQ+SB communities is rooted in past social injustices and inequalities, within the last decade there have been two significant votes in Australia that have had and continue to have a direct impact LGBTIQ+SB Mob, these being the Plebiscite (same sex marriage) Bill 2016 and the Australian Indigenous Voice referendum in 2023.

The project centred Aboriginal wisdoms, world views, lived experience and ways of knowing, being and doing throughout the design and implementation of the pilot, partnering with a range of Aboriginal professionals from across the country and engaging in community consultations in NSW.

Project Overview

The Safety, Acceptance and Identity on Country & LGBTIQ+SB Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Mob Yarns pilot developed an Australian institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS) Ethics Committee approved sexual violence yarning circle model and framework. This framework was supported by a literature review on the sexual violence experienced by LGBTIQ+SB Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, and the development of sexual violence prevention resources co-designed by and for LGBTIQ+SB Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. The model was implemented once, on Darkinjung Country (NSW Central Coast).

Several unforeseeable circumstances resulted in multiple and significant changes to the pilot's original workplan. These included an extended response time to being granted ethics approval and a series of natural disasters impacting communities that were carefully selected for the yarning circles. A decision was made by the project team to listen to Country, as Country provides inner messages relating to the delivery of sacred cultural work and business; honouring this was not the right time or place to facilitate and hear these yarns. An overview of these workplan changes can be found in Appendix 4 of this Report.

A brief timeline of the project can be found below.

May 2023 – April 2023: The original subcontracted community-led organisation saw significant delays in recruiting and maintaining staff to work on this project, finding it difficult to recruit someone who had a solid understanding of the unique and intersecting needs of First Nations and LGBTIQ+SB people as well as professional sexual violence experience and project management/community development experience.

As a result of the extended recruitment time, this project saw significant delays in commencement. LHA then decided that re-designing the project model to have multiple delivery partners would not only put the project back on track to finish on time but would also allow for a richer project design and more meaningful community engagement.

April – December 2024: Project coordination for the Safety, Acceptance and Identity on Country & LGBTIQ+SB Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Mob Yarns pilot was taken up by Restorative Yarns in April 2024. Partner Agency 2-Spirits joined the project in May 2024.

The yarning circle model and framework was developed in this timeframe and consisted of a range of documents to facilitate implementation including:

- Yarning circle facilitator manual
- Yarning circle program and activities
- Participant information sheet
- Registration screening form
- Informed consent form
- Yarning circle distress and safety protocol
- Community data sovereignty report template

An ethics committee application to the AIATSIS was made in October 2024.

January – April 2025: Ethics approval for the Yarning Circles was granted by AIATSIS in February 2025. Unfortunately, during this time four out of seven planned locations for the implementation of the Yarns (Palm Island, Yarrabah, Brisbane, Lismore) became no longer viable due to natural disasters including flooding, cyclones, and resultant power outages. To ensure there was no compromise to participant safety, particularly in communities who are prioritising natural disaster recovery, the decision was made to pull back the implementation of the Yarning Circle to two locations. Unfortunately, a yarning circle did not occur in Sydney, after further consultation, feedback was provided around a lack of service willingness to partner on this project, alongside community members feeling that there were a lack of culturally safe or LGBTIQ+SB safe organisations to participate. This reprioritisation of activities in this pilot was approved by the Department of Social Services in March 2024.

The Yarning Circle on Darkinjung country (on the NSW Central Coast) took place on 12 April 2025 in partnership with Barang Regional Alliance. An account of this can be found below.

A workshop with First Nations consultants took place on Gadigal Country (Sydney) between 22-24 April 2025. This workshop focused on addressing sexual violence prevention resource gaps for LGBTIQ+SB Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. An account of the outcomes of this workshop can be found below.

Yarning

Yarning as a methodology is considered a culturally safe approach with First Nations peoples in Australia (Smith et al. 2020; Kennedy et al., 2022).

Yarning methodology promotes cultural safety by positioning the interviewee as the expert in constructing their own story rather than taking a didactic researcher-driven process which has been harmful to First Nations peoples (Doyle et al., 2017; Kennedy et al., 2022; Smith, 1999). It allows adequate flexibility to prioritise relationship and trust building (D'Antoine et al. 2019; Bessarab & Ng'andu, 2010) and adhere to the unique cultural protocols of each community (Kennedy et al., 2022). It privileges Aboriginal ways of knowing, being, and doing (Kennedy et al., 2022; Leeson et al., 2016). Facilitating agency and self-determination for the storyteller, e.g. they can choose which parts of their story to share and when (Barlo, et al. 2020)

Yarning Circles

The Yarning Circle model and framework developed through this pilot includes the following key elements:

- Yarning Circles are facilitated by experienced LGBTIQ+SB Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander facilitators with expertise in sexual violence prevention and culturally responsive practices. Two facilitators are required to ensure safety and the ability to respond to participants as needed.
- Participation is capped at 12 people to maintain safe engagement and provide adequate time for sharing and listening.

- Each yarn is held for a full day, with the following structure to guide the conversations:
 - Welcome/acknowledgement
 - Group connections activity
 - Establishing yarning circle care agreement
 - Structured yarning questions
 - Processing the yarning experience together and debriefing
 - Grounding activity

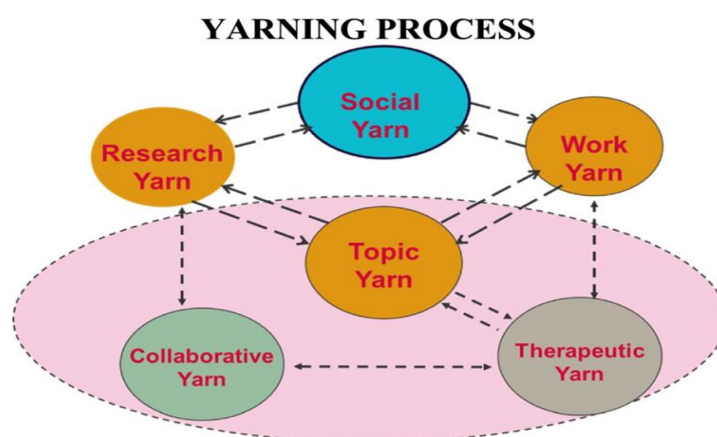
Preparation for the Yarning Circle includes consultation with the local community and Aboriginal Community organisations to gain community buy in, determine readiness for yarning circles on LGBTQIA+SB sexual violence prevention and follow cultural protocols/governance. A community engagement plan and consultations result in formal partnerships being formed with local community organisations. These partnerships support the project in a range of ways including: advertisement of the yarning circles, seeking support from the wider community and considering data sovereignty

Within the Yarning Circle, guided conversations focus on topics including:

- The impact of gender stereotypes and sexual orientation/s on black LGBTQIA+SB people
- Experiences of challenges of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people within the Queer community
- Understandings and definitions of sexual violence
- Community supports for sexual violence prevention and response, and access to these
- Support needs for LGBTQIA+SB Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to address sexual violence individually and within communities
- Sexual violence prevention and education messaging.

The Yarning Circle Model and Framework was implemented on Darkinjung country in April 2025 in partnership with Barang Regional Alliance.

Figure 24: Yarning Process. Source: Bessarab and Ng'andu, 2010





Safety, Acceptance & Identity on Country



Are you LGBTQIA+, First Nations, Sistergirl, or Brotherboy?

We invite you to join our Darkinjung Yarning Circle to share your thoughts and experiences around sexual violence impacting First Nations LGBTQIA+ Mob.

When: Saturday 12th of April 9am - 5pm
Where: 35 McPherson Rd, Mardi

This Yarning Circle aims to create a culturally safe space to discuss strategies for prevention and responses to support our community.

"You do not need to have personal experience of sexual violence to participate"

All information shared will be protected under data sovereignty principles and will be used to benefit the Darkinjung community.

For more information or to ask any questions, please get in touch. Participants must be registered to attend.

David Hunter (p)

Corrine Hodson (p)



We acknowledge the Traditional Owners across these lands, oceans, waterways and sky country. We pay our respect to Elders past, present and emerging. For us to do our work with integrity, Traditional Custodians, ancestors and Elders, and the ways of knowing, being and doing, must be central to how we work, live, walk and play.

Figure 25: Darkinjung Yarning Circle Invitation

Darkinjung Yarning Circle

The *Darkinjung Community Report* captures the insights and priorities shared during a yarning circle held on Darkinjung Country in April 2025, as part of the *Safety, Acceptance and Identity on Country* project. This initiative focused on addressing sexual violence prevention for LGBTIQ+SB Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities through culturally safe, trauma-informed, and community-led approaches. Facilitated by Restorative Yarns and 2Spirits in partnership with Barang Regional Alliance, the yarn brought together Aboriginal participants from the Central Coast region to explore their lived experiences, community strengths, and visions for safer, more inclusive futures.

The conversation highlighted how systems retraumatise people, especially when reporting sexual violence. Fear of retaliation and community politics were discussed as often preventing people from seeking help, especially when perpetrators can be embedded in powerful or connected families. Participants identified systems need to be deconstructed and rebuilt to reflect the identities and needs of LGBTIQ+SB Aboriginal communities.

Ivancsik, S & Purcell, L. (2025), *Darkinjung Community Report*.

During the yarning circle, participants spoke candidly about the intersecting challenges they face as Blak LGBTIQ+SB people navigating systems that are often unsafe or exclusionary. Themes of invisibility, intergenerational trauma, and lateral violence were woven throughout the day's discussions. There was deep reflection on the ways cultural authority can be misused to silence victim-survivors or protect perpetrators, particularly in the absence of culturally safe and inclusive support services. The group also explored how gender, sexual orientation/s, and identity influence access to services and community connection, and how social norms and

shame act as barriers to reporting or seeking help. Participants voiced the need for choice in services, acknowledgment of Queer and trans Aboriginal experiences, and stronger pathways for healing, cultural connection, and leadership.

Key issues identified in the yarning circle included the absence of culturally safe, inclusive services for LGBTIQ+SB Aboriginal people, ongoing silencing and normalisation of sexual violence, and fear of accessing justice or health systems due to lateral violence, stigma, and unsafe reporting mechanisms. Participants highlighted the misuse of culture to protect perpetrators, the intersectional discrimination they face, and the need for holistic, culturally responsive healing spaces. The increasing role of technology-facilitated abuse, particularly among youth, was also raised as a growing and under-recognised threat to safety and wellbeing.

In response, the report outlines a set of community-driven recommendations to support primary prevention and systemic change. These include establishing a community-controlled, LGBTIQ+SB-affirming youth service with regional hubs; building cultural safety capacity within mainstream and Aboriginal services; and investing in digital education, youth storytelling, and media campaigns. The report also calls for structural reform to improve transport access, outreach models, and service integration, and advocates for long-term funding that centres Blak LGBTIQ+SB leadership and lived experience.

Finally, the report sets a precedent for culturally grounded sexual violence prevention work and highlights the importance of sustained community engagement. It recommends embedding feedback loops, such as regular community check-ins, follow-up yarns, and collaborative resource development, to keep the report dynamic and relevant. The commitment to relational accountability, community governance, and data sovereignty demonstrated through this project provides a strong foundation for future funding, collaboration, and systems change that truly centres LGBTIQ+SB Aboriginal voices.

Darkinjung localised resource development

Based on the community-led yarning circle held on Darkinjung Country, a series of localised resources were co-designed to support sexual violence prevention among LGBTIQ+SB Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people. Developed under the theme "Cuppa and a Yarn", the resource suite includes short videos and social media tiles centred on key themes such as *Consent* and *Healthy Relationships*. These resources reflect the lived experience, humour, and cultural wisdom of Mob, and are designed to be inclusive, affirming, and culturally safe. The content features accessible, youth-friendly language, vibrant visuals, and messages delivered by Blak Queer voices, reinforcing messages around bodily autonomy, respect, boundaries, and relational accountability.


In response to the themes and needs identified during the Darkinjung yarning circle, two distinct resource sets were developed: one focused on Consent and the other on Healthy Relationships. Each set includes a 30-second video script featuring a relatable Blak LGBTIQ+SB speaker, as well as a series of vibrant, illustrated social media tiles. The *Consent* series uses culturally relevant metaphors, like BBQs, tattoos, and bush animals, to communicate clear messages about boundaries, respect, and enthusiastic agreement. Key slogans such as "If it ain't a Hell Yeah, it's a Nah" and "Consent is like sharing a feed" are designed to cut through shame and normalise open conversations. The *Healthy Relationships* set uses humour and familiar scenarios, like hiding relationships from aunties or doing the dishes together to highlight the importance of mutual respect, communication, accountability, and visibility in Mob love. These resources are intentionally playful, accessible, and affirming, blending Queer joy and Blak humour with serious messages to empower youth and challenge harmful norms.

The primary target audience for these resources is young LGBTIQ+SB Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people living on Darkinjung Country and across the Central Coast. However, they also hold value for community organisations, educators, and youth workers engaging with Mob across a range of settings. Designed for flexible use, the resources can be shared online via social media platforms or integrated into in-person workshops and community education sessions. Their strength lies in their relatability, strong cultural grounding, and ability to create space for critical conversations about safety, identity, and connection in ways that centre Blak voices and experiences.

Main opening slide

"If It Ain't a Hell Yeah: Blak Consent 101"

Slide 2.

 TILE 1: "If It Ain't a Hell Yeah, It's a Nah"

Visual: Two cute bush animals texting – a deadly rainbow lorikeet and a shy echidna.

Text:


Lorikeet: "Wanna link up later? 😊"

Echidna: "Ummm maybe... idk... 😬"

Lorikeet: "All good, cuz! A maybe ain't a yes. Hit me up when it's a hell yeah 🎉 📱 ✨"

Caption:



Consent has to be enthusiastic, fam. "Yes" should sound like a Beyoncé chorus, not a maybe/mumblin' mess. #ConsentIsCulture #BlakQueerJoy #RespectMob

 TILE 2: "You Can't Read Minds, Cuz"

Visual: A dreamy drag kangaroo with a crystal ball looking confused.

Text:

"They were quiet and didn't say no, so I thought—"

 STOP RIGHT THERE, DARL 

If you ain't got a clear "YES", you ain't got consent.

Silence is not a spell for "go ahead".

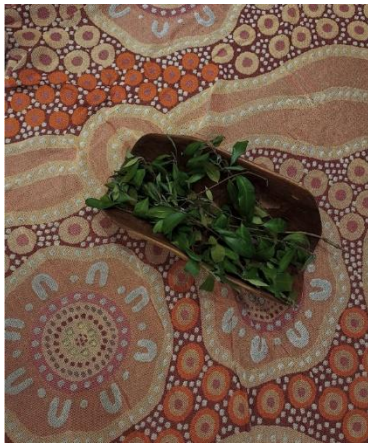
Caption:

Mob, we're powerful – but we ain't psychic. Don't assume. Just ask. And respect the answer. 💜 #LGBTIQASB #FirstNationsConsent #Don'tBeThatPerson

Figure 26: "If it ain't a Hell Yeah, it's a Nah" script examples
 A copy of the localised resources developed can be found in Appendix 5 of this Report.

These tools also support ongoing engagement beyond the initial yarning circle by reinforcing prevention messages and building a shared language around respect and consent. The "Cuppa and a Yarn" series has the potential to expand into additional themes, such as secrecy, shame, or digital safety, based on further community feedback and evolving needs. This adaptability ensures that the resource remains responsive and community-led. Above all, these materials reflect a commitment to cultural safety, self-determination, and storytelling as tools for healing, education, and change within Blak LGBTIQ+SB communities.

National Resource Development



Five resources were developed through codesign with First Nations contractors as part of the pilot. The resource design workshop, held in April 2025, on Gadigal Country brought together a range of LGBTQIA+SB practitioners from across the country. The workshop focused on developing a sexual violence prevention framework and resources for Queer Blak Mob. It centred Aboriginal ways of knowing, being and doing which led to a process of truth telling. These yarns were dynamic, passionate and centred in cultural humility.

The resources were developed by: Sam Ivancsik; Leslie Purcell (Flowers); Locky Bygrave,; Annie Monks; Madi Day; Baylee O’Grady; David Hunter and Mel Brown.

1. Eco-System of Support

The Eco-System of Support is a culturally grounded therapeutic resource designed for LGBTQIA+SB communities to explore experiences of sexual violence. Inspired by narrative therapy and First Nations ways of knowing, being, and doing, this tool uses natural metaphors such as billabongs, trees, and animals to guide participants in reflecting on support systems, personal values, strengths, resistance, and joy. The resource invites storytelling and healing by centring Country as a living co-facilitator, encouraging a deep connection between identity, land, and community.

Intended for use by individuals or in group settings, the *Eco-System of Support* can be adapted for therapeutic sessions, community workshops, or cultural healing spaces. It is particularly well-suited for future yarning circles focused on LGBTQIA+SB sexual violence prevention, fostering safe and supportive environments for sharing and resilience-building. This flexible tool allows participants to express themselves creatively through art, words, and symbolism, supporting empowerment, identity, and healing across diverse experiences and settings.

The billabong was chosen as it is a powerful cultural metaphor within this therapeutic framework. For many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, billabongs are sacred places - deeply connected to spiritual and clan identity. They represent more than waterholes; they are sites of reflection, connection, and belonging. The billabong is a place where the physical, emotional, and spiritual come together. In therapeutic practice, this image offers a culturally grounded symbol of healing - a place to sit, reflect, feel, and connect. It becomes a container for stories, emotions, and memories, held safely within the layers of Country and culture.

Integrating items from the billabong ecosystem into narrative therapy invites individuals to journey through their own stories with grounding and curiosity. Each item, whether a stone, animal, or ripple in the water, can represent an emotion, event, or experience.

Narrative therapy is a collaborative, non-pathologising approach that centres people as the experts in their own lives. It focuses on the stories individuals tell about themselves, seeking to uncover and strengthen narratives of resilience, strength, and identity, rather than problems or deficits. The approach can also be used with whole communities as a powerful collective practice to identify and celebrate shared strengths, stories of resistance, and pathways to healing. This resource is culturally responsive, as it resonates with First Nations traditions of storytelling, deep connection to Country, and relational healing practices. By honouring lived experience and ancestral knowledge, narrative therapy supports healing in ways that are respectful, empowering, and grounded in culture.

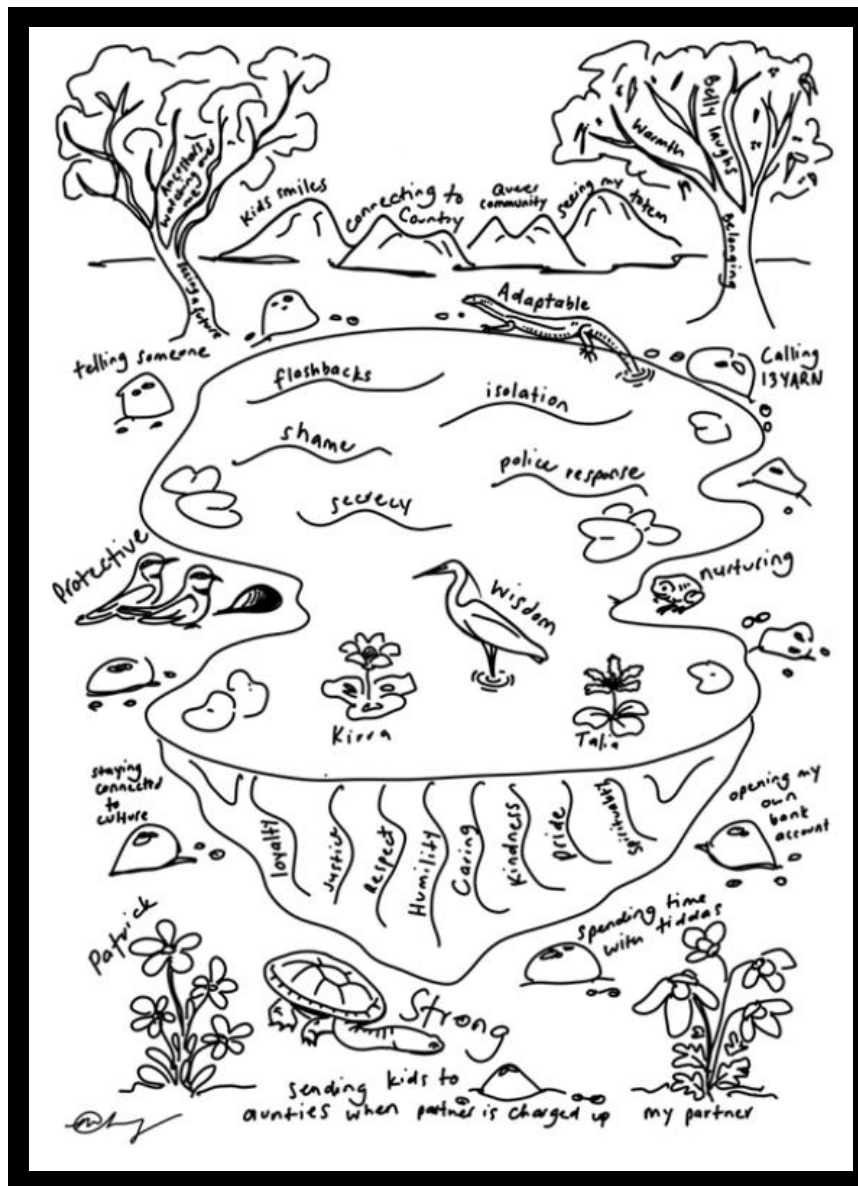


Figure 27: Ecosystem of support (Billabong)
 A copy of the facilitator guide developed can be found in Appendix 6 of this Report.

2. Sexual Violence Prevention Framework

The LGBTIQ+SB Sexual Violence Framework is a culturally responsive resource designed to support facilitators, community workers, and advocates in leading meaningful and trauma-informed sessions that explore the underlying drivers of sexual violence impacting LGBTIQ+SB individuals and communities. Rooted in cultural safety, intersectionality, and strengths-based practice, the framework helps participants understand sexual violence beyond individual acts - acknowledging the social, structural, and systemic conditions that perpetuate harm. Central to this framework is its focus on culturally safe yarning, self-reflection, and shared knowledge, promoting healing, empowerment, and accountability.

The resource identifies six core systemic drivers of sexual violence as they affect LGBTIQ+SB communities: colonialism, racism, transphobia, homophobia, patriarchy, and ableism – with abuse of power woven throughout. These systems of oppression create conditions where violence is normalised, overlooked, or reinforced through institutional and social structures. For example, colonial legacies and ongoing racism continue to marginalise First Nations identities and experiences, while ableism and cisnormativity exclude people with disabilities and trans individuals from accessing culturally appropriate education, services, and protections. Understanding these drivers equips communities with the insight needed to shift the focus from isolated incidents to systemic transformation.

An important feature of the framework is the Community Template Tool, a blank resource included to help communities identify and reflect on how the systemic drivers of sexual violence show up in their own unique contexts. This tool encourages participants to explore and document real-life examples, language, behaviours, or systemic barriers that reflect the presence of drivers like racism, homophobia, or colonialism within their community. By capturing localised experiences, this template supports deeper, place-based understanding and ensures that prevention strategies are grounded in the realities of the people most impacted. It also creates space for communities to honour their own knowledge, develop culturally relevant responses, and guide future action that is both meaningful and sustainable.

This framework can be used flexibly- individually, in group workshops, or within community yarning circles aimed at sexual violence prevention. It invites deep listening, storytelling, and collective reflection, allowing for both personal and community insight. Whether as part of professional development, grassroots healing spaces, or future community-led prevention work, the resource fosters environments where LGBTIQ+SB voices are centred and affirmed. By using this framework in ongoing conversations, communities can begin to dismantle systems of harm while affirming resilience, resistance, and cultural strength.

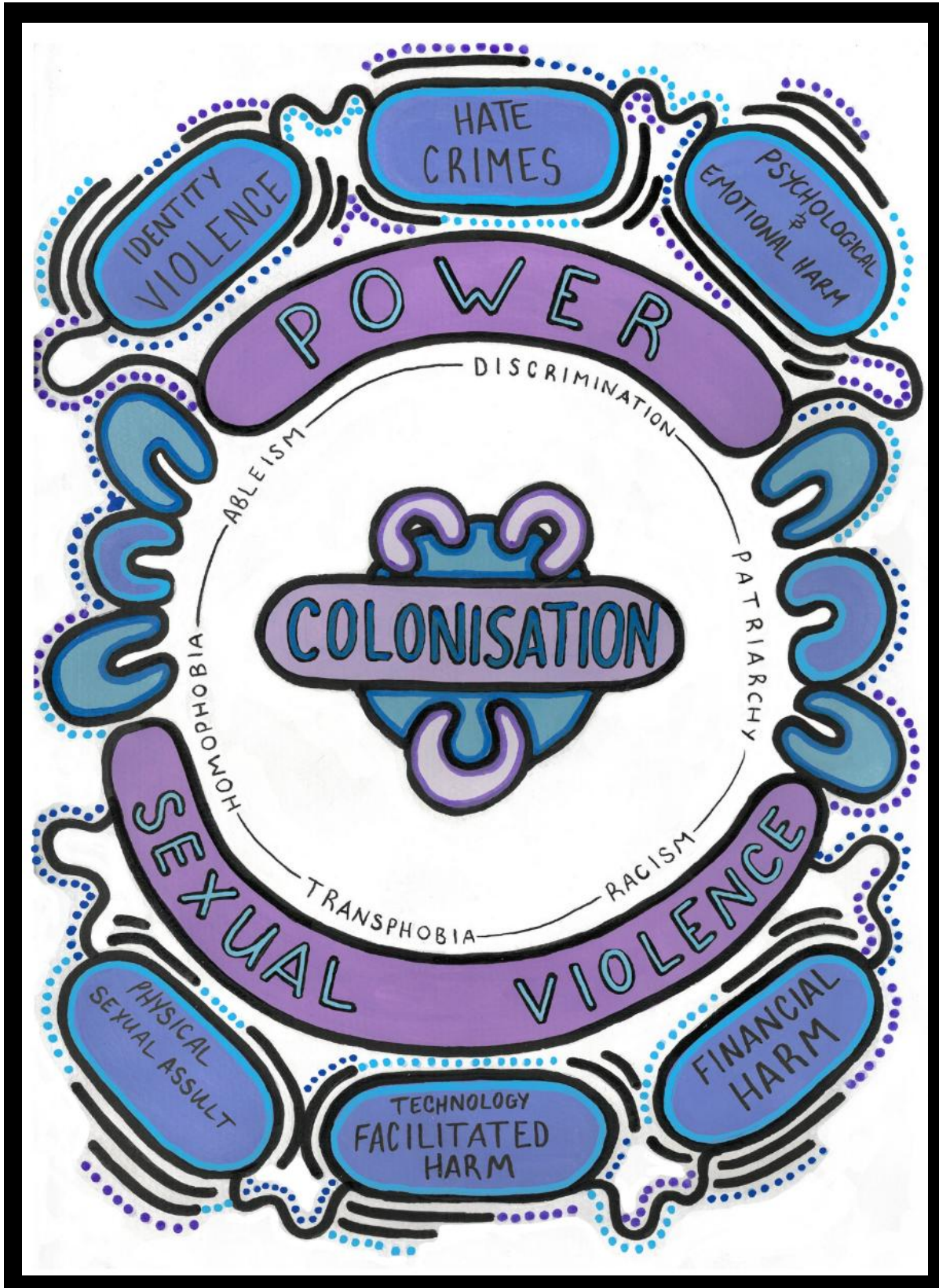


Figure 28: Drivers of Sexual Violence: A framework for working with LGBTIQ+SB Mob
 A copy of the Recognising the Drivers of Sexual Violence: A Framework for Working with LGBTIQ+SB Mob guide can be found in Appendix 7 of this Report.

This resource is intended for use by individuals, peer support groups, counsellors, and facilitators engaged in sexual violence prevention and healing within Blak LGBTIQ+SB communities. It can be used one-on-one in therapeutic conversations, in group workshops for shared learning and reflection, or as a guiding framework in yarning circles focused on safety, identity, and justice. Its strengths lie in creating accessible language to describe complex experiences, fostering cultural safety, and supporting further community-led conversations and collective healing efforts.

4. LGBTIQ+SB Mob Sacred Embers Cards

Sacred Embers is a culturally grounded Aboriginal Oracle card deck created by and for LGBTIQ+SB First Nations communities. Developed through collective wisdom and lived experience, the deck is divided into four themes: *Walking, Being, Healing, and Dreaming*, each offering poetic reflections, prompts, and teachings that honour the resilience, strength, and sacred identities of Queer Blak people. Rooted in connection to Country, culture, and Ancestors, the cards centre truth-telling, community care, and personal empowerment. This resource speaks to the spirit, heart, and story of LGBTIQ+SB Mob, providing a space to reflect, feel, and heal in culturally safe and affirming ways.

Designed for broad use, *Sacred Embers* is intended for individuals, community groups, health professionals, and educators who work alongside First Nations LGBTIQ+SB peoples. The cards can be used in one-on-one conversations, group settings, therapeutic contexts, or in future yarning circles focused on the prevention of sexual violence. Through guided reflection and storytelling, this resource opens space for deeper conversations about identity, justice, consent, and healing. It invites users to explore difficult topics with care, while also celebrating survival, pride, and the strength of Queer Blak communities.

5. Sexual Violence Prevention posters

A suite of posters has been developed to centre messages of consent, healing, love, and chosen family - designed to support individual learning, community education, and feelings of physical safety in spaces. These resources will be shared across community spaces, digital platforms, and professional networks to promote conversations rooted in care, connection, and collective strength.

Guided by the voices of LGBTIQ+SB clinicians, the resources honour the significance of chosen family, Country, and community care as key sources of safety, resistance, and spiritual grounding. Visuals and messaging celebrate Blak Queer joy, relational connections to Country, and the strength found in community-led, non-punitive safety models. Rather than using fear or shame-based approaches common in traditional health promotion, these resources are intentionally hopeful- speaking to the spirit and envisioning a future grounded in love, pride, and cultural continuity for current and future generations.

HEALING

Renewal
Restoration
Spirit Growth

Healing is not a straight path - it moves like water across the Country, flowing into the cracks where light is waiting to enter.

It is the quiet mending of spirit, heart and body through connection to culture, queerness and kin.

Healing honors both the wound and the wisdom it leaves behind, reminding us that our scars hold strength not shame.

What does healing mean and look like for you?

How do you hold both the pain and the strength of your healing journey while continuing to move forward?

What are some ways that you can reclaim and rewrite your story and experience?

Can you think of a time when community, culture, or chosen family supported your journey and healing?

Can you think of a time when connections, or place gave you a sense of healing, growth and belonging?

HEALING

SEXUAL VIOLENCE

"EVEN IN RIPPLES,
I RISE AND RETURN TO SELF.
I AM MORE THAN
THE STONE THAT ONCE
DISTURBED MY WATER-
I AM THE WAVES,
THE CURRENT AND
THE HEALING TIDE."



SEXUAL VIOLENCE

Figure 30: Sacred Embers Oracle Cards

A copy of these cards can be found in Appendix 9 of this Report.



Figure 31: Sexual Violence Prevention Posters

Literature Review

In 2024, LHA commissioned a literature review to evidence approaches to build community acceptance, awareness and support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander LGBTIQ+SB people at risk of sexual violence. The report was commissioned to review the literature on primary prevention of sexual violence specifically within First Nations LGBTIQ+SB communities. This report was undertaken by Dr Melinda Hickey in collaboration with Dr Madi Day.

The design and implementation of prevention strategies must be culturally safe – this means creating ‘an environment that is safe for people, where there is no assault, challenge or denial of their identity, of who they are and what they need. It is about shared respect, shared meaning, shared knowledge and experience, of learning, living and working together with dignity, and truly listening’ (Williams, 1999). First Nations people must be prioritised as authorities on their own lives and experiences throughout the prevention process.

Integral to preventing violence is prioritising and strengthening First Nations capacity to lead and care for their own communities including facilitating intergenerational transfer of culture and traditions of governance.

Hickey, M & Day, M. (2025) Primary Prevention of sexual violence in First Nations LGBTIQ+SB Communities: A literature review.

The literature review found “no robust published evidence of what works for preventing sexual violence in First Nations LGBTIQ+SB communities.” When considering prevention in First Nations communities and LGBTIQ+ communities separately, some overlap is apparent. Common to both sets of literature was the importance of culturally appropriate frameworks that honour unique experiences while fostering empowerment and healing. Efforts to prevent sexual violence in First Nations and LGBTIQ+ communities were found to require addressing systemic and intersecting drivers such as colonisation, racism, heteronormativity, and cisnormativity.

Key learnings from the review include:

- Intersectional and systemic factors such as racism, colonisation, homophobia, and transphobia are deeply intertwined with the drivers of sexual violence in First Nations and LGBTIQ+ communities.
- Community-led and culturally safe approaches are essential for effective prevention and healing.
- Collaboration between mainstream and community-specific organisations strengthens prevention efforts.
- Long-term, sustainable funding is critical for impactful research and prevention initiatives.
- Trauma-informed and culturally grounded methodologies enhance inclusivity and effectiveness in addressing sexual violence.
- Improved data collection and evaluation tailored to First Nations and LGBTIQ+ communities are necessary to build a comprehensive evidence base.

The research showed that First Nations LGBTIQ+SB communities have unique strengths and resilience rooted in their cultural identity, community support, and activism. These qualities are crucial for preventing sexual violence and ensuring safety within the community. Although the review found there is little evidence on effective ways to prevent sexual violence, evidence did exist of the ways that these communities have long used their diverse identities to confront colonisation, racism and homophobia while also leading efforts to advocate for inclusion and acceptance. The review highlighted the importance of First Nations LGBTIQ+SB community-led programs, research and initiatives. Such programs were found to build trust, cultural safety, and relevance.

Discussion Paper

The “Our Voices, Our Ways” discussion paper responds to the literature review commissioned by LHA on the primary prevention of sexual violence and addresses its significant gaps from the lived experiences and cultural expertise of First Nations LGBTIQ+SB communities. Grounded in a yarning session with seven Blak LGBTIQ+SB clinicians and community leaders, the paper provides a culturally informed and community-led critique of mainstream prevention frameworks and outlines actionable recommendations for systemic change.

Several participants spoke about how small sample sizes are often used as a justification to exclude First Nations LGBTIQ+SB people from analysis in both national and state level reports. In quantitative research, if a subgroup is deemed too small, it is either statistically “adjusted” out or entirely omitted, which perpetuates a cycle of invisibility. One participant explained that this exclusion has a knock-on effect “*We’re always the smallest number in any study, so we’re always the first to be cut.*” Without disaggregated data, key issues such as prevalence, service access barriers, and community strengths remain undocumented, undermining efforts to develop tailored prevention and response strategies.

Ivancsik, S & Purcell, L. (2025) Our Voices, our ways discussion paper: Primary prevention of sexual violence in First Nations LGBTIQ+SB Communities

Key findings include:

- **Cultural Invisibility and White Normativity:** Existing literature marginalises Blak Queer realities, reinforcing colonial perspectives and excluding community-defined understandings of harm and healing. The framing of victim/perpetrator binaries fails to align with kinship-based approaches and relational accountability practiced in many First Nations communities.
- **Conflation with Family Violence:** Sexual violence is inaccurately subsumed under family and domestic violence frameworks, leading to misaligned services, policies, and funding. This misrepresentation erases the unique contexts in which sexual violence occurs for Queer Blak communities, including hookup culture, online spaces, and within community structures outside traditional domestic arrangements.

- **Systemic Harm and Erasure:** Health, justice, and social service systems often replicate harm, policing and pathologising LGBTIQ+SB First Nations bodies. Survivors are denied care due to complex needs or previous use of harm, and services are often either culturally safe or Queer inclusive, but rarely both. This results in institutional gaslighting and ongoing trauma, reinforcing mistrust and exclusion.
- **Colonial Load and Vicarious Trauma:** Frontline Blak LGBTIQ+SB workers carry immense emotional, cultural, and spiritual burdens. They are often under-resourced, isolated, and expected to hold space for others while navigating their own histories of harm. This “colonial load” remains invisible in dominant frameworks, risking burnout and loss of critical community leadership.
- **Underrepresented Voices:** Two Spirit, intersex, trans, and gender diverse people, young people, and remote/regional community members remain largely excluded from existing research, services, and policy design. Their insights are critical to creating effective and inclusive prevention strategies, and their exclusion perpetuates systemic erasure and harm.

The paper highlights the urgent need to shift from white, heteronormative paradigms to culturally sovereign frameworks that reflect the lived realities and strengths of First Nations LGBTIQ+SB communities. Participants strongly advocated for the expansion of what counts as knowledge- centring oral storytelling, art, cultural practice, and lived experience as valid forms of evidence alongside academic research. Without this shift, prevention strategies risk continuing the cycles of harm they aim to interrupt.

The recommendations are clear and actionable: invest in First Nations LGBTIQ+SB led organisations; embed cultural governance and lived experience in all policy, research, and program design; and fund targeted, community led solutions that reflect place-based needs. This includes disaggregated, inclusive data collection governed by community, culturally responsive workforce development, and the co-design of services that are both LGBTQIA+SB and Blak. Prevention must be a shared responsibility rooted in respect, care, and cultural integrity.

This paper is not simply a critique of existing gaps it is a blueprint for transformation. It offers a vision of prevention work that is healing-centred, truth-telling, and grounded in love, sovereignty, and accountability. Funders have a critical role to play in resourcing this vision, not only by supporting frontline programs but by enabling systemic change that empowers First Nations LGBTIQ+SB communities to lead, define, and sustain the work of prevention on their own terms.

The “Our Voices, Our Ways” discussion paper can be found in Appendix 10 of this Report.

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Appendix 1- Project Governance

The following governance structures supported the delivery of this project.

Project Advisory Group (all pilots)

The Project Advisory Group (PAG) provided high level advisory functions to the project team to:

- ensure that the right voices are included in the scoping, consultation and co-design processes;
- advise on the development and implementation of evaluation frameworks for pilot projects;
- ensure community, evaluation and subject matter expertise is brought together;
- provide a “brains trust” function to the project team.

The Project Advisory Group met virtually, every 2 months across the project delivery timeframe. Meetings were 2 hours maximum and online. Where advice was required in between meetings, members were contacted by email or phone.

Pilot 1: Peer support for LGBTIQ+ people with disability experiencing isolation- Service Users Reference Group

The Service Users Reference Group (SURG) provided advice and input in the development and provision of LGBTIQ+ services to agencies involved in the Canberra Inclusive Partnership (CIP) including Meridian and several community-based services in Canberra. It is funded by the ACT Government as part of the Supporting and Strengthening Canberra’s LGBTIQ+ Communities Program.

SURG Members were comprised of people of all identities, sexualities, bodies, experiences and abilities who identify as a part of the LGBTIQ+ communities. SURG Members helped to identify service gaps whilst also assisting in the design of our services and projects and contributing to the continual improvement of service provision for our LGBTIQ+ communities.

As a primary stakeholder, the Group provided input in the codesign and development of a framework as well as ongoing feedback for the duration of the project. SURG met every two months, for no longer than three hours.

Pilot 2: Protecting personal autonomies of intersex people- Pilot Governance Group

InterLink established an advisory committee to provide oversight of the development and delivery of the pilot, in addition to the associated evaluation components. The advisory

committee was comprised of people with lived experience representing a key intersex-led organisations, representatives from the hosting organisation (QC) and researchers from the University of Southern Queensland and the University of Queensland. The advisory committee met quarterly and provided intermittent input via email as required.

Pilot 3: Cultural Wisdoms Group

The Initial project plan embedded a cultural wisdoms group to share knowledge and guidance, whilst also providing an external mechanism for community and cultural accountability to the team in the delivery of this project, in the following ways:

- Centering Aboriginal ways of knowing, being and doing and lived experience
- Specialist knowledge holders and services providers, to ensure First Nations LGBTIQ+SB voices are being elevated and heard
- Engaging in co-design at all levels of project implementation
- Providing cultural guidance to the development of key documents, resources and evaluation

Due to the significant changes made to the project in the second and final year of delivery, it was decided that forming a wisdoms group at such a late stage would feel tokenistic and rushed and would not respect the time it takes to listen to the wisdom shared.

Instead, the project relied on open and transparent dialogue between Restorative Yarns, 2Spirits, Barang Regional Alliance and the many consultants brought on to undertake this project.

Appendix 2- Guiding Principles (Excerpt from *Sexual Violence Primary Prevention in LGBTIQ+SB Communities Final report and recommendations*)

A number of underpinning issues and themes were identified through the co-design process which have both informed the development of the proposed pilots, but also must inform the implementation and evaluation.

Data Sovereignty

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander experts and Indigenous and First Nations people globally have developed strong protocols relating to the creation, custodianship, use and sharing of Indigenous peoples' data. Indigenous Data Sovereignty and Data Governance have been raised as underpinning principles through the Project Advisory Group and in the think tank process. The PAG strongly supports the Indigenous Data Sovereignty communique and the principles of the Maiam nayri Wingara Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Data Sovereignty Collective.

“Indigenous Data Sovereignty in Australia refers to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' inherent right to govern their communities, resources, and Country (including lands, waters and sky). It is the right of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to exercise ownership over Indigenous data. Ownership of data can be expressed through the creation, collection, access, analysis, interpretation, management, dissemination and reuse of Indigenous data.

These are the right of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to:

- Exercise control of the data ecosystem including creation, development, stewardship, analysis, dissemination and infrastructure.
- Data that is contextual and disaggregated.
- Data that is relevant and empowers sustainable self-determination and effective self-governance.
- Data structures that are accountable to Indigenous peoples and First Nations.
- Data that is protective and respects our individual and collective interests.

Exercising Indigenous Data Governance enables Indigenous peoples and their representative or governing bodies to accurately reflect their stories. It provides the necessary tools to identify what works, what doesn't work, and why. Effective Indigenous Data Governance empowers Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to make the best decisions to support their communities and people in the ways that meet their developmental needs and aspirations.”

Intersectionality

LGBTIQ+SB individuals and communities have vastly diverse experiences and backgrounds, sexualities, gender, appearances, race, religion, class. This can be both empowering and represent challenges; uniqueness and diversity is a strength; but also a lens in which discrimination is experienced.

Intersectionality is a theoretical approach that understands the interconnected nature of social categorisations – such as gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity, language, religion, class, socioeconomic status, gender, ability or age – which create overlapping and interdependent systems of discrimination or disadvantage for either an individual or group.

This understanding is critical to be central to the design and implementation of policy, programs and pilots for our communities.

Throughout the co-design and think tank processes, the overlaps and tensions between experiences of violence and discrimination for LGBTIQ+SB people in families of origin, institutions and society more broadly were a consistent theme.

An intersectional approach in these pilots is not optional – for an approach to be successful it will have to use a gender transformative approach that also responds to the inequalities and discriminations that LGBTIQ+SB people face because of their race, culture, ethnicity, class, ability, body, age and migration status.

Lack of data, commonly accepted myths about the violence that LGBTIQ+SB people experience and perpetrate and an invisibility of particular groups within the broader LGBTIQ+SB spectrum are all themes that require further attention as Rainbow Health Victoria's Pride In Prevention notes.

People born with intersex variations

The historical impact of non-consensual medical examinations and interventions experienced by intersex people is significant. It corrodes intersex peoples' personal boundaries and supports the ongoing rhetoric about heteronormative perceptions of 'normal bodies'. The ongoing impact of the ideology of "shameful" or "deficient" bodies creates vulnerable community members in a predatory and medicalised cultures, resulting in violations of intersex people's personal autonomy.

The Australian Human Rights Commission published its report Ensuring health and bodily integrity: towards a human rights approach for people born with variations in sex characteristics in October 2021 and makes unequivocal recommendations based on human rights principles on bodily integrity, children's agency, precautionary principle, medical necessity and independent oversight. These are reflected in pilot 1 but also in the final Policy and Reform section of this paper. Without core funding for the two key intersex organisations Intersex Human Rights Australia (IHRA) and Intersex Peer Support Australia (IPSA), this vital work will not be possible.

People with disability

There is significant Australian evidence that talks to the rates of violence, including sexual violence experienced by people with a disability but there are significant gaps when it comes to knowing the full picture for LGBTIQ+SB people with a disability. The 2014 General Social Survey also found that of persons living with disability or a long-term health condition, those who identified as gay, lesbian, bisexual, or other were more likely to experience physical and/or threatened violence (19%) compared with those who identified as heterosexual (8.2%). During the process of co-designing and consulting through closed workshops, the

Disability Royal Commission held a closed hearing on 14 October 2021, to hear about the experiences of LGBTIQ+ people with disability. This is clearly an area that also demands urgent attention.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander closed workshop identified that LGBTIQ+, same-sex attracted, Two Spirit, Sistergirls and Brotherboys are virtually invisible not only because of a lack of data but because they face multiple layers of violence and discrimination in LGBTIQ+ communities, in mainstream services and within First Nations community settings. Whilst we may not have accurate prevalence data that tells us the scale and locations that sexual violence occurs, we do know that rejection from community plays a significant role and impacts on health outcomes – the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander pilot proposal in this report directly addresses this.

Sexual Violence Prevention Theory of Change

La Trobe’s Narrative Theory of Change was commissioned by the Commonwealth Department of Social Services to identify effective primary prevention SVH interventions and analyse other forms of data that may inform a Theory of Change and future research on the primary prevention of SVH.

Appendix 3- Evidence Mapping

Initial mapping of pilots against select knowledge base on the drivers and prevention of violence, conducted in 2023.

Source	Element	Pilot 1	Pilot 2	Pilot 3
Our Watch (2021) Change The Story <i>Gendered Drivers</i>	Condoning of violence against women			
	Men's control of decision-making and limits to women's independence in public and private life	X		
	Rigid gender roles and stereotyped constructions of masculinity and femininity		X	
	Male peer relations that emphasise aggression and disrespect towards women			
Our Watch (2021) Change The Story <i>Essential Actions</i>	Challenge condoning of VAW			
	Promote women's independence and decision-making in public life and relationships			
	Foster positive personal identities and challenge gender stereotypes and roles	X	X	X
	Support men and boys in developing healthy masculinities and positive, supportive male peer relationships			X
	Promote and normalise gender equality in public and private life			
	Address the intersections between gender inequality and other forms of systemic and structural oppression and discrimination, and promote broader social justice	X	X	X
	Build safe, fair and equitable organisations and institutions by focusing on policy and systems change			
	Strengthen positive, equal and respectful relations between and among women and men, girls and boys			X
Our Watch (2021) Change The Story <i>Reinforcing factors</i>	Condoning of violence in general		X	
	Experience of, and exposure to, violence	X	X	X
	Factors that weaken prosocial behaviour	X		X
	Backlash factors (increases in violence when male dominance, power or status is challenged)			
Our Watch (2021) Change The Story <i>Essential Actions</i>	Challenge the normalisation of violence as an expression of masculinity or male dominance		X	
	Prevent exposure to violence and support those affected to reduce its consequences	X	X	X
	Plan for and actively address backlash and resistance			
	Strengthen prosocial behaviour	X		X
Rainbow Health Victoria (2020) Pride in Prevention	Rigid gender norms			
	Cisnormativity			X
	Heteronormativity			X
	Inequality in recognition of bodies, identities and relationships	X	X	
	Devaluation of bodies, identities and relationships	X	X	

Drivers of violence (LGBTIQ)	Reproduction of norms and stereotypes	X	X	
	Homophobic, biphobic, transphobic and intersexphobic behaviour	X	X	X
	Normalisation of violence and abuse	X	X	
Our Watch & Women with Disabilities Victoria (2022) Changing the Landscape <i>Ableist Drivers</i>	Negative stereotypes about people with disabilities	X		
	Accepting or normalising violence, disrespect and discrimination against people with disabilities			
	Controlling people with disabilities' decision-making and limiting independence	X		
	Social segregation and exclusion of people with disabilities	X		
Our Watch & Women with Disabilities Victoria (2022) Changing the Landscape <i>Essential Actions</i>	Address the underlying social context that gives rise to violence against women and girls with disabilities	X		
	Challenge the acceptance and normalisation of violence against women and girls with disabilities			
	Improve attitudes towards women and girls with disabilities by challenging ableist and sexist stereotypes	X		
	Promote the inclusion of women and girls with disabilities in all aspects of life	X		
	Promote women and girls with disabilities' independence, agency and participation in leadership and decision-making	X		
	Engage men and boys to challenge controlling, dominant and aggressive forms of masculinity			
Our Watch (2018) Changing the Picture <i>Gendered Drivers</i>	Ongoing impacts of colonisation for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, families and communities			X
	Ongoing impacts of colonisation for non-indigenous people and society			
	Gendered factors			
Our Watch (2018) Changing the Picture <i>Essential Actions</i>	Address the legacies and ongoing impacts of colonisation for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, families and communities			X
	Address the legacies and ongoing impacts of colonisation for non-Indigenous people, across Australian society			
	Address the gendered drivers of violence against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women			
Our Watch (2018) Changing the Picture <i>Supporting Actions</i>	Intervene in and respond to existing violence			X
	Address socio-economic inequality, disadvantage and exclusion			
	Improve Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people's physical and mental health			
	Address harmful alcohol and drug use and harmful drinking cultures			

Key

Pilot 1: Peer support for LGBTIQ+ people with disability experiencing isolation

Pilot 2: Protecting personal autonomies of intersex people

Pilot 3: Safety, Acceptance and Identity on Country

Appendix 4- Pilot Descriptions and Requirements

Pilot 1: Peer Support for LGBTIQ+ People with Disability Experiencing Isolation pilot

Original Description of Pilot (Think Tank)

LGBTIQ+ people with disability experience high levels of isolation which creates vulnerabilities and risks around sexual safety. LGBTIQ+ people with disability living with their parents and those living in supported accommodation, group homes, and other institutional settings such as boarding houses, large residential centres, aged care facilities, forensic centres, psychiatric facilities, and hospitals can face significant barriers in accessing the LGBTIQ+ community and its supports.

People with disability living in closed and institutional settings are at increased risk of all forms of violence including sexual violence. It is essential that an intersectional approach is taken to this work acknowledging that women, girls and non-binary LGBTIQ+ people with disability and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds have very different experiences and higher rates of violence to other LGBTIQ+ people.

Build on LHA's existing participation in civil society for people with disability project; this project will employ a peer support model based on the citizen advocacy model where an LGBTIQ+ person with disability experiencing isolation and marginalisation is linked with a local volunteer from the disability LGBTIQ+ community, so that the person experiencing the isolation is supported to access the LGBTIQ+ community, community groups and services and pride events. Through developing a relationship with at least one loyal, long-term LGBTIQ+ ally, community connection will be enhanced, the person will be less isolated, and safeguards will be increased.

The match will be driven by the preferences and interests of the person experiencing isolation so that gender, ethnicity, cultural background, and language (Auslan, deafblind signing, community language) are also factored in.

The resourced Peer Support SVP project will be coordinated either by a newly established national LGBTIQ+ Disabled People's Organisation or a disabled LGBTIQ+ consortium which could be led by Disabled People's Organisations Australia. Matching and supporting volunteers and LGBTIQ+ people with disability will occur through resourcing local/ state-based advocacy groups for example Victoria's Rainbow Rights and Advocacy. In some jurisdictions it might be more appropriate for an LGBTIQ+ community organisation to host the peer support program, building on similar peer support/ community visitor programs they operate for isolated people living with HIV.

Original Pilot Requirements (Expression of Interest)

The purpose of the project is to challenge social isolation by matching LGBTIQ+ people with disability with an LGBTIQ+ community volunteer to facilitate access to social engagement opportunities. The project partner will deliver the following:

- engage with people with disability living in vulnerable accommodation or circumstances
- develop, or build on, existing peer support models to support the project principles
- employ a peer support model based on the <http://sidebyside.org.au/citizen-advocacy/> where an LGBTIQ+ person with disability experiencing isolation and marginalisation is linked with a local volunteer from the LGBTIQ+ community, to enhance community connection
- support access to LGBTIQ+ community, community groups and services and pride events
- deliver the project throughout from 1 January - 31 December 2023.

Note: This pilot was extended to the end of the 2024/2025 Financial Year in 2024.

Pilot 2: Protecting Personal Autonomies of Intersex People pilot

Original Description of Pilot (Think Tank)

Building on the work of the two Australian key intersex peer organisations IHRA and IPSA as well as individual peer advocates, this project will be developed by intersex peer-led organisations and delivered by intersex peers. It will support the development of healthy boundaries across the lifespan, boundary setting, explore concepts of consent in the context of both medical and in personal relationships and provide education to:

- Intersex people – adults, children and young people using age-appropriate language and framing
- Parents, caregivers and extended families of intersex children and young people
- Medical and other professionals.

It will focus on initiatives that promote setting and maintaining effective boundaries, building self knowledge (pleasure), self-love and body awareness with intersex people and families in Australia as the primary focus for support.

The pilot will use various intersectional lenses (including intersex, disability and diverse cultural communities) and will result in broader improvements to LGBTIQ+ community sexual violence prevention and education, contribute to the body of evidence on non-LGBTIQ+ sexual violence prevention as well as being of interest to international intersex advocates seeking to prevent sexual violence and support intersex people and their families.

Year 1

This project will:

- Create resources and accessible information for intersex people to understand consent and bodily autonomy.
- Provide support and guidance to families of intersex children and young people so that they can discuss concepts relating to consent, respectful relationships, bodily autonomy and agency using age-appropriate language.
- Include a diversity of intersex voices and experiences, including through co-design.
- Address stigma, shame and myths about intersex people and bodies.

Year 2

- Conduct workshops to parents, caregivers and extended families of intersex children and young people, medical and other professionals.

Original Pilot Requirements (Expression of Interest)

The purpose of the project is to develop sexual violence prevention resources for intersex people and their families with a particular focus on consent and boundary setting. Materials and approaches will be developed through co-design approaches by intersex peers and tested with intersex people across Australia to understand effective strategies to support intersex people's personal autonomy, promoting self-confidence and self-determination, celebrating intersex bodies and supporting individuals to make fully informed choices about consent. The project partner will deliver the following:

- Create resources and accessible information for intersex people to understand consent and bodily autonomy.
- Provide support and guidance to families of intersex children and young people so that they can discuss concepts relating to consent, respectful relationships, bodily autonomy and agency using age-appropriate language.
- Include a diversity of intersex voices and experiences, including through co-design.
- Address stigma, shame and myths about intersex people and their bodies.
- Conduct workshops to parents, caregivers and extended families of intersex children and young people, medical and other professionals.
- Deliver the project over two years 2022/2024 financial year/s.

Pilot 3: Safety, Acceptance and Identity on Country and LGBTIQ+, Two Spirit, Sistergirl and Brotherboy Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Mob Yarns pilot.

Original Description of Pilot (Think Tank)

Building on the principles laid out in the Healing Together in Ngurin Ngarluma Warawarni-gu Guma Statement and work done in Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal LGBTIQ+ communities to prevent suicide, this project will pilot approaches to building networks of safe Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations and people who understand trauma and can listen, provide help and support LGBTIQ+ Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, young people and adults and their families in community.

Partnering with experts (Rainbow Door/Switchboard) and working collaboratively alongside similar peer programs (2Spirits/QUAC) it will develop and pilot training and resources for Aboriginal Medical Services and community-controlled organisations including health and legal services as well as engaging with local non-Aboriginal organisations that can provide culturally safe support for LGBTIQ+ people impacted by sexual violence.

Critically, it will seek to engage with families, Elders and respected community leaders to increase awareness and acceptance of LGBTIQ+ Mob using a community strengths model and respecting cultural protocols and responsibilities to keep Mob safe. It will support people of influence in communities to stand up to and prevent discrimination and violence and build understanding, support and acceptance of sex and gender diversity for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander LGBTIQ+ adults, young people and children.

The project will be guided by a series of yarning circles to be held in communities in parallel with the development of the training and resources where local LGBTIQ+ people identify the issues in their community with a follow up yarn to give feedback on the training developed.

Year 1

- 2 x yarning circles to be held in each location with LGBTIQ+, same-sex attracted, Two Spirit, Sistergirls and Brotherboys. Workshop 1 will identify specific issues in the community and workshop 2 will be to follow up and gather feedback on the resources and training once developed.
- Develop a network of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled organisations that can provide support and be prevention allies – through provision of training and resources.
- Engagement with families of LGBTIQ+ people.
- Cultural engagement with Elders and respected community leaders.
- Training and awareness for non-Aboriginal organisations working in sexual violence prevention and response including LGBTIQ+ orgs that may be able to provide safe support or work in partnership in the longer term.
- Partner with Indigenous LGBTIQ organisations already delivering similar programs and approaches to ensure responses are coordinated.

Year 2

- Develop resources & training materials
- A resource sharing LGBTIQ+ people's stories that explains the links between experiences of sexual violence, assault and harassment and what safe responses look like.
- A training package (including train the trainer) developed by Rainbow Door that builds on their suicide prevention work and can be tested through the yarning circles to be delivered to Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal services.
- Workshop materials including script, slides, videos, activities.
- A visual resource for families, community leaders and Elders about sexual violence prevention.
- A template for communities to yarn and develop guidelines on safety, responsibility and obligations.
- Tip sheets: why inclusion and acceptance of LGBTIQ+ people are important, what to do and where to get more help/support (referrals).

Original Pilot Requirements (Expression of Interest)

The purpose of the project is to engage with LGBTIQ+ Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in eight east coast communities to identify local issues relating to sexual violence prevention, developing localised responses, engaging families, Elders and service providers through yarning circles and training to build strong cultural approaches to prevent and respond to violence. It will result in a framework and model that could be adapted to use in other Aboriginal community settings to prevent LGBTIQ+ sexual violence. The project partner will deliver the following activities:

- pilot approaches to build community acceptance, awareness and support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander LGBTIQ+ people at risk of sexual violence
- engage local LGBTIQ+ people through yarning circles to determine community priorities for future development of sexual/ violence prevention approaches for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people – yarning circles will be based in Cairns with an initial focus on testing approaches in Cape York and the Torres Strait followed by a series of yarning circles and workshops in the east coast of Australia – see location breakdown below:
 - Year 1 – Cairns, Torres Strait, Townsville, Brisbane
 - Year 2 – Lismore, Broken Hill, Redfern and Melbourne/Mildura
- develop training, resources and tools that will raise awareness of sexual violence
- prevention create a model and framework that can be used in other Aboriginal community settings deliver the project from 1 February 2023 – 30 December 2024 participate in the evaluation process for the entire project.

Summary of approved changes

Approved Workplan Changes- 2024	Approved Workplan Changes- 2025
7 yarning circles across 3 states to determine community priorities for future development of sexual violence prevention approaches for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.	1 yarning circle held on the Central Coast NSW.
Develop resources and tools that will raise awareness of sexual violence prevention and assist with responses to sexual violence.	3 resources developed: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Queer Blak Strengths Based Cards (used in therapeutic, psychoeducational and yarning sessions) • Practice guide • Service poster

<p>Create a model and framework that can be used in other Aboriginal community settings</p>	<p>Sexual violence yarning circle model and framework including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • approved ethics application • yarning circle facilitator manual • yarning circle program and activities • yarning circle distress and safety protocol • registration screening form • participation information sheet • informed consent form • English proficiency self-rating scale.
<p>Desktop literature review to evidence the direction of resource development and future development of sexual violence prevention approaches.</p>	<p>Literature review as well as a discussion paper developed by a group of 7 consultants.</p>
<p>Develop an evaluation framework for this project.</p>	<p>Evaluation framework and project summary report.</p>

Appendix 5- “Cuppa and a Yarn” - Barang Regional Alliance localised resources for LGBTIQ+SB Sexual violence prevention

Written by Restorative Yarns and 2-Spirits.

Intro/Blurb for advertisement:

Cuppa and a Yarn is an ongoing educational series created especially for young LGBTIQ+SB Mob, offering a safe, inclusive, and culturally grounded space to explore big topics over a virtual cuppa. With heart, humour and honesty, this series aims to support Mob in navigating relationships, identity, and the world around them with respect, love, and cultural humility. Each instalment tackles issues like consent, boundaries, and respectful relationships, weaving together lived experience, cultural knowledge, and community wisdom. Developed to address and prevent sexual violence, *Cuppa and a Yarn* empowers our mob to have the hard conversations, share stories, and build a future where everyone feels safe, heard, and deadly.

Resource theme focus:

First resource theme: Consent

Second resource theme: Healthy relationships

Script for 30 second video on CONSENT

TITLE CARD (0:00-0:03)

Text on screen:

"Consent Is Culture: Real Talk for Mob"

 [Cheeky but chill beat with Blak/queer energy]

DAVID VIDEO (0:04-0:26)

[Clip of David with a cuppa at a table]

"Hey mob - quick yarn.

Consent ain't just a one-time 'yes'.

It's gotta be clear, deadly, and feel like a full-body 'HELL YEAH'.

'Maybe' is a no. Silence is a no. Guilt-tripping? Big no.

And guess what? You can change your mind anytime.

If they keep going after you say 'nah' - that's not a vibe, that's a red flag."

OUTRO (0:27-0:30)

Text on screen:

"Consent is care. Consent is Blak love. Consent is always needed."




#ConsentIsCulture #YarnItOut #BlakQueerPride #RespectMob

Social Media Tiles on CONSENT

Main opening slide

"If It Ain't a Hell Yeah: Blak Consent 101"

Slide 2.

 TILE 1: "If It Ain't a Hell Yeah, It's a Nah"

Visual: Two cute bush animals texting - a deadly rainbow lorikeet and a shy echidna.

Text:


Lorikeet: "Wanna link up later? 😊"

Echidna: "Ummm maybe... idk... 😬"

Lorikeet: "All good, cuz! A maybe ain't a yes. Hit me up when it's a hell yeah 🏆 🙌 ✨"

Caption:

Consent has to be enthusiastic, fam. "Yes" should sound like a Beyoncé chorus, not a maybe/mumblin' mess. #ConsentIsCulture #BlakQueerJoy #RespectMob

 TILE 2: "You Can't Read Minds, Cuz"

Visual: A dreamy drag kangaroo with a crystal ball looking confused.

Text:

"They were quiet and didn't say no, so I thought-"


 STOP RIGHT THERE, DARL 

If you ain't got a clear "YES", you ain't got consent.

Silence is not a spell for "go ahead".

Caption:

Mob, we're powerful – but we ain't psychic. Don't assume. Just ask. And respect the answer. 💜 #LGBTIQASB #FirstNationsConsent #Don'tBeThatPerson

 TILE 3: "Consent is like Sharing a Feed"


Visual: Two Blakfullas at a BBQ. One offers kangaroo snags, the other says "No thanks."

Text:

"You don't get cranky when someone says no to your kangaroo snag 🐾 - so don't get cranky if they say no to something else."

Caption:

It's not rejection - it's redirection. Keep it cool, keep it kind, and pass the sauce. #ConsentCulture #BlakBBQBoundaries #MobRules

 TILE 4: "You Can Take It Back- Like a Bad Tattoo"

Visual: Someone showing off a deadly rainbow tattoo... that says "YOLO" in Comic Sans.


Text:

"Just like a dodgy tatt - you can change your mind about sex or dating, even mid-way through."

Caption:

Said yes at first but changed your mind? That's valid. Consent can be taken back *any*

time. And if they don't listen? That's not on. #ConsentYarn
#TattooRegretsAndBoundaries #BlakQueerVoices

 TILE 5: "No Shame in Saying No"

Visual: A fabulous elder holding a fan that says "NOPE." Surrounded by love hearts and affirmations.

Text:

"Not today, not this time, not with you - and that's ok!"

Saying NO doesn't make you rude. It makes you powerful. ✨

Caption:


Boundaries are strong Blak magic. Protect your spirit, honour your feelings, and don't let anyone guilt you into anything. #StrongMobConsent #LGBTIQA+BlakPride
#BlakBoundaries

Script for 30 second video on HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS

 TITLE CARD (0:00- 0:03)

Text on screen:

"Mob Love 101: What's a Healthy Relationship?"

 [Upbeat, chill music with Blak/queer vibes]

 DAVID VIDEO (0:04- 0:26)

[Clip of David with red and green flags in hands]

"Alright mob - let's yarn real quick. A healthy relationship?"

It's not just butterflies and cute selfies.


It's feeling safe to be your full, deadly self.

It's open yarns, big respect, and checking in - not checking your phone.

It's being hyped up, not hidden.

And when stuff gets tough? You talk it out - not walk out.

Real love listens. Real love learns. Real love doesn't gaslight you then blame it on Mercury in retrograde, alright?"

 OUTRO (0:27-0:30)

Text on screen:

"You deserve love that feels safe, strong & proud. 💖"



#MobLove101 #HealthyLoveForDeadlyMob #RespectIsPower #BlakQueerJoy

Social Media Tiles on HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS

Main opening slide

"Love You, But Make It Healthy"

♥ TILE 1: "Not Just Cute Selfies, Cuz"

Visual: Two Blakfullas posing for a selfie, then cutting to them doing dishes together.

Text:

A healthy relationship isn't just the selfies on Insta.

It's also:

👉 Doing the dishes

🗣️ Talking through the awkward stuff

☕ Bringing them a cuppa when they're cranky

Caption:

Cute is good. But respect, care, and showing up every day? That's the real heart-throb stuff 🙌 #DeadlyLove #NotJustVibes #MobMatters

♥ TILE 2: "Jealousy Isn't Romantic - It's Just Stressy"

Visual: Someone lurking in bushes watching their partner's phone... with mozzies biting them.

Text:

"They don't let me hang with my friends. That's love, right?"

👁️👁️🚩 Nah fam. That's control dressed up as romance.

Healthy love lets you *breathe* - mozzies don't.

Caption:

True love says, "Go live your life, I'll be here when you're back." Not, "Who's that you liked on Insta?" #TrustOrBust #MobDeservesBetter

♥ TILE 3: "Accountability - It's Sexy, Actually"

Visual: A person saying "Sorry" while holding a sign that says "Working on myself, not just vibing".

Text:

Blamed your trauma? Snapped and then ghosted?

🗨️ That's not deep - that's avoidance.

Healthy love means saying:

"I was wrong. I'm working on it."

Caption:

Mob love includes learning, growing, and being brave enough to own your mess.

Accountability = 💯 attractive. #GrownNotGroan #HealingTogether #MobRelationships

♥ TILE 4: "If You're Vibing in Secret... 👁️👁️"

Visual: Two people in love hiding under a table, dodging the aunties.

Text:

"They say they love me... but won't be seen with me in public 😬"

If your love's hiding you like a bad haircut - that ain't love.

You deserve to be seen, loud and proud.

Caption:

A healthy relationship doesn't hide you. It celebrates you. Even in front of the nosy cousins. 🌈 #NoMoreSecretMobs #ProudLove #BlakAndOut

♥ TILE 5: "Communication: The Original Love Language"

Visual: Text convo with lots of "you good?", "can we yarn?", and meme sharing.

Text:

Healthy love sounds like:

"Can we yarn about that thing?"

"I heard you, and I get it now."

"You want space? I got you."

(Bonus points for memes & cuppas ☕)

Caption:

Talking isn't a chore – it's connection. Healthy mob love is built on safe yarns and checking in. #YarnIsLove #MobTalksMatter #HealthyHeartBeats

Appendix 6- Eco-System of Support Facilitator Instruction Guide



Facilitator Instruction Guide

Eco-System of Support: A therapeutic tool for working with LGBTQIA+ SB Mob to explore experiences of sexual violence

Overview

The *Eco-System of Support* is a narrative therapy tool inspired by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ways of knowing, being, and doing - centring **Country** as a living co-facilitator. It uses the natural elements of Country (like trees, rivers, animals, and mountains) as metaphors to guide reflection, connection, and storytelling about personal support systems, identity, strengths, and experiences of resistance, hope, and joy.

The authors (Sam Ivancsik, Leslie Purcell (Flowers), Locky Bygrave, Annie Monks, David Hunter and Madi Day) acknowledge Ncazelo Ncube and David Denborough's Tree of Life methodology and work, which was adapted to create a culturally responsive therapeutic tool for LGBTQIA+SB mob to explore experiences of sexual violence.

This tool is to be used alongside the Recognising the Drivers of Sexual Violence Framework for LGBTQIA+SB mob, it can be used individually or within a small group setting.

Introduction to Narrative Approaches and the Eco-system of support

Narrative therapy is a respectful and empowering approach to healing that invites individuals to reclaim their stories and centre their strengths. Rather than seeing problems as located within a person, narrative therapy externalises them - separating the issue from the person - and invites a process of re-authoring life stories in ways that affirm identity and resilience. This is especially aligned with First Nations worldviews, where storytelling is not only a communication tool, but a cultural and spiritual act of survival and strength. As Kaurna Elder and narrative therapist Aunty Barbara Wingard says, "*We assist people to tell our stories in ways that make us stronger.*" For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, stories carry cultural knowledge, guide social behaviours, and connect individuals to Country, Kin, and Ancestors.

Narrative approaches also honour the relational nature of healing in First Nations communities. In contrast to Western therapeutic models that often isolate the self from its social context, narrative therapy recognises that healing happens in relationship - with community, with cultural identity, and with the land. This ecosystem of support is vital for wellbeing. It sees people not in isolation but as part of interconnected systems that include

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Country, family, community, and spirit. The use of narrative tools help individuals explore personal and collective experiences, locate resistance and strength, and express complex emotions that may otherwise be difficult to voice.

The billabong was chosen as it is a powerful cultural metaphor within this therapeutic framework. For many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, billabongs are sacred places - deeply connected to spiritual and clan identity. They represent more than waterholes; they are sites of reflection, connection, and belonging. The billabong is a place where the physical, emotional, and spiritual come together. In therapeutic practice, this image offers a culturally grounded symbol of healing - a place to sit, reflect, feel, and connect. It becomes a container for stories, emotions, and memories, held safely within the layers of Country and culture.

Integrating items from the billabong ecosystem into narrative therapy invites individuals to journey through their own stories with grounding and curiosity. Each item, whether a stone, animal, or ripple in the water, can represent an emotion, event, or experience. By engaging the senses and prompting reflection, participants are supported to make connections between their inner world and the environment around them. The eco-system elements and their associated questions allow for a gentle entry into difficult topics, supporting expression through metaphor when words are hard to find. This kind of practice respects cultural ways of knowing, being, and healing, and reinforces the power of storytelling not just as therapy, but as a way of life.

Purpose

- To help participants reflect on their networks of support and resilience.
- To externalise challenges and lift personal stories of strength, resistance, and hope.
- To nurture LGBTIQ+SB identity, belonging, and agency through storytelling rooted in Country.

Materials Needed

- Large blank paper or canvas with the printed Billabong in the middle
- Markers, pens, paint or natural items (e.g., leaves, flowers, sand, dirt, sticks) for participants to use.
- Copies of reflective prompts and example eco-system of support (optional handout).



- Soft music, nature soundtrack or listening to Country outside (optional).
 - A quiet, comfortable space (ideally a culturally important/ healing area on country)
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Facilitation Steps

1. Welcome & Grounding (10–15 min)

- Acknowledgement or Welcome to Country.
 - Invite participants to take a few breaths, connect with the land beneath them, and reflect on the idea that Country holds us and remembers us.
 - Explain that this session will explore support systems through metaphors in nature, inviting a connection with self, others, and the land.
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2. Introduce the Eco-System Metaphors (10 min)

Walk through each element and its associated reflection question:

- **Flowers - "Who are your chosen family?"**
Represent the people you choose to stand with you - friends, family, chosen family, mentors, ancestors, community.
- **Underground Water Systems – "What are your values?"**
These unseen but essential waters represent the values that nourish your roots and guide your decisions.
- **Billabong Ripples - "What is weighing your spirit down?"**
The ripples on still water show the impact of burdens, grief, or pain that need acknowledgment.
- **Rocks - "What have your acts of resistance been?"**
Solid and enduring, these represent your moments of standing firm, moments of self protection, or surviving.
- **Animals - "What strengths do others see in you?"**
Animals show up with different traits and identities - strength, cleverness, speed, nurture. What do others notice in you?



- **Trees - "What does hope feel like?"**
Trees reach upward with resilience. Describe hope as a feeling, an image, or a sensation.
 - **Mountains - "What brings your spirit joy?"**
Mountains can be awe-inspiring, grounding, or freeing. What uplifts your spirit?
 - **Addition of own symbol - "Is anything missing or need to be added?"**
Listen to your spirit and add any symbol you feel is missing
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3. Creative Reflection (50 min)

Option A: Individual Exploration

- Participants create their own Eco-System of Support landscape on paper.
- Encourage them to draw, write, or use symbols to respond to the seven reflective prompts.
- Provide participants with a hand out of 'example billabong' (see appendix A)

Option B: Group Mapping

- Create a large shared map on butcher paper or canvas.
 - Invite each person to contribute one reflection per element.
 - This builds a collective eco-system and highlights shared experiences.
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4. Story Sharing Circle (Optional, 20–30 min)

- Invite participants to share reflections if they feel safe and ready.
- Use prompts:
 - "Would anyone like to share a flower - someone in your chosen family?"
 - "What's one rock - an act of resistance you're proud of?"
 - "What animal do you think represents you?"
- Respect silence and allow non-verbal forms of sharing (pointing, drawing, etc.)



5. Closing & Grounding (10 min)

- Reflect as a group:
 - What strengths did you see in yourself or others?
 - What part of Country are you taking with you today?
 - Invite a closing breath and a moment of stillness with country.
 - End with a poem, song, or Dadirri.
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Facilitator Tips

- **Know Your Audience** - Understand the identities and needs of the individuals, group or community.
 - **Trauma-Informed:** Let participants have choice throughout the activity, allowing them to opt out of any question. Have an additional facilitator present, to provide support available
 - **Flexible Use:** This tool works in therapeutic, group, or cultural healing contexts. Adapt as needed, participants may feel additional pieces of country need to be added to their Billabong.
 - **Nature Connection:** If indoors, bring in elements of Country - photos, branches, stones, natural items.
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Reflection Prompts Recap (Eco-System Map)

Element	Reflection Prompt
Flowers	Who are your chosen family?
Underground Water	What are your values?



Billabong Ripples	What is weighing your spirit down?
Rocks	What have your acts of resistance been?
Animals	What strengths do others see in you?
Trees	What does hope feel like?
Mountains	What brings your spirit joy?

Acknowledgement

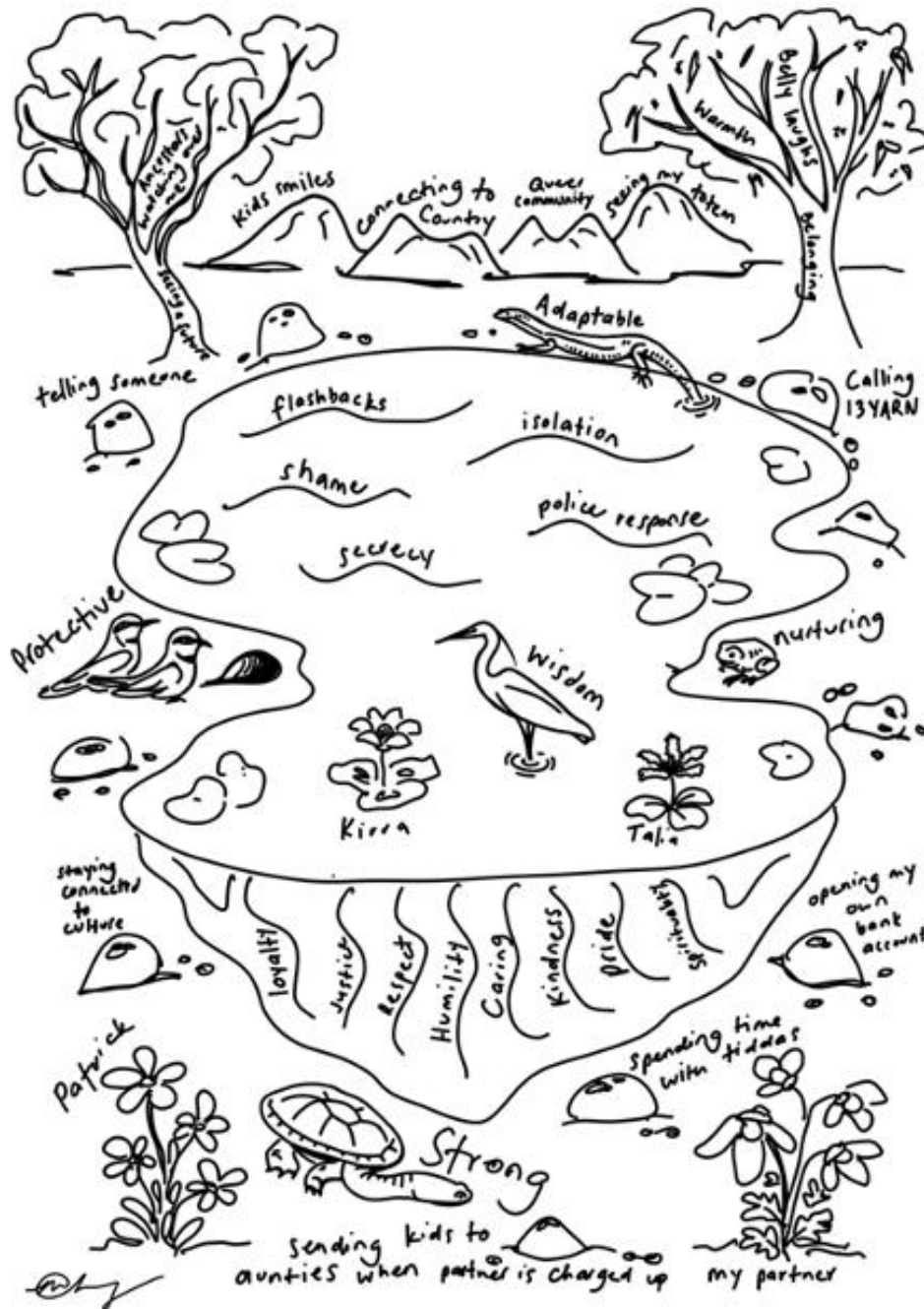
Facilitator guide written by Restorative Yarns and 2-Spirits.

Made possible with funding from the Australian Government Department of Social Services and support from LGBTIQ+ Health Australia.

Artist: Melinda Hickey

June 2025

Appendix A



Appendix 7- Recognising the Drivers of Sexual Violence Facilitator Guide

Facilitator Instruction Guide

Recognising the Drivers of Sexual Violence: A Framework for Working with LGBTIQ+ SB Mob

Purpose of This Guide

This facilitation guide supports practitioners, community workers, and advocates to deliver sessions focused on identifying and discussing the social, structural, and systemic drivers of sexual violence experienced by LGBTQIA+ Sistergirl and Brotherboy (SB) mob. It is designed to:

- Foster culturally safe and trauma-informed dialogue.
 - Empower mob through shared knowledge and experiences.
 - Challenge systems of harm and raise collective awareness.
 - Promote healing, respect, and accountability.
 - Begin to unpack the drivers of violence for LGBTIQASB mob to increase awareness and understanding
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Core Principles

Facilitators must uphold the following principles:

1. **Cultural Safety** – Respect Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledge, leadership, and lived experience.
2. **Trauma-Informed Practice** – Be mindful of triggers and promote emotional, spiritual and physical safety.
3. **LGBTQIA+SB Inclusion** – Use affirming language and recognise intersectional identities.
4. **Consent and Choice** – Participation is voluntary. Always seek consent before beginning or sharing.



5. **Strengths-Based Yarning** – Focus on collective strength, resilience, and resistance to systemic violence.
6. **Cultural Humility** - Acknowledge the cultural reciprocity and two way learning that occurs through sacred yarns.

Preparation Steps

1. **Honouring Cultural Protocols** - Respecting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people's ways of knowing, being and doing. Acknowledging protocols will differ across many countries and local consultation should occur.
2. **Know Your Audience** – Understand the identities and needs of the individuals, group or community.
3. **Create a Safe Space** – Choose a quiet, comfortable, culturally safe and private location. Consider healing spaces and places on Country.
4. **Gather Resources** – Bring the sexual violence drivers framework, visual aids, paper, art supplies, and support service contacts.
5. **Plan for Support** – Arrange a co facilitator to support throughout the yarning circle. In addition to this, consider identifying a cultural mentor, elder, healer or support person who can be present or on-call.
6. **Self-Check** – Reflect on your own biases, grounding, and readiness to hold space for sensitive yarns.

Session Structure

Estimated Duration: 90- 120 minutes (adaptable depending on context)

1. Welcome and Grounding (10–15 minutes)

- Acknowledgement or Welcome to Country
- Invite participants to introduce themselves, pronouns and share what brought them here.
- Explain the purpose of the session.



- Set group care agreement around confidentiality, respect, and cultural safety.
- Offer a grounding practice: breathing, cultural meditation, listening to country.

2. Introducing the Framework (30- 45 minutes)

- Provide copies of the 'recognising drivers of sexual violence framework' to the group as a handouts (refer to appendix A)
- Use plain, inclusive language to explain:

- What sexual violence is (beyond physical acts).

Sexual assault is any sexual action or attempt that happens without a person's clear and willing consent. It includes any behaviour that makes someone feel uncomfortable, scared, or threatened in a sexual way. This can happen through force, pressure, or manipulation.

Sexual assault isn't just physical contact. It can also include things like forcing someone to watch sexual content or sharing private sexual images or videos without their permission. Consent must always be given freely, and without fear, pressure, or guilt. (Family Safety Victoria, 2025)

- What is meant by "drivers" – the underlying causes or enablers.

In the context of preventing sexual violence, "drivers" refer to the underlying causes, conditions, and social norms that enable or increase the likelihood of this violence occurring. These are not just individual risk factors or isolated incidents, but deeply rooted societal issues that shape attitudes, behaviours, and power dynamics. Drivers operate across all levels - individual, relational, community, and societal and contribute to environments in which sexual violence is more likely to happen.

Key drivers include colonialism, patriarchy, ableism, homophobia, transphobia and racism. These drivers are the underlying enablers of gender inequality, rigid gender roles, power imbalances that normalise disrespect, control, and violence, sexism, heteronormativity, cisnormativity. Understanding these complex and intersecting drivers is essential for shifting from reactive responses to proactive, inclusive, and culturally responsive prevention strategies that address the root causes of violence for all communities. (Our Watch, 2018).

- The difference between individual acts and systemic drivers.

The difference between individual acts and systemic drivers lies in understanding the root of the issue versus its surface level symptoms.



Individual acts of sexual violence are the specific incidents where harm occurs — such as assault, coercion, or harassment. These acts are committed by individuals and are often treated as isolated behaviours or the result of personal failings, mental health issues, or substance use. While addressing these acts is important for justice and safety, focusing only on individuals ignores the broader conditions that allow such violence to be widespread and repeated.

Systemic drivers, on the other hand, are the underlying social, political, and cultural forces that create the conditions for individual acts of violence to occur and recur. Systemic drivers shape attitudes, normalise harmful behaviours, and influence institutions in ways that condone, excuse, or fail to prevent violence especially against LGBTQIA+ SB Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. For example, when media stereotypes blame victims or overlook First Nations people's experiences, or when institutions fail to provide culturally safe and responsive support, they reinforce the systemic drivers of violence.

To truly prevent violence, it's essential to go beyond responding to individual acts and focus on changing the systems and structures that enable and perpetuate them. (Our Watch, 2018).

- Present the core drivers relevant to LGBTQIA+ SB mob using the framework, provide copies of the 'defining sexual violence' to the group as hand outs (refer to appendix B):

- **Colonialism**

Colonialism is a system dependent on the idea that one group of people are better than others, this thinking often justified violence against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to establish control and ownership of resources (centring making money/amassing wealth). The belief that one group is superior can be used to justify sexual violence towards the group viewed inferior. (Kashyap, M, 2023)

Example: The media and Coalition party in 2025 portraying sexual abuse as an issue specific to Aboriginal communities "the Coalition has committed to holding a royal commission into sexual abuse in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, If this was occurring elsewhere in our society, a royal commission would be demanded." Jacinta Price (Brennan, D, 2025)

- **Racism**

Racism is a system of oppression creating power imbalances at every level in society.

Example: Australia introduced the assimilation policy in an attempt to try and breed Aboriginality out of the population. Children were trafficked (stolen) from their families by Governments, churches and welfare bodies based on



race, then forced to live in institutions where many experienced sexual abuse. (Australian Law Reform Commission, 2010)

- **Transphobia**

Negative beliefs about what it means to be transgender, two-spirits, nonbinary, and gender nonconforming, fundamentally rejecting trans identity and a refusal to acknowledge that it could possibly be real or valid. Transphobia is deeply institutionalised and causes direct harm and loss of life for transgender people.

Example: Unwanted sexually suggestive comments, intrusive questions about their gender identity or sex lives, and unwelcome sexual jokes. It can also include threats of sexual violence to "fix" someone's gender.

- **Homophobia**

Negative attitudes, beliefs, prejudice, discrimination and actions towards people of diverse sexualities. Homophobia is deeply institutionalised and causes direct harm and loss of life for LGBTQIA+SB individuals.

Example: A religious group using sexual violence as a conversion practice.

- **Patriarchy**

Patriarchy is defined as an ideology that upholds men's systemic dominance over women, justifying male superiority and rejecting equal structures.

Example: A male manager sexually harassing a female staff member, he knows she won't report the incident because there are no policies in place and she is afraid to lose her job.

- **Ableism**

Discrimination or prejudice towards people with disabilities. It can be described as the systemic and interpersonal exclusion and oppression of people with disability

Example: Lack of healthy relationship and sex education targeted at people with disabilities due to society not viewing them as sexual beings, this increasing vulnerability to sexual violence.

3. Yarning Circle or Discussion (30–40 minutes)

- Pose open questions (adapt if needed):
 - "What stands out to you in this framework?"
 - "How do you see these drivers showing up in community?"



- "What are the strengths and wisdom mob bring in response to these harms?"
- Use the 'participant community template tool' (refer to appendix C) to capture how these drivers show up in their community.
- Hold space gently – validate contributions and listen deeply.
- Monitor emotional responses; offer breaks or support if needed.

4. Reflection and Moving Forward (15–20 minutes)

- Ask:
 - "What sat with your spirit today?"
 - "What would you like mob to know about these drivers?"
 - "What steps can we take, as individuals or community, to respond to these harms?"
- Provide follow-up resources, including counselling, health, and LGBTQIA+SB support services.
- Close with a strength-based reflection or cultural practice (song, poem, affirmation, or grounding).

Tips for Facilitators

- **Use visual tools** (e.g., the framework diagram, storyboards, or art materials) to support different learning styles.
- **Stay adaptable** – some sessions may need to be slower or more conversational.
- **Avoid re-traumatising language** – use soft, respectful phrasing when discussing violence or harm.
- **Watch for power dynamics** – ensure all voices have space, especially the most marginalised.

After the Session



- Debrief with a co-facilitator or cultural support person.
- Follow up with any participants who showed distress (with consent).
- Reflect on what went well and where the session could improve.
- Document insights anonymously (if appropriate) to inform broader community work.

Useful Phrases

- "Take your time, you don't have to share if you're not ready."
- "This space is for you, and we honour your story."
- "Our communities have always had strength and wisdom – we're reconnecting with that today."
- "Let's look at the systems that create harm, not just individuals."

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Acknowledgement

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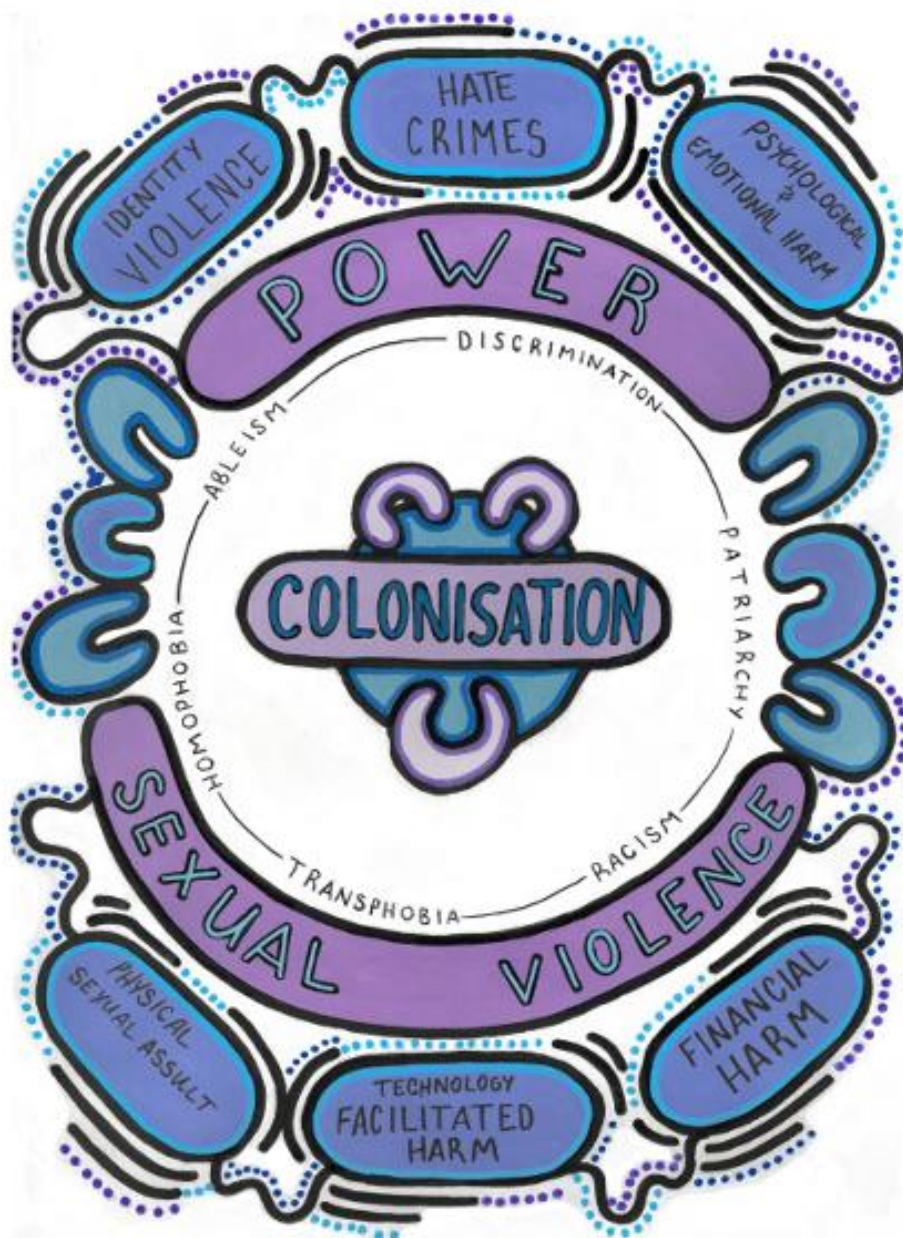
Made possible with funding from the Australian Government Department of Social Services and support from LGBTIQ+ Health Australia.

Artist: Baylee O'Grady

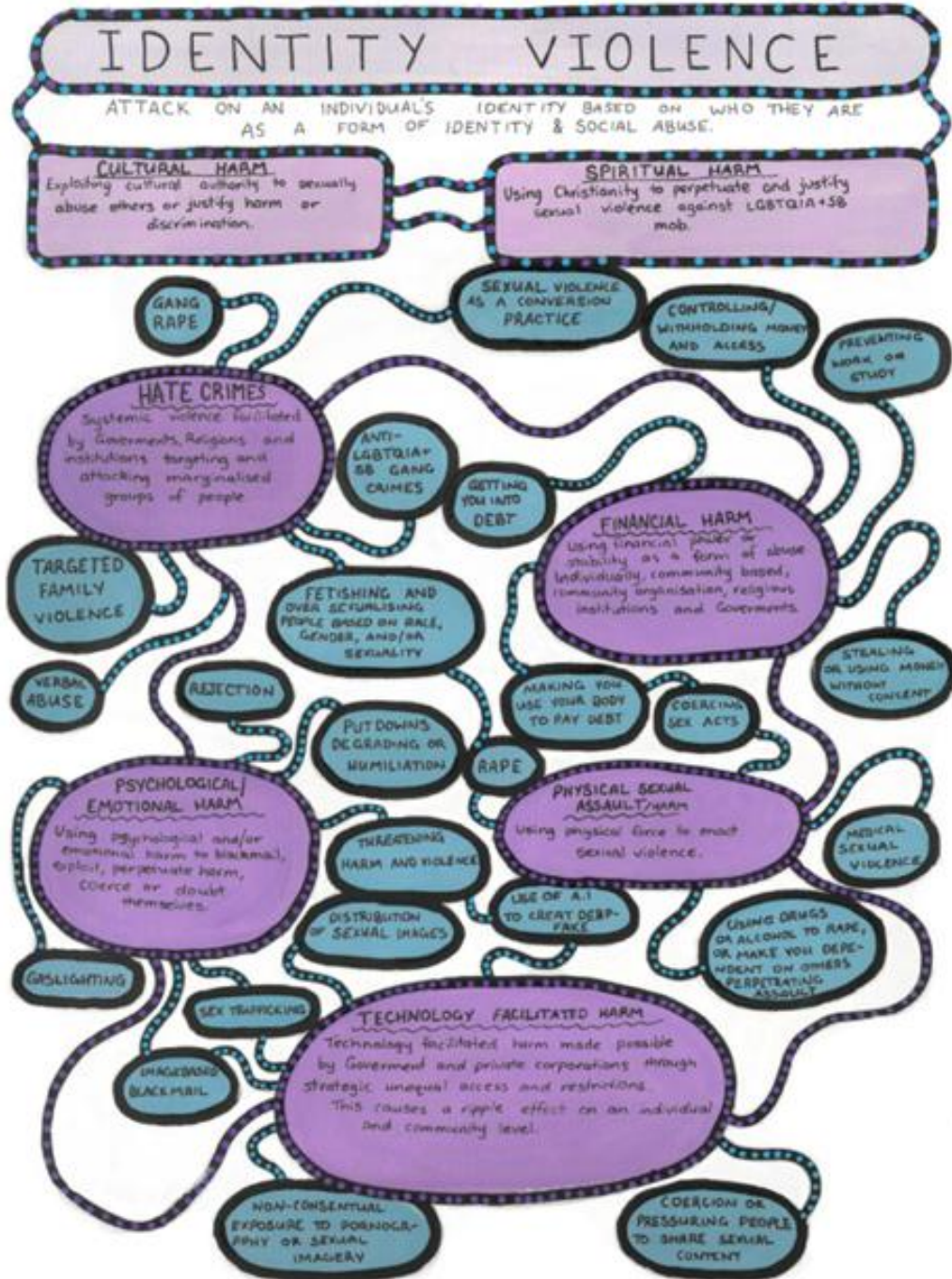
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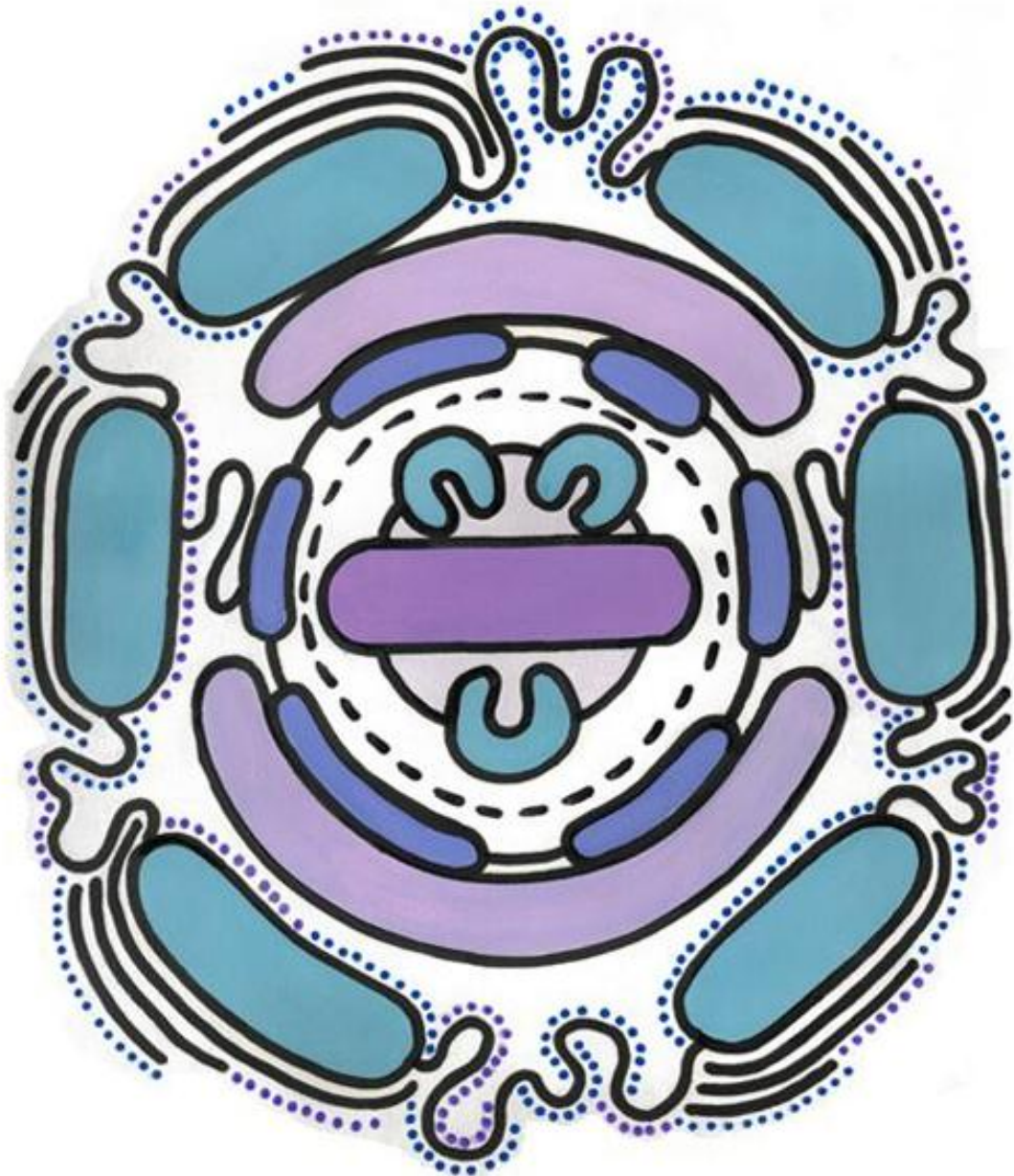
Appendix A



Appendix B



Appendix C



Appendix 8- Fact Sheets: Recognising the Drivers of Sexual Violence and Defining Sexual Violence

RECOGNISING THE DRIVERS OF SEXUAL VIOLENCE

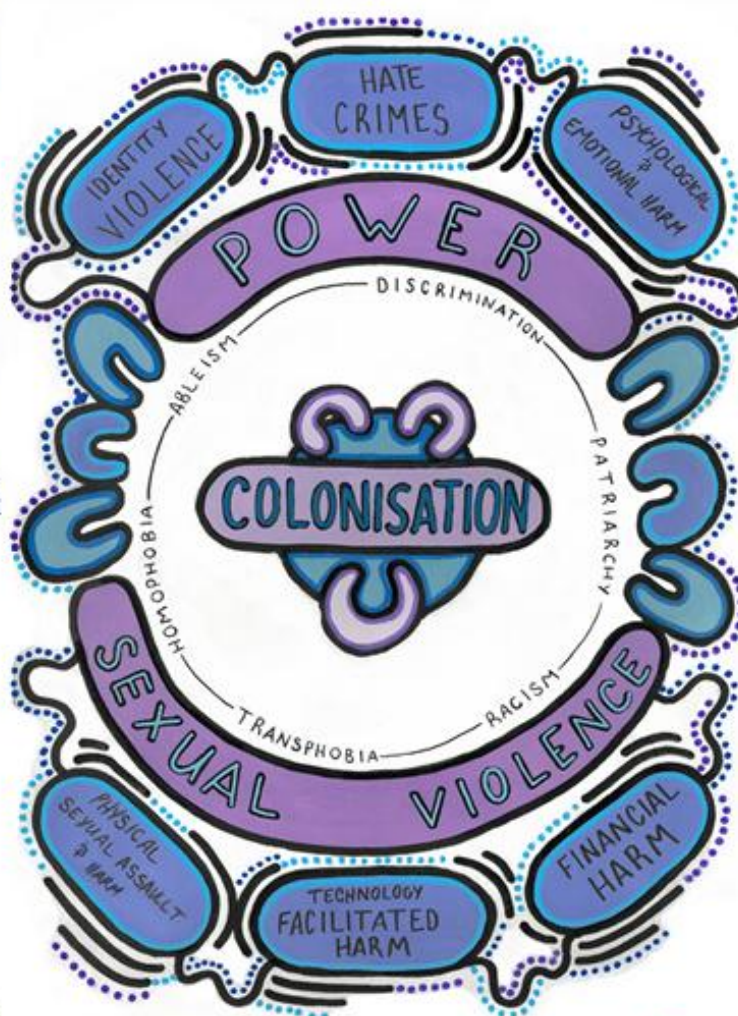
A FRAMEWORK FOR WORKING WITH LGBTIQ+ SB

When we talk about stopping sexual violence before it happens, we've got to look at what's driving it in the first place.

"Drivers" are the deep stuff underneath – like the beliefs, rules, and ways of thinking in our communities and wider society that make this kind of harm more likely. It's not just about one person doing the wrong thing – it's about the bigger picture: power, control, disrespect, and unfairness that can grow in families, relationships, communities, and systems.

These drivers can be passed down, taught, or even normalised without us realising. That's why it's so important we yarn about them, name them, and challenge them.

When we understand the drivers, we can change the story – creating safer, stronger communities where respect and care are at the centre.



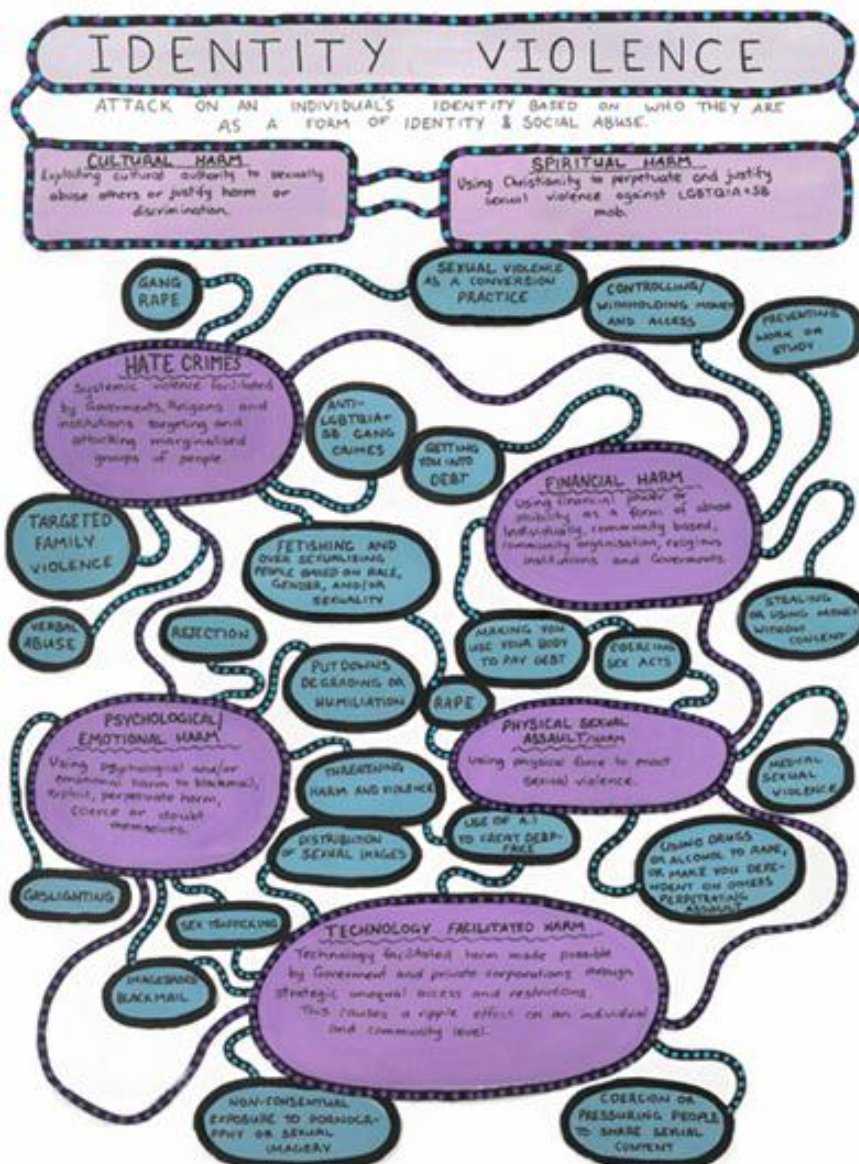
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DEFINING SEXUAL VIOLENCE

A FRAMEWORK FOR WORKING WITH LGBTIQ+ SB



Art by Baylee O'Grady

This resource was made for our Mob to yarn about hard things like sexual violence in safe and respectful ways. It shows how harm can happen—not just in one way, but through many systems.

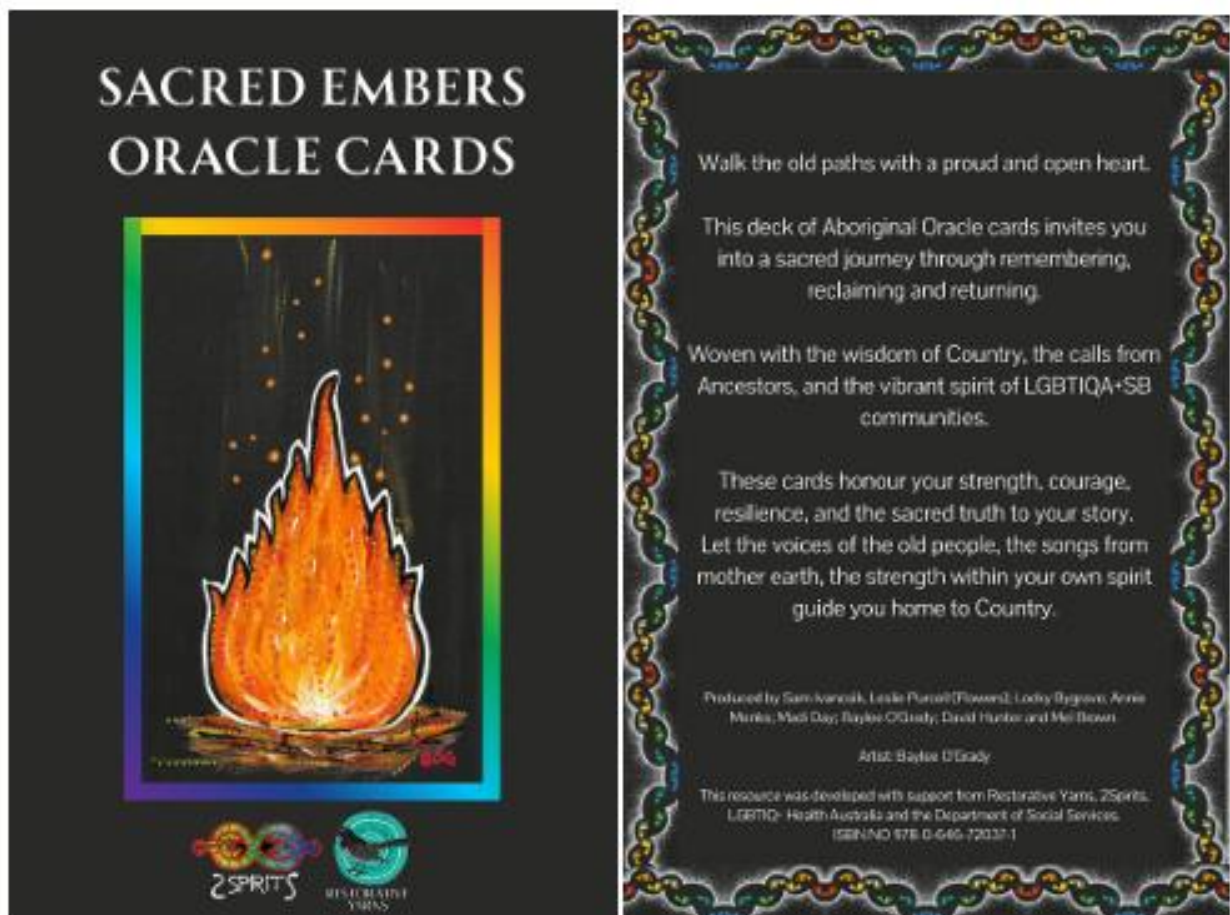
Each circle shows a different type of harm and explains how these can be used to control, hurt, or abuse someone. It helps us name what's happening, where it comes from, and how we can start to heal.

This tool was made with community voices and knows that for us, justice looks different. It's about truth-telling, not punishment. It's about keeping each other safe.



Made possible with funding from the Australian Government Department of Social Services and support from LGBTIQ+ Health Australia

Appendix 9- Sacred Embers Oracle Cards



Sacred Embers Oracle is a culturally grounded tool to support healing from sexual violence, especially within First Nations LGBTIQA+SB communities. Divided into four themes — Walking, Being, Healing, and Dreaming — the cards guide reflection on identity, recovery, and ancestral wisdom.

They create safe spaces for personal and collective healing by helping people name harm, reclaim agency, and connect with Country, Ancestors, and spirit.

This resource is grounded in an LGBTIQA+SB sexual violence framework that centres First Nations lived experiences, cultural identities, and strengths. It recognises sexual violence as rooted in colonialism, heteropatriarchy, and systemic oppression, and affirms that healing is both personal and political. By naming these drivers and supporting community-led responses, the **Sacred Embers Oracle** contributes to resistance, reclamation, and the centering of LGBTIQA+SB sovereignty, safety, and connection to Country.

WALKING

**Movement
Adaptability
Change**

Each step we take is a movement across Country, guided by the spirit of our old people and the stories written in the land. Walking reminds us that life is a journey — one that demands adaptability, courage, and trust in the path ahead. Change is not something to fear; it is as natural as the shifting sands, the flowing rivers, and the shooting stars. With every movement, we honour where we have come from and open ourselves to what lies ahead.

How has your journey as an LGBTIQ+SB person shaped the way you adapt to change and move through the world?

What moments have guided you closer to living in alignment with your truth?

What stories and lessons about strength and adaptability have you learned from your journey?

How has movement- body, heart or spirit helped you grow into your most authentic self?

WALKING

HOPE

“LIKE THE RHYTHM OF LAUGHTER FROM THE BEAUTIFUL KOOKABURRAS AT DAWN, OUR HOPE RISES EACH DAY – A JOYFUL REMINDER THAT NEW BEGINNINGS ARE ALWAYS WITHIN OUR REACH.”



HOPE

WALKING

HEART

"OUR HEARTS, LIKE THE RED
HIBISCUS THRIVING
UNDER THE SUNRAYS,
BLOOM WITH THE RADIANT
POWER OF STRENGTH,
LOVE, RESILIENCE, AND THE
JOY OF BEING TRUE
TO WHO WE ARE."



HEART

WALKING

GROWTH

"LIKE A SNAKE SHEDDING ITS
SKIN, WE EMBRACE GROWTH –
SHEDDING OLD FEARS
AND IDENTITIES
TO REVEAL OUR TRUEST,
MOST RADIANT SELVES."



GROWTH

WALKING

GRIEF & LOSS

THROUGH GRIEF AND LOSS,
LIKE FEATHERS FALLING
TO COUNTRY,
WE LET GO AND MAKE SPACE
FOR THE UNKNOWN,
STRENGTH, LOVE, AND HOPE."



GRIEF & LOSS

WALKING

ANGER

"LIKE WASPS FIERCELY
GUARDING THEIR NEST IN THE
LEMON MYRTLE, OUR ANGER IS
NOT CHAOS –
IT IS PROTECTION, POWER, AND A
CALL TO HONOUR WHAT WE
HOLD SACRED."



ANGER

WALKING

ACTS OF RESISTANCE

"OUR ACTS OF RESISTANCE,
LIKE BUSH MEDICINE, HEAL,
STRENGTHEN, AND REMIND US
THAT OUR LOVE IS
POWERFUL AGAINST A WORLD
THAT HAS TRIED TO
SILENCE US."



ACT OF RESISTANCE

WALKING

JUSTICE

"WITHIN THE STRONGHOLD OF
A TERMITE NEST,
OUR PURSUIT OF JUSTICE IS
GROUNDED IN COLLECTIVE CARE,
COMMUNITY, CONNECTION, AND
THE BELIEF THAT TOGETHER
WE CAN CREATE LASTING
CHANGE."



JUSTICE

WALKING

POWER

IN EVERY EXPRESSION OF
OUR LOVE AND IDENTITY,
WE CARRY THE SPIRIT OF OUR
OLD PEOPLE AS THEY STOOD
STRONG IN OUR TRUTH,
INSPIRING OTHERS, AND SHAPING
A BETTER WORLD.



POWER

BEING

Ethics
Values
Essence

Being is the stillness within us
— the place where we are
grounded, our ethics, values,
and true spirit are held.
It is not about what we do,
but who we are when
all else falls away.

Our essence holds the
teachings passed down
through bloodlines, the
wisdom of Country, and the
strength of living in truth.

When we stand firm in our
being, we honour our
ancestors, our community,
and the sacredness of our
own and shared story.

How has your Queer Blak
identity shaped the way you
see and walk through the
world?

How has your values and
cultural teachings guided you
in standing strong against
abuse and discrimination?

In what ways has your
journey of being true to
yourself helped you connect
more deeply to chosen
family, community, culture,
or spirit?

How do you fill your spirit
with love and care?

How do you know you are in
your being state- a place
where you are grounded?

BEING

VALUES

"OUR VALUES,
LIKE THE SUN AND MOON,
HOLD THE BEAUTY OF
DUALITY, GIVING US THE
STRENGTH TO SHINE AND THE
WISDOM TO REFLECT,
GUIDING US THROUGH EVERY
SEASON OF LIFE."



VALUES

BEING

SELF LOVE

"LIKE A WATERFALL FLOWING
FREELY AND ENDLESSLY,
SELF-LOVE NOURISHES
OUR SPIRIT,
REMINING US THAT WE ARE
WORTHY OF ABUNDANCE,
BEAUTY, AND RENEWAL."



SELF LOVE

BEING

RESPECT

"RESPECT FLOWS LIKE THE OCEAN AND EVER MOVING, REMINDING US TO HONOUR OURSELVES, EACH OTHER, AND THE SACRED ENERGIES THAT SHAPE OUR JOURNEY."



RESPECT

BEING

PRIDE

"LIKE A MOUNTAIN RISING ON THE HORIZON, OUR QUEERNESS STANDS TALL AND IS A LIVING SYMBOL OF OUR JOURNEY, OUR RESILIENCE, AND OUR UNBREAKABLE SPIRIT."



PRIDE

BEING

IDENTITY

"EACH FOOTPRINT WE LEAVE
BEHIND IS A MARK OF
SELF-LOVE AS WE WALK
OUR PATH WITH PRIDE,
HONOURING OUR QUEERNESS,
THE ANCESTORS WHO
WALKED BEFORE US AND
THOSE WHO WILL FOLLOW."



IDENTITY

BEING

FREEDOM

"LIKE TREES STANDING TALL
IN THE RAINFOREST,
OUR FREEDOM IS ROOTED
DEEP IN WHO WE ARE,
REACHING FOR THE SKY
WHILE STAYING STRONG
IN OUR TRUTH."



FREEDOM

BEING

CONTROL

"LIKE THE STILL WATERS
OF A BILLABONG,
TRUE CONTROL COMES FROM
WITHIN AND IS STEADY,
STRONG, AND CONNECTED TO
THE RHYTHMS OF COUNTRY
AND SPIRIT."



CONTROL

BEING

CONNECTION

"LIKE A CAMPFIRE GLOWING
UNDER THE NIGHT SKY,
OUR CONNECTION BRINGS
WARMTH, LIGHT, AND
THE TIMELESS STRENGTH
OF HOLDING STORIES, SPIRIT,
AND BELONGING."



CONNECTION

BEING

CONFIDENCE

"LIKE CROSSING A DESERT
PLAIN TOWARD
DISTANT WATER,
OUR CONFIDENCE IS KNOWING
THAT EVEN THROUGH
HARDSHIP, OUR SPIRIT IS
STRONG, AND OUR DREAMS
ARE WITHIN REACH."



CONFIDENCE

BEING

CHOSEN FAMILY

"LIKE THE ECOSYSTEMS OF
COUNTRY, OUR CHOSEN
FAMILY IS A PLACE OF
BELONGING WITH A
GATHERING OF SOULS
WHO WALK BESIDE US
ON OUR JOURNEY."



CHOSEN FAMILY

HEALING

Renewal
Restoration
Spirit Growth

Healing is not a straight path
- it moves like water across
the Country, flowing into the
cracks where light is waiting
to enter.

It is the quiet mending of
spirit, heart and body
through connection to
culture, queerness and kin.

Healing hours both the
wound and the wisdom it
leaves behind, reminding us
that our scars hold strength
not shame.

What does healing mean and
look like for you?

How do you hold both the
pain and the strength of your
healing journey while
continuing to move forward?

What are some ways that
you can reclaim and rewrite
your story and experience?

Can you think of a time when
community, culture, or
chosen family supported
your journey and healing?

Can you think of a time when
connections, or place gave
you a sense of healing,
growth and belonging?

HEALING

SEXUAL VIOLENCE

"EVEN IN RIPPLES,
I RISE AND RETURN TO SELF.

I AM MORE THAN
THE STONE THAT ONCE
DISTURBED MY WATER-

I AM THE WAVES,
THE CURRENT AND
THE HEALING TIDE."



SEXUAL VIOLENCE

HEALING

TRUTH TELLING

“LIKE A MAGPIE
SINGING AT FIRST LIGHT,
TRUTH-TELLING IS OUR CALL TO
THE WORLD AND A REMINDER
THAT OUR STORIES AND
VOICES CANNOT BE SILENCED.”



TRUTH TELLING

HEALING

SECRECY

“LIKE A BOOK WITH
A MISSING PAGE,
SECRECY LEAVES GAPS –
BUT RECLAIMING
OUR TRUTH HEALS
AND COMPLETES
OUR STORY.”



SECRECY

HEALING

WHAT DOES HEALING MEAN TO YOU ?

"HEALING IS A SACRED RETURN TO SELF, TO CULTURE, TO STORIES THAT REMIND US OF WHO WE ARE. IT IS NOT ABOUT ERASING PAIN BUT HOLDING IT AS PART OF THE JOURNEY."



BLANK CARD

HEALING

CONSENT

"LIKE THE RELATIONSHIPS IN NATURE, CONSENT IS BUILT ON RESPECT, TRUST, AND A SACRED UNDERSTANDING THAT HONOURS EACH SPIRIT'S PLACE AND CHOICE."



CONSENT

DREAMING

Ancestral Wisdom

Life Force

Activism

Dreaming is like the rhythm of nature, the story, songs and dances from our ancestors, carried through generations.

Like water, land and air the rhythm of our past, present and future are one, we are our Ancestors. Dreaming is not just a memory – it's a feeling. Our dreaming allows us to step into our culture and queerness.

When you think of dreaming, what comes to mind and how do you make sense of it?

Thinking about your identity, how do you think cultural knowledge, dreaming and wellbeing has a place in your life?

How does connecting to ancestral wisdom underpin your wellbeing and resilience?

What ancestral teachings or cultural stories inspire you to stand strong against injustice and create change in your community?

How does the legacy of your ancestors who walked before you, shape your resistance, activism and action today?

DREAMING

ANCESTORS

"OUR ANCESTORS
WALK WITH US,
AS THEY WATCH OVER US
LIKE STILLNESS OF
THE NIGHT,
GUIDING OUR STEPS WITH
LOVE, CARRIED THROUGH
GENERATIONS."



ANCESTORS

DREAMING

CEREMONY

"Like smoke
we rise to the stars
during ceremony.
Our spirit and our identity
connects to the old ways
and the new ways
that we carry
our collective stories,
love and strength."



CEREMONY

DREAMING

COUNTRY

"Like a woman woven
into water, land, desert, sky,
and sea, we are country –
living, breathing, and
forever connected to
all that gives us life."



COUNTRY

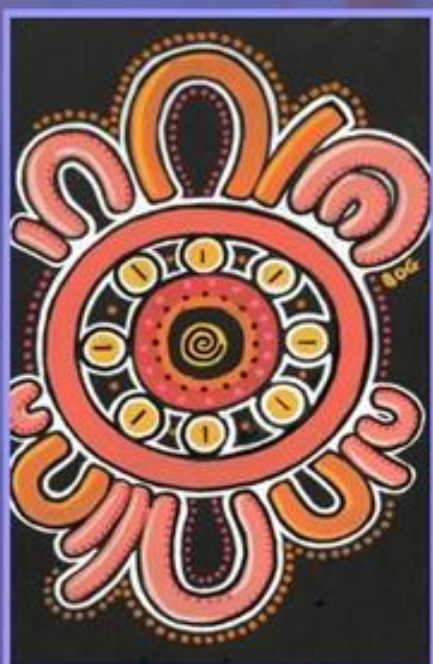


ECO-SYSTEM

DREAMING

ECO-SYSTEM

“LIKE A WATERHOLE
SURROUNDED BY TRACKS
IN THE SAND,
WE ARE PART OF A LIVING
ECOSYSTEM - EACH OF US
DIFFERENT, YET ALL CONNECTED,
SHARING THE SAME SACRED
ENERGY OF LIFE AND
BELONGING.”



FAMILY

DREAMING

FAMILY

“LIKE FAMILY GATHERED
IN A CIRCLE,
WITH OUR OLD PEOPLE
WATCHING OVER US,
FAMILY IS WHERE OUR ROOTS
STRENGTHEN, AND OUR
SPIRITS STAY CONNECTED.”

DREAMING

GENERATIONAL WISDOM

"Like Layers of ancestor
SPIRITS WOVEN THROUGH OUR
BLOODLINES,
generational wisdom flows
TO US AND THROUGH US,
KNOWING THAT we are never
walking alone."



GENERATIONAL WISDOM

DREAMING

HEALING

"Like HANDPRINTS LEFT ON
ancient stone,
HEALING MARKS OUR JOURNEY AS
a LIVING REMINDER
THAT OUR STRENGTH, PAIN,
and HOPE are ALL PART OF THE
STORY we Leave BEHIND."



HEALING

DREAMING

MEANING MAKING

"LIKE COMMUNITIES COMING TOGETHER, MEANING-MAKING WEAVES OUR VOICES AND DREAMS INTO A GREATER STORY OF CHANGE AND BELONGING."



MEANING MAKING

DREAMING

SPIRIT

"OUR SPIRIT IS NOURISHED BY CULTURE, FAMILY, AND FRIENDS, GIVING US A SENSE OF BELONGING THAT STRENGTHENS WHO WE ARE AND WHO WE ARE BECOMING."



SPIRIT

DREAMING

STORIES

“LIKE AN UNFINISHED WEAVING,
OUR STORIES HOLD STRUGGLES,
LOVE, AND HOPE –
THREADS WAITING TO FORM
SOMETHING STRONG AND
BEAUTIFUL.”



STORIES

Appendix 10 - “Our Voices, Our Ways: Primary Prevention of Sexual Violence in First Nations LGBTIQ+SB Communities” A discussion paper in response to the national literature review



“Our Voices, Our Ways: Primary Prevention of Sexual Violence in First Nations LGBTIQ+SB Communities”
A discussion paper in response to the national literature review



June 2025

Authors: Sam Ivancsik and Leslie Purcell

Artwork by Baylee O’Grady

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We acknowledge the lands on which we live, work, and gather. This paper was developed across many First Nations lands, with respect and deep gratitude to Elders past and present, and to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander LGBTIQ+SB people whose strength and resilience continue to guide this work.

Trauma Informed Safety Protocol

The *Our Voices, Our Ways* paper talks about some tough topics that might be upsetting or hard to read. It includes things like sexual abuse, family violence, racism, homophobia, transphobia and different kinds of trauma. It's important to take care of yourself while reading - go slowly, take breaks, and notice how you're feeling. If it brings up strong emotions, talk to someone you trust, and reach out for professional support if you need to: QLife (1800 184 527), 13 YARN (13 92 76), Lifeline (13 11 14), 1800 RESPECT (1800 737 732), Beyond Blue (1300 224 636), Blue Knot Helpline (1300 657 380).

Introduction

This discussion paper responds to a national literature review on the primary prevention of sexual violence for Blak LGBTIQ+SB people. While that literature review provides a foundational analysis of existing research, its limitations are significant and highlight the need for a response grounded in lived experience, cultural knowledge, and community led insight.

Positionality and Accountability

This paper is grounded in a powerful yarning session with seven Blak LGBTIQ+SB clinicians and community workers who have been instrumental in shaping the *Safety, Acceptance, Identity on Country and LGBTIQ+SB* project. Their lived experience, cultural knowledge, and professional expertise have guided every aspect of this work - from challenging the limitations of the literature to envisioning culturally grounded, community-led solutions to sexual violence. We honour and acknowledge the contributions of the following individuals:

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Sam Ivancsik

Sam (She/Her) is a proud Wiradjuri cisgendered woman, who identifies as a lesbian. She holds a Social Work degree, lives and works on beautiful Dharawal Country in Wollongong and has been working within the sexual violence field for over a decade, an area she is extremely passionate about. Sam's work is grounded in a strong social justice and human rights approach, using decolonial practices that centres truth-telling and honours the historical experiences of First Nations Peoples in contemporary contexts. She recognises the ongoing impact of social determinants and acknowledges that these experiences are not separate from our lives, they are part of all our stories.

Leslie Purcell (Flowers)

Leslie (She/Him) also known by her gifted name Flowers, is a two spirited Bidjara person living in Rock Hampton in Queensland. Flowers has a Masters of Narrative Therapy and Community Work, in addition to a Diploma of Counselling and Group Work. Flowers has worked in child protection, family support, youth work and counselling. Flowers has an inner passion for healing connected to ways of doing, being and existing.

Rochelle Byrne

Rochelle "Rocky" Byrne (She/Her) is a Ngoorabul woman, a parent, grandparent and currently the Executive Officer of 2Spirits. Rocky has worked in various roles spending the last 20 years in Community Services in particular children, young people and families, and has formal education in Human Services. Rocky gets to work alongside folks, families and communities to raise the voices and visibility of our Rainbow mob.

Locky Bygrave

Locky (He/Him) is a proud Kamilaroi/Gamilaroi Queer man with a Bachelor of Social Work (Hons), living and working on Bidjigal country in Sydney. Locky brings clinical experience supporting people impacted by complex trauma, with a particular focus on sexual violence. Guided by First Nations ways of Knowing, being and doing. Locky grounds his practice in a holistic, human rights strengths-based framework that holds country, spirit and healing at the centre while holding a strong position of cultural advocacy.





Annie Monks

Annie (She/Her) is a Queer mixed race women of Indigenous, Italian, English and Irish heritage. She is a Mental Health Social Worker and Sexologist based on Bundjalung Country in Lismore, NSW. She works at the intersection of mental health, sexuality, and justice, centring decolonial frameworks in her practice. Annie's expertise lies in trauma-informed care, where she brings a critical lens to the systemic drivers of sexual violence. Her work is grounded in community, cultural safety, and the belief that healing is possible through collective and compassionate approaches.

Madi Day

Madi Day is a trans Murri who was raised on Dharug Ngurra and who lives and works in the First Nations LGBTQIA+SB community in Sydney. First Nations LGBTQIA+SB people continue the longest running protest to colonialism and carry an unbroken legacy of resistance to attacks on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, lives and systems of governance and kinship.

Tanieka McPhee

Tanieka (She/Her) is a proud Kaurareg, Murri & SSI cisgendered woman, who identifies as queer. She was born and raised in the tropics of Gimuy. Tanieka is deeply motivated to support community connection and improve wellbeing for our Rainbow mob.

Funding

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Background

On the 2nd of June 2025 space was held to discuss the literature review, guided by the following key questions:

- What are the key gaps or points of tension in the literature that the discussion paper should highlight?
- Which findings from the literature review are the most urgent or impactful to foreground in the discussion paper?
- Are there specific voices or populations underrepresented in the literature that the discussion paper should intentionally centre or advocate for?





- How do we balance academic evidence with lived experience, cultural knowledge, and community priorities?

The yarn brought deep insights from the wider group, centring frontline work, cultural practice, and personal journeys of advocacy, survival, and resistance. Their voices are not supplementary to this paper- they are its foundation. The group seeks to not only identify key gaps, tensions, and opportunities, but also to honour the responsibility of truth-telling, healing, and self-determination in this work. This discussion is a continuation of their leadership and an offering to the broader community and systems that must now be prepared to listen and act.

Purpose and Significance of a Discussion Paper

The literature review, though extensive, lacks the lived experience and cultural context that give true meaning to the subject of primary prevention in First Nations LGBTIQ+SB communities. This discussion paper seeks to:

- Influence policy, program design, and funding priorities.
- Centre the expertise of Blak LGBTIQ+SB people, particularly those working in sexual violence prevention.
- Highlight the urgent need for community-led, culturally grounded prevention strategies.

We speak from a place of love, community accountability, and a desire for change. The urgency of this work demands that our communities are no longer excluded from frameworks that concern our own safety and wellbeing.

Key Gaps and Points of Tension in the Literature

a) Cultural Invisibility and White Normativity

One of the most consistent critiques raised during the yarning session was the overwhelming presence of white normativity throughout the literature review. Participants described how much of the existing research is rooted in white, cisgender, and heterosexual perspectives, failing to account for the complex cultural and social realities of First Nations LGBTIQ+SB communities. This was seen not only in what was included, but also in what was left out - particularly in the omission of queer Blak

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relational norms, language, and cultural understandings of harm and healing. The framing of “perpetrator” and “victim,” for example, was flagged as fundamentally incompatible with community understandings that emphasise relational accountability and kinship based responses.

Several clinicians also highlighted the literature continued to reflect a heteronormative lens, even when attempting to be inclusive. Concepts such as gay cruising, drug use in sexual contexts (puff and play), or the realities of intimate partner violence in same-sex relationships were either ignored or framed in ways that felt alienating. Participants noted their lived experiences were either medicalised, misunderstood, or rendered invisible, reinforcing the message their realities were outside the scope of concern in mainstream prevention work. This failure to meaningfully engage with the cultural contexts of queer Blak people means existing prevention models are not only incomplete - they risk being actively harmful.

Finally, there was strong sentiment that if knowledge is not captured in white academic literature, it is often treated as non-existent or invalid. As one participant shared, *“if there’s not academic papers or research behind it, your existence isn’t as important or valid.”* This colonial dynamic of erasure where community knowledge, lived experience, and oral storytelling are dismissed was identified as a core barrier to culturally grounded prevention work. Participants called for a reimagining of what counts as evidence and expertise, advocating that community and cultural knowledge must be treated with equal weight in shaping prevention frameworks, funding decisions, and systemic responses to sexual violence.

b) Conflation of Sexual Violence with Family and Domestic Violence (FDV)

A key concern raised during the yarning session was the conflation of sexual violence with FDV throughout the literature review. Participants noted that while these forms of violence may intersect, they are not the same and must be understood through distinct frameworks. The failure to disaggregate data and discussion on sexual violence from FDV obscures the unique dynamics, contexts, and needs associated with each. For example, sexual violence also occurs outside of intimate partnerships, within hookup culture, or through community interactions - spaces not typically examined in FDV-focused research. As a result, services and policies shaped by FDV-centric models often fail to capture the full spectrum of sexual violence experienced by First Nations LGBTIQ+SB people.

This conflation is not just a matter of academic oversight - it directly affects the support available to survivors. Clinicians shared examples of queer clients being excluded from

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services or referred elsewhere because they didn't fit into narrowly defined FDV frameworks. For instance, in cases where both individuals in a same-sex relationship had experienced harm or where harm occurred outside a traditional "domestic" setting, services struggled to respond appropriately. This limited understanding also impacts funding, with programs and interventions primarily designed to respond to FDV being inappropriately applied to contexts of sexual violence, without addressing the specific drivers, impacts, and cultural considerations that differentiate them.

The group also reflected on how this conflation reinforces broader systemic failures. It contributes to gaps in prevention efforts, where the focus on FDV overshadows the need for targeted sexual violence prevention strategies- particularly in queer and trans Blak communities. Participants emphasised prevention approaches must move beyond domestic contexts and include community-based education, safe sexual health access, and culturally informed responses to hookup and online environments. Without these shifts, First Nations LGBTIQ+SB people continue to be underserved, misrepresented, and placed at increased risk by systems that fail to see the full scope of their experiences.

c) The Silence Around Systems Harm

Participants in the yarning session expressed deep frustration at the literature review's failure to adequately acknowledge the harm caused by systems themselves, particularly service systems that claim to support survivors. Many described how health, justice, and social service systems replicate the violence they purport to prevent, especially for First Nations LGBTIQ+SB people. The review, they felt, overlooked how these systems police and pathologise queer Blak bodies through rigid intake processes, punitive service models, and exclusionary practices. As one participant noted, services often impose "coercive control" on clients by demanding compliance with strict conditions - mirroring the very dynamics of control and surveillance they aim to address.

There was specific concern around how mainstream services weaponise complexity to deny access. Survivors who had also used harm, or who presented with co-occurring needs such as substance use or mental health challenges, were frequently excluded from care. One example shared was the refusal of domestic or sexual violence services to support queer individuals who had previously engaged in violence, despite their own history of victimisation. In these cases, participants observed that the system effectively abandons both prevention and healing. Rather than supporting nuanced, trauma-informed interventions, services defer responsibility through referral loops and

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risk-averse policies that ultimately leave queer Blak people unsupported and more vulnerable.

This systemic harm is compounded by a lack of cultural safety within both Aboriginal and LGBTIQ+ service spaces. Clinicians shared that in culturally specific services, queerness was often marginalised or rendered invisible, while queer-specific services lacked the cultural responsiveness to work respectfully with mob. The result is a fractured and siloed system that demands individuals choose which parts of their identities are “safe” to reveal in order to access care. This erasure and re-traumatisation by the system itself was named “institutional gaslighting” and was one of the most urgent and painful omissions in the literature review. Addressing sexual violence in our communities requires naming and dismantling these harmful structures, not simply adapting them.

Urgent Findings to Foreground

a) Absence of Disaggregated Data

The absence of disaggregated data on First Nations LGBTIQ+SB people in the literature review was identified as one of the most urgent and foundational gaps. Participants emphasised that without clear, identity-specific data, their communities remain invisible in both research and policy. As one clinician noted, *“It’s like we don’t even exist if we’re not counted.”* Current data collection methods often group First Nations people and LGBTIQ+ people separately but rarely explore the intersection. This means the unique experiences of queer mob, especially those affected by sexual violence are systematically excluded from the evidence base used to design services and allocate funding.

Several participants spoke about how small sample sizes are often used as a justification to exclude First Nations LGBTIQ+SB people from analysis in both national and state level reports. In quantitative research, if a subgroup is deemed too small, it is either statistically “adjusted” out or entirely omitted, which perpetuates a cycle of invisibility. One participant explained that this exclusion has a knock-on effect *“We’re always the smallest number in any study, so we’re always the first to be cut.”* Without disaggregated data, key issues such as prevalence, service access barriers, and community strengths remain undocumented, undermining efforts to develop tailored prevention and response strategies.

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This lack of visibility not only affects service provision but also contributes to broader social erasure. When policy makers and service providers look to the data and don't see queer Blak lives reflected, they assume there is no problem, or worse - no population. The group strongly advocated for First Nations LGBTIQ+SB-led research initiatives that are community-controlled and culturally grounded, ensuring data is not only collected ethically but also interpreted with nuance. They emphasised the importance of data sovereignty and the need to shift power into community hands, so that their stories, identities, and solutions are accurately represented and resourced.

b) Colonial Load and Vicarious Trauma

Throughout the yarning session, participants spoke openly about the profound emotional, spiritual, and cultural toll of doing this work- what they referred to as both *colonial load* and *vicarious trauma*. These burdens, they noted, are amplified for Blak LGBTIQ+SB clinicians and community workers who are often holding space for others while navigating their own histories of harm and marginalisation. The literature review, however, was silent on these realities. It failed to name or explore the daily weight carried by frontline workers who live at the intersections of race, gender, sexuality, and trauma, nor did it account for how systemic oppression is embedded in the structures they work within.

One participant discussed the realities of living and working in rural/remote communities naming sometimes individual workers may be “the only one” in their community trained to provide support, working in isolation, and being called on constantly without adequate professional or cultural support. The expectation to show up emotionally, culturally, and clinically is relentless. Many shared that this type of labour is rarely acknowledged, let alone resourced or remunerated properly. Vicarious trauma is not simply about hearing distressing stories; it's about carrying them in one's own body while also holding the historical and ongoing impact of colonisation, including working within Western colonial systems that are still perpetrating harm and abuse on the individuals these clinicians are walking alongside and supporting. The group described this as a “colonial load,” where being a safe person for community means absorbing pain across generations, identities and systems.

Participants called for workforce strategies that specifically recognise and respond to these intersecting burdens. This includes dedicated cultural supervision, flexible working arrangements, trauma-informed organisational policies, and meaningful recognition, financial and otherwise of the extra labour involved. The silence in the literature review around this issue was seen as particularly dangerous because it

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mirrors the silence within many institutions. Without acknowledging and addressing colonial load and vicarious trauma, systems will continue to burn out the very workers most capable of leading culturally safe and healing informed sexual violence prevention.

c) Weaponisation of Culture

Participants in the yarning session spoke powerfully about how cultural practices are sometimes weaponised to exclude LGBTIQ+SB mob from full participation in cultural life. This exclusion often stems from the imposition of colonial gender binaries, homophobia, and transphobia introduced through Christian missionary influence and now embedded in community structures. Many shared experiences of being denied access to ceremony, law, or cultural learning because of their sexual or gender identity. Sistergirls and Brotherboys, for example, have been excluded from gendered spaces; trans and non-binary mob denied roles in initiation or kinship systems; and queer young people told that their identities are “not part of culture.” This form of cultural gatekeeping causes deep spiritual and social harm, reinforcing shame, isolation, and a sense of cultural disconnection.

Participants also raised the confronting reality that culture itself can be manipulated to justify or conceal harm. In some instances, reconnection or initiation processes have been distorted to sexually exploit individuals- particularly those seeking belonging after experiences of disconnection. Although such incidents are not widespread, they are serious and remain largely unaddressed due to fears that public discussion will feed into racist, deficit-based narratives about Aboriginal communities. The group stressed that naming these harms is not an attack on culture itself, but rather a call to protect and uphold its integrity. By ignoring these dynamics, the literature review missed a critical opportunity to address how cultural exclusion, when shaped by colonial and discriminatory values, becomes a mechanism of violence. For prevention to be effective, it must include culturally sovereign, community led strategies that embrace the full diversity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander identities.

d) Complexity of Survivor and Perpetrator Identities

A central theme raised in the yarning session was the lack of recognition in the literature review of the complex, overlapping realities of people who have both experienced and used harm. Participants emphasised that the binary framing of “victim” and “perpetrator” does not reflect the lived experiences of many First Nations





LGBTIQ+SB people. In queer Blak communities, where relationships are often interwoven through kinship, survival, and shared trauma, individuals may occupy multiple roles across time and circumstance. One participant described the reality of working with clients in same-sex relationships who had both experienced and caused harm, and how services often failed to respond in nuanced or culturally safe ways. This oversimplification in the literature not only misrepresents people's experiences but also contributes to further marginalisation and service exclusion.

Clinicians shared stories of people being denied support services because they had been labelled as a perpetrator- despite also being a survivor of trauma, violence, or systemic harm. In one example, a person in a queer relationship who engaged in harmful behaviour lost access to counselling services altogether, with no alternative pathways for accountability, healing, or rehabilitation. This zero sum approach was described as harmful and counterproductive. It perpetuates cycles of violence by focusing solely on punitive responses rather than considering the underlying drivers, such as: colonisation, trauma, substance use, or cultural disconnection- that shape people's behaviours. Participants argued for approaches that acknowledge these complexities and prioritise care, healing, and accountability over exclusion such as restorative justice frameworks.

The group advocated for a paradigm shift in how services and systems respond to harm in First Nations LGBTIQ+SB communities. They called for frameworks that allow individuals to be held in both their pain and their responsibility. This includes trauma informed, culturally grounded models that support people to unpack their experiences, rebuild trust, and prevent further harm - without denying them the right to healing. The literature's failure to address this complexity was seen as a major limitation, reinforcing carceral and binary models that do not align with community values or needs. True prevention, participants argued, must involve honest, compassionate responses that honour relational accountability and support healing for all.

Underrepresented Populations to Centre

During the yarning session participants identified the following underrepresented populations within the literature review, which required further consideration moving forward for LGBTIQ+SB sexual violence prevention.

- **Two Spirit and Intersex Mob:**

Participants in the yarning session highlighted the near total absence of Two

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Spirit and intersex voices in the literature review, reflecting a broader trend of exclusion from both Blak and mainstream queer policy and research spaces. This invisibility was seen as a significant failure that reinforces erasure and limits the development of inclusive prevention strategies. While the discussion acknowledged that some content on Two Spirit and intersex identities was added late in the review process through advocacy, it was clear that this inclusion was minimal and insufficient. The group stressed that Two Spirit and intersex mob face unique forms of marginalisation, both within Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities where colonial binaries often dominate cultural narratives and within LGBTQIA+ spaces, where race and cultural identity are frequently overlooked. Their exclusion from national data, service design, and policy responses perpetuates a lack of safety, recognition, and resourcing. Participants called for specific, intentional inclusion of Two Spirit and intersex perspectives in all future research, funding, and program design to ensure that these communities are not just acknowledged but empowered to lead.

- **Young People:**

The absence of queer First Nations young people's voices in the literature review was a key concern raised during the yarning session. Participants emphasised that young people are not only among the most vulnerable to sexual violence but also most likely to engage in sexual violence, with research both internationally and nationally seeing a rise in peer to peer sexual harm. Young people hold critical insights into contemporary cultural, relational, and systemic dynamics, especially within schools, online spaces, and peer networks - despite this, their experiences were largely overlooked in the reviewed research. The group reflected on how young people often face exclusion from both mainstream and community spaces due to their sexuality, gender identity, age and lack of power, with little support available to navigate these intersecting pressures. Reports like *Walking Together*, *Catching Dreams* were cited as valuable because they centred youth perspectives on cultural safety and identity based harm, yet even such reports remain underutilised in shaping prevention policy. Participants called for research and program development to prioritise the voices and leadership of queer Blak youth, not only as a matter of inclusion but as essential to designing effective, forward-looking solutions.

- **Remote and Regional Communities:**

Feedback from the yarning session highlighted that access to culturally safe and





inclusive services is severely limited and often non-existent in many remote and regional communities. Participants shared that in some areas, there is only a single service provider attempting to meet all community needs, often without specialist training or support for working with LGBTIQ+SB people. This places enormous pressure and responsibility on individual workers, many of whom carry the cultural and emotional labour of their communities alone. Services are frequently fly-in-fly-out, inconsistent, or ill-equipped to provide gender affirming or queer inclusive care. One participant noted that even accessing basic sexual health care, like PrEP or gender affirming hormone therapy, required long-distance travel and risked forcibly outing people within their communities due to lack of confidentiality or having to use specific LGBTIQ services due to mainstream health services being unable to provide this healthcare. These systemic barriers, largely unaddressed in the literature review, contribute to ongoing isolation, fear, and unmet health and safety needs for queer Blak people in remote regions. Participants called for sustained investment in community-led, place-based service models that reflect local knowledge, build trust, and centre cultural safety for all identities.

- **Trans and Gender Diverse Mob:**

The yarning session revealed a deep concern that trans and gender diverse mob are routinely excluded or erased within both queer and Aboriginal support systems, an issue notably absent from the literature review. Participants shared trans mob are often denied access to services such as women's domestic violence shelters or culturally specific programs due to rigid, binary understandings of gender. Within some Aboriginal community services, colonial gender norms and limited awareness of trans identities create environments where gender diverse people feel invisible or unsafe. At the same time, mainstream queer services frequently lack the cultural responsiveness to work respectfully with Blak clients, leaving trans and gender diverse mob without a truly safe or affirming place to seek support. This dual marginalisation reinforces systemic barriers to care and increases vulnerability to harm. Participants stressed the urgent need for services that are both culturally safe and gender-affirming, and that are co-designed and led by First Nations trans and gender diverse people themselves, to ensure responses are grounded in lived experience and community knowledge





Balancing Academic Evidence with Lived Experience and Cultural Knowledge

Our truths do not always exist in peer reviewed journals. Storytelling, yarning, and cultural practices are valid and powerful evidence bases. This paper argues for an expanded definition of knowledge and authority.

Community and cultural knowledge must sit alongside academic research. Without this, prevention strategies will remain ineffective and harmful.

Our recommendation is that all research, policy and practice work includes:

Cultural governance and leadership

Participants in the yarning session strongly advocated for the inclusion of cultural governance and leadership in all research, policy, and practice related to the primary prevention of sexual violence, particularly within First Nations LGBTIQ+SB communities. This recommendation emerged in direct response to the literature review's failure to reflect culturally grounded perspectives or engage with communities in a meaningful way. Several attendees noted that without cultural leadership, research risks being extractive, misrepresentative, or reinforcing colonial harm. One participant emphasised that *"if people play with cultural fire, they'll get burnt,"* underscoring the need for cultural humility and accountability when engaging with sacred, community based knowledge. The group stressed that cultural governance must not be symbolic it must include decision making power, be grounded in local protocols, and prioritise the voices of those most impacted by the issues at hand. Embedding cultural leadership ensures that prevention strategies are not only ethical and respectful, but also effective, because they reflect the lived realities, strengths, and needs of the communities they intend to serve.

Lived experience advisory bodies

The yarning session made clear that research, policy, and practice in the area of sexual violence prevention must be guided by lived experience advisory bodies particularly those made up of First Nations LGBTIQ+SB people. Participants expressed frustration that the literature review lacked the direct voices and insights of those with personal and professional experience navigating violence, exclusion, and healing. This absence not only weakens the relevance of the findings but perpetuates a pattern of decision making about communities without them. Several contributors highlighted that lived experience is not just anecdotal it is a form of expertise rooted in survival, cultural knowledge, and frontline practice. Advisory bodies, they argued, must have real authority in shaping the direction, language, and priorities of research and policy development. Embedding lived experience ensures that strategies are grounded in

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reality, not assumption, and that responses reflect the diversity and complexity of queer Blak lives. Without this inclusion, prevention efforts will continue to miss the mark and risk reproducing the very harms they seek to address.

Community validation and accountability processes

Participants in the yarning session emphasised that community validation and accountability processes must be embedded in all research, policy, and practice related to sexual violence prevention in First Nations LGBTIQ+SB communities. A key part of this call was the recognition of data sovereignty, the right of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to govern the collection, ownership, and use of data about their communities. Participants expressed frustration that much of the existing literature, including the reviewed research, had been developed without proper consultation, transparency, or community control over how data was gathered, interpreted, or shared. This lack of accountability was seen as a continuation of colonial research practices that extract knowledge and personal stories without returning benefit or ensuring respectful representation. Several contributors shared that they are often left out of the loop once research is published, with little opportunity to correct misrepresentations or influence how findings are applied. The group called for structured and ongoing validation processes that centre cultural authority, provide opportunities for communities to review and challenge content, and ensure data is held, interpreted, and disseminated in ways that honour sovereignty and self-determination. Without these mechanisms in place, policy and practice risk reinforcing the very systems of harm they claim to address.

Recommendations

1. Fund First Nations LGBTIQ+SB-led Organisations

- Provide direct funding to deliver prevention programs.

2. National Data Reforms

- Mandate collection of inclusive, disaggregated data.
- Support data sovereignty through community control.

3. Build an Inclusive Service System

- Resource LGBTQ+SB to engage in capacity building across the LGBTIQ and Aboriginal Community Controlled.
- Ensure all services are trans-inclusive and affirming.

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- Minimum benchmark training for LGBTIQ organisations on cultural responsive practice and Aboriginal Community Controlled on LGBTIQ+SB responsive practice.

4. Tiered Public Health Response

- Establish primary, secondary, and tertiary interventions that specifically include First Nations LGBTIQ+SB needs.

5. Invest in Workforce and Colonial Load Management

- Acknowledge and remunerate colonial load.
- Provide cultural supervision and healing support.

6. Truth-telling and Healing-centred Practice

- Create spaces for collective healing and dialogue.
- Frame prevention through cultural continuity and community accountability.

Conclusion

There is no prevention without truth-telling. The voices of First Nations LGBTIQ+SB communities have for too long been silenced, sidelined, or extracted without care. This discussion paper has highlighted the deep systemic gaps and cultural tensions that continue to undermine meaningful prevention efforts - most notably, the erasure of queer Blak experiences in national data, research, and policy. Participants called for a shift away from white led inquiry and toward genuine structural transformation that centres cultural governance, lived experience, and community validation. Prevention must start with listening to those who live at the intersections of racialised, gendered, and sexual oppression, and valuing their knowledge not as supplementary, but as central to designing safe and effective systems.

The recommendations from this paper outline a clear, community led path forward. These include funding First Nations LGBTIQ+SB led organisations to deliver culturally grounded prevention programs, and implementing national data reforms that ensure inclusive, disaggregated data collection governed by data sovereignty principles. We must build inclusive service systems that are both queer and Blak, one that affirms trans and gender diverse mob, and recognises the lived complexity of survivor/perpetrator identities. A tiered public health approach must be adopted, spanning primary prevention to tertiary intervention with culturally specific responses embedded

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at every level. Investment is also urgently needed to support the workforce, including acknowledgement of colonial load, cultural supervision, and vicarious trauma supports for First Nations LGBTIQ+SB practitioners who are doing this sacred, heavy work on the frontlines.

This paper is not a conclusion; it is a call to action. Truth telling must be embedded in all responses to sexual violence, not as an afterthought but as a starting point. We must create spaces for collective healing and accountability, and resource prevention work that is framed through cultural continuity and community care. Prevention is sacred work. It must be handled with humility, deep cultural respect, and a commitment to change that is led by those most impacted. The path forward is already known within community - it simply needs to be honoured, funded, and followed.

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