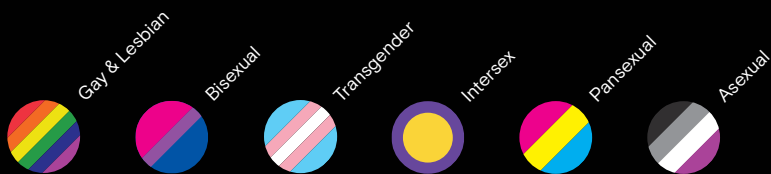


CAPITAL^{OF}

EQUALITY

An ACT Government strategy
to deliver equitable outcomes
for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans,
Intersex & Queer (LGBTIQ+) people

2019–2023



In this Strategy, LGBTIQ+ is an umbrella term respectfully used to refer to the diversity of individuals that are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex and/or queer.

It is also intended to capture diverse sexualities and gender identities, including (but not limited to) people who are agender, non-binary, gender fluid, asexual and pansexual, as well as individuals who prefer to use specialised personal terms to describe their own sex, gender or sexuality.

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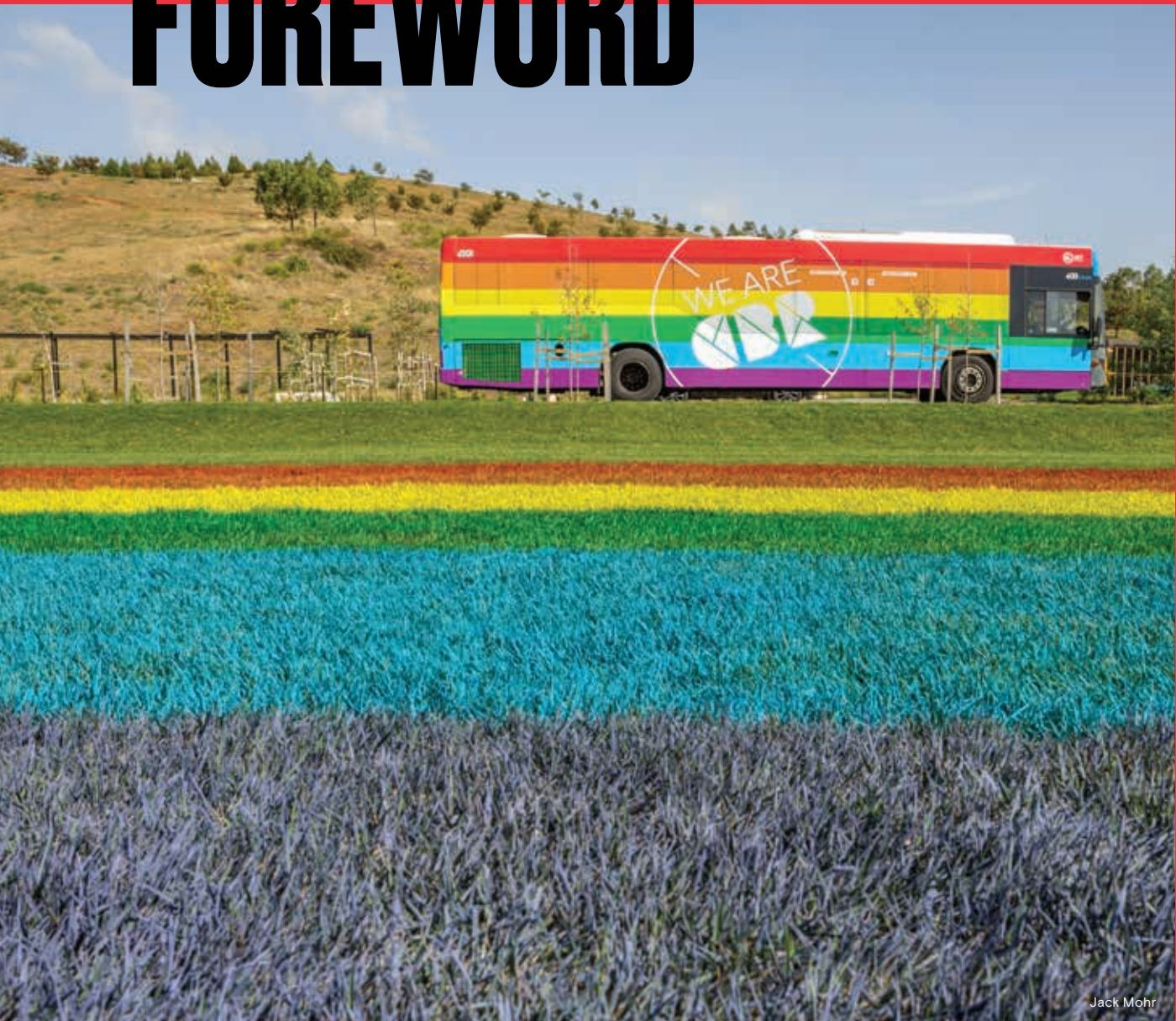
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CHIEF MINISTER'S FOREWORD



Jack Mohr

I AM VERY PLEASED TO PRESENT *CAPITAL OF EQUALITY*, THE FIRST ACT LGBTIQ+ STRATEGY ON BEHALF OF THE ACT GOVERNMENT.



There is a long history in the Territory of LGBTIQ+ people coming together to build connections, to support each other and to advocate for the realisation of human rights for all. Much of the progress we have made is due to this work – almost always carried out in the community and often on a voluntary basis.

The ACT Government supports the realisation of LGBTIQ+ equality as part of our broader commitment to social inclusion and equality. The right to equality is enshrined in the ACT's own *Human Rights Act 2004*, which we are proud to have been the first jurisdiction in Australia to enact.

While our jurisdiction has seen some significant gains, there is more work to do – particularly in addressing the needs and priorities of trans and intersex Canberrans. We also have more to do to meet the needs of the most vulnerable members of our communities – including homeless young people and isolated older persons.

We need to better understand and reflect the specific needs of members of LGBTIQ+ communities who are also Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community members, are from a culturally and linguistically diverse background or who have a disability.

Our vision is for Canberra to be the most LGBTIQ+ welcoming and inclusive city in Australia – a city where we are all visible, valued and respected.

Capital of Equality is another important step in achieving this vision. It recognises the previous work of both community and government and builds on the strength and expertise of our communities. It sets out our commitment as a government and delivers a policy framework to guide our efforts over the next four years (2019–2023).

I would like to thank everyone who has contributed to this work so far. The LGBTIQ+ Ministerial Advisory Council has been an invaluable source of expertise and I am grateful for their commitment and hard work. I wish to acknowledge our LGBTIQ+ elders and all the community members who shared their experiences and expertise via surveys and community forums. These stories have shaped the Strategy and will continue to drive work to advance LGBTIQ+ rights in the ACT.

I am excited about the future of Canberra. Our community will be at its strongest when we are all participating fully – investing our diverse talents, passions, knowledge and abilities. It is my hope that through the implementation of this Strategy – and the ongoing work of our community – that our city's reputation for openness, inclusiveness and respect continues to grow.

Andrew Barr MLA
Chief Minister
Minister for Social Inclusion and Equality



OUR LONG-TERM VISION:

**FOR CANBERRA TO BE THE MOST
LGBTIQ+ WELCOMING AND INCLUSIVE
CITY IN AUSTRALIA**

**ACHIEVING THIS MEANS THAT LGBTIQ+ PEOPLE,
THEIR FAMILIES AND COMMUNITIES ARE:**

VISIBLE, VALUED, RESPECTED



IN THE MEDIUM TERM, OUR OBJECTIVES ARE:



**FOSTERING
UNDERSTANDING
AND AWARENESS
SO THAT
BARRIERS TO
EQUALITY CAN
BE REMOVED**



**UNDERTAKING
SERVICE
IMPROVEMENTS
TO DELIVER MORE
INCLUSIVE AND
ACCESSIBLE
SERVICES**



**CONTINUING
REFORMS TO
HAVE EQUAL
RIGHTS
REFLECTED
IN LAW, DATA
AND POLICIES**

TO ACHIEVE THESE OBJECTIVES, WE WILL:



Equip service providers with good guidance about supporting LGBTIQ+ people, including through training and awareness

Increase the profile of LGBTIQ+ sector organisations and their service offerings

Support workplace settings to be safe and inclusive

Support schools and other education settings to be safe and inclusive

Promote inclusion and visibility of our LGBTIQ+ communities and leaders

Support services and businesses to demonstrate they care about delivering high quality services to LGBTIQ+ people

Acknowledge the contributions of LGBTIQ+ individuals and organisations to the Canberra community

Support the availability of services that meet the needs of LGBTIQ+ people at all life stages

Support mainstream services to be LGBTIQ+ safe, inclusive and appropriate, particularly in settings such as health, aged care and child protection

Ensure that services provide the supports required without the need to navigate complex systems

Create an authorising environment for all ACT Government directorates to drive better outcomes for LGBTIQ+ people

Support partnerships to provide targeted, peer-led services for LGBTIQ+ communities

Ensure LGBTIQ+ people have equality before the law, equal protection and benefits of the law

Consider and include LGBTIQ+ people, their families and communities in policy creation, program delivery and evaluation

Collect and use data in a way that lets us understand and meet the needs of LGBTIQ+ individuals and communities

Provide LGBTIQ+ people with easily accessible information about their rights

Ensure LGBTIQ+ people can live their lives safely and feel safe inside and outside their homes

Improve support for LGBTIQ+ victims of crime




INTRODUCTION





THE ACT GOVERNMENT IS PROUD OF OUR CITY'S REPUTATION AS A FAIR, WELCOMING AND INCLUSIVE COMMUNITY THAT CELEBRATES DIVERSITY IN ALL ITS FORMS.



Through our policies, programs and investments, we are committed to creating equal opportunities by supporting and empowering all Canberrans as our city continues to grow. We are a stronger community when everyone can participate to their full potential.

Canberra has an active and connected LGBTIQ+ community, which has been a driving force in achieving reforms to Territory laws, regulations and policies to achieve greater protections for human rights. Several community-based and peer-led organisations have been at the forefront of these changes and continue to be drivers of change today.

The LGBTIQ+ Ministerial Advisory Council was established in 2012 to provide practical and strategic advice to the ACT Government. Since its establishment, the expertise of Ministerial Advisory Council members has contributed greatly to the development of government policy. For example, the pioneering reforms of 2014, which enabled legal recognition of sex and gender diverse people in the ACT, owed much to the hard work and perseverance of the Ministerial Advisory Council.

In 2017 the ACT Government established the Office for LGBTIQ+ Affairs within the Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate. Working in partnership with the Ministerial Advisory

Council and the community, the Office engages in a range of initiatives to support and strengthen LGBTIQ+ people, their families, communities and allies.

There have been many advances in recent years, but some LGBTIQ+ people in Canberra continue to experience various forms of rejection, discrimination, harassment and violence. Evidence from our community partners indicates that LGBTIQ+ people are more likely than the wider population in the ACT to experience mental and physical health challenges, unemployment, poverty, homelessness, social exclusion, and are more likely to use alcohol and other drugs.

Like the general Canberra community, the LGBTIQ+ community does not have a universal experience. There are many LGBTIQ+ individuals who are educationally, socially and financially vulnerable, while other members of the LGBTIQ+ community are doing well – with higher average incomes and levels of education than the general population.

This Strategy acknowledges the diversity of our own communities and has been created to guide the development of actions and initiatives to ensure the Territory continues to lead in reforming laws, improving services, supporting peer-led organisations, and opening doors to participation for LGBTIQ+ people in all areas of public life.

This Strategy sits within the ACT Government's broader commitment to social inclusion and equality and is intended to work in conjunction with other initiatives addressing the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Canberrans, children and young people, Canberrans with a disability, culturally and linguistically diverse communities, seniors, women and veterans.

These initiatives include: the ACT Women's Plan, the Disability Justice Strategy, Future of Education Strategy (particularly the implementation principle of equity); the ACT Education Directorate's Safe and Inclusive Schools Initiative; Early Support by Design; a Charter of Rights for Victims of Crime; the Family Safety Hub; the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Agreement; and the Multicultural Strategy. *Capital of Equality* acknowledges and supports the role these initiatives play in addressing compounding disadvantage.

The Strategy is not seeking to displace grass roots and community-led initiatives. It reinforces the ACT Government's commitment to work collaboratively with people who are part of the LGBTIQ+ community, as well as other communities, in a way that encourages self-determination and community-led solutions.

As government, we have more work to do to understand how different identities, backgrounds and experiences can influence and support our work.

When implementing this Strategy, the ACT Government will continue to build relationships and connections to diversify the voices we are hearing from, so that we can better understand and reflect the needs of the whole community.



WHO IS THIS STRATEGY FOR?

Capital of Equality is for all Canberrans, at all stages of their lives.

It is for children and young people who have unique experiences as children of LGBTIQ+ parents, who are advocates and allies in their communities and who are same-sex attracted, trans and gender diverse and/or who have particular kinds of bodies and characteristics.

It is for adults who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans and gender diverse, intersex and/or queer as well as their families, communities and allies.

It is also for government agencies, service providers, community groups and businesses – to help organisations build capacity to better support the needs of LGBTIQ+ people.



HOW HAS THE STRATEGY BEEN DEVELOPED?

The development of the Strategy has been a collaboration between the Office for LGBTIQ+ Affairs and an inter-directorate LGBTIQ+ Working Group (comprising senior representatives from all directorates: ACT Health; Community Services; Education; Justice and Community Safety; Transport and City Services; Access Canberra; Treasury; and Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development).

The Strategy has also been guided by input from the ACT LGBTIQ+ Ministerial Advisory Council and the ACT Human Rights Commission. The membership of the LGBTIQ+ Ministerial Advisory Council includes people with diverse skills, life experiences and expertise who represent the spectrum of the LGBTIQ+ population.

Public consultations took place through the ACT Government's Your Say webpage supported by a discussion paper, through online and paper surveys conducted during SpringOUT, two 'Think Tank' events with LGBTIQ+ community members discussing priority issues and ideas for the future, targeted consultations with specific organisations representing the asexual, trans, gender diverse and intersex communities, and a range of conversations with government and community-based agencies held in a variety of venues across Canberra.

All these conversations, together with research conducted by the Office for LGBTIQ+ Affairs, have informed the development of this Strategy.

WHAT WE HEARD

In our conversations with community we heard that, although there has been significant progress, the rights of LGBTIQ+ people in the ACT are not yet fully respected, protected and realised.

We heard that while there are many examples across our city of places where people feel safe and valued, this is not necessarily spread evenly.

We heard about some of the difficulties people have in accessing services that meet their needs. Both public and community services have historically been – and in many cases still are – designed only to accommodate cisgender¹¹ heterosexual individuals and family units.

Compounding this, much of the population research and data collections at the local and federal levels do not include sexual orientation, gender identity or variations in sex characteristics.

To develop effective policies, programs and services, and to inform social, political and legislative reforms, accurate population data is needed. Without it, people with variations in sex characteristics, gender identities and sexual orientations risk being invisible to society, with their needs neither identified nor understood.

We heard that systemic discrimination and unconscious bias can have an insidious effect on an individual's health and wellbeing. The flow-on impacts of this can be felt acutely by certain LGBTIQ+ individuals and communities in the form of income disparity and poverty, lower civic and social participation, poor health and less education, among other factors.

¹¹ A cisgender person is a person whose gender identity corresponds with that person's biological sex assigned at birth.

These issues are especially complex because the LGBTIQ+ community is diverse. We heard about how important it is that ACT public servants involved in decisions that impact LGBTIQ+ people have adequate knowledge of the significant challenges and risk factors that this population may face, as well as understand the key differences between the individuals and communities within this population. Some examples that have been emphasised through engagements with the community include the following:

- Some lesbian, gay, bisexual, asexual and pansexual people feel their specific needs go unaddressed when accessing services – particularly healthcare – so they sometimes opt out of seeking the care that they need. Many also reported experiencing or fearing discrimination.
- Trans and gender diverse people face additional legal and administrative hurdles associated with their identity (which can also be financially burdensome) and face high rates of discrimination, harassment and violence in the community.

- Being born with a variation in sex characteristics (commonly known as intersex) can bring a distinct set of challenges to other communities encompassed by the LGBTIQ+ acronym. As reflected in the 2017 Darlington Statement by Australian and Aotearoa/New Zealand intersex community organisations and independent advocates, considerations relating to bodily integrity, physical autonomy and self-determination are key. The intersex community is diverse, with over 40 currently recognised variations that present in a wide variety of ways. Low levels of general community understanding and awareness about what intersex means can lead to discrimination, or hinder access to competent and respectful services.

The removal of all barriers for LGBTIQ+ individuals and communities will require cultural change and systemic improvements in the ACT over the long-term. It is particularly important that the government continues to listen to people who are LGBTIQ+, their families and allies, and work collaboratively at every stage over the lifetime of the Strategy.

Information about the consultation we conducted, including the “What We Heard Report” and discussion paper can all be accessed at yoursay.gov.au/lgbtiq-strategy.

HOW THE STRATEGY IS ORGANISED

Capital of Equality is built around an overarching vision. This is the high level and long-term outcome that we want for our city.

To achieve that vision, the Strategy sets out three key objectives for the next four years. Each objective is linked to the actions to be undertaken to deliver the outcomes we seek. These are intentionally high level and are intended to *guide* thinking about what can be and what needs to be done.

The specific initiatives to be implemented will be laid out in a series of Action Plans over the life of the Strategy. The first of these Action Plans will be developed in the first quarter of 2019-20.

To be effective, the government will need to take an innovative and consultative approach that is responsive to changing circumstances. The Strategy is intended to provide direction, but outcomes will be driven by the Action Plans, which can be flexible and dynamic, so that adaptations can be made as we learn new things.



VISION

**OUR VISION IS FOR
CANBERRA TO BE
THE MOST LGBTIQ+
WELCOMING AND
INCLUSIVE CITY
IN AUSTRALIA.**

THIS MEANS CANBERRA IS A PLACE WHERE: LGBTIQ+ PEOPLE, THEIR FAMILIES AND COMMUNITIES ARE VISIBLE, VALUED, RESPECTED

The table below provides examples of the types of changes that will signal we are moving in the right direction.

MOVING AWAY FROM...	WHERE WE WANT TO BE...
Limited awareness and understanding in service systems of the needs of people who are LGBTIQ+	Organisations and workers understand the unique and intersecting needs of LGBTIQ+ people and are given tools to make reasonable adjustments for those needs
Services are disjointed with gaps in service provision and few reasonable adjustments are made	Services are informed and skilled, and provide coordinated and responsive supports to LGBTIQ+ people
Discrimination embedded in, or enabled by, ACT legislation	Equal legal status and recognition for LGBTIQ+ people, their families and communities is achieved
Some LGBTIQ+ people experience poorer health and wellbeing outcomes than the general population	Improved health and wellbeing of LGBTIQ+ people and their families
LGBTIQ+ people continue to be exposed to violence	LGBTIQ+ people and their families live their lives safely, and feel safe both inside and outside of their homes
LGBTIQ+ people continue to face barriers to full participation in public life	Full participation of LGBTIQ+ people and their families' involvement in all areas of public life
Lack of safe and inclusive spaces for LGBTIQ+ people	More safe and inclusive spaces for LGBTIQ+ people to build a sense of community and support social connections
Data gathering and information sharing is limited	Services undertake focused research and collect data about our LGBTIQ+ communities

OBJECTIVES

THE STRATEGY IDENTIFIES THREE OBJECTIVES TO DIRECT ACT GOVERNMENT ACTIONS OVER THE NEXT FOUR YEARS:



01

Fostering **understanding and awareness** so that barriers to equality can be removed



02

Undertaking **service improvements** to deliver more inclusive and accessible services



03

Continuing **reforms** to have equal rights reflected in law, data and policies

01— FOSTERING UNDERSTANDING AND AWARENESS SO THAT BARRIERS TO EQUALITY CAN BE REMOVED



This means collaborating with community partners to equip the ACT public sector and mainstream services with increased knowledge and understanding of the different LGBTIQ+ populations throughout the community. This will build the competence of the ACT public sector and mainstream services to address the diverse needs of LGBTIQ+ populations and protect their rights as enshrined in the *Discrimination Act 1991* and the *Human Rights Act 2004*.

LGBTIQ+ people will not receive equal access to services unless ACT Government services and employees understand the specific and intersecting needs of LGBTIQ+ people and are trained in how to respond appropriately, what people's rights are, and what supports are available. Provision of education and guidance resources on LGBTIQ+ issues for frontline workers in the services sector and policy makers can make a significant difference. It can also assist frontline workers who are endeavouring to provide a good level of service but feel constrained by a lack of knowledge, training and resources.

It is important that more LGBTIQ+ people are in the public eye, helping to increase awareness and understanding of the experiences of LGBTIQ+ people. We will ensure the voices of more community members can be heard through community-based events and

activities that support increased visibility, education and awareness of LGBTIQ+ people and culture; by ensuring equal consideration of LGBTIQ+ people in leadership positions on ACT boards and committees, and by supporting young and emerging LGBTIQ+ leaders.

To achieve this, we will:

Equip service providers with good guidance about supporting LGBTIQ+ people, including through training and awareness

Increase the profile of LGBTIQ+ sector organisations and their service offerings

Support workplace settings to be safe and inclusive

Support schools and other education settings to be safe and inclusive

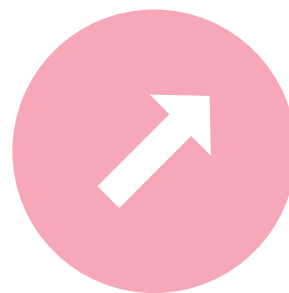
Promote inclusion and visibility of our LGBTIQ+ communities and leaders

Support services and businesses to demonstrate they care about delivering high quality service to LGBTIQ+ people

Acknowledge the contributions of LGBTIQ+ individuals and organisations to the Canberra community



02 – UNDERTAKING SERVICE IMPROVEMENTS TO DELIVER MORE INCLUSIVE AND ACCESSIBLE SERVICES



This means ensuring LGBTIQ+ people have equitable access to services and that they receive support that is both appropriate to their experiences and responsive to their needs across all stages of life.

This includes services delivered by government, as well as those offered in the community and by the private sector.

We greatly value the existing work being carried out by community organisations, social groups and LGBTIQ+ individuals – both in delivering services directly and in assisting others to deliver services better.

We will continue to encourage and support these organisations, groups and individuals to build on existing community strengths and engage in peer-led reform. We will also work to encourage and support continued service delivery improvements in the private sector.

To achieve this, we will:

Support the availability of services that meet the needs of LGBTIQ+ people across all life stages

Support mainstream services to be LGBTIQ+ safe, inclusive and appropriate, particularly in settings such as health, aged care and child protection

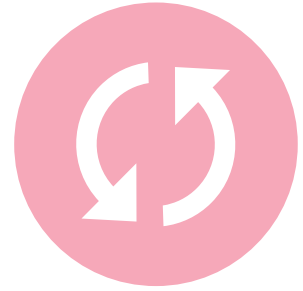
Ensure that services provide the supports required without the need to navigate complex systems

Create an authorising environment for all ACT Government directorates to drive better outcomes for LGBTIQ+ people

Support partnerships to provide targeted, peer-led services for LGBTIQ+ communities



03 — CONTINUING REFORMS TO HAVE EQUAL RIGHTS REFLECTED IN LAW, DATA AND POLICIES



This means reviewing and reforming our Territory laws, policies and service models to ensure LGBTIQ+ human rights are reflected and respected.

This includes the collection of information and data about LGBTIQ+ people in Canberra to inform the design and implementation of policy, programs and services.

It involves people who are LGBTIQ+ knowing their rights and being able to express their views.

It also includes enhancing the way our laws, policies and systems are implemented, so that responses address LGBTIQ+ people's needs, and we achieve and measure change.

To achieve this, we will:

Ensure LGBTIQ+ people have equality before the law, equal protection and benefits of the law

Consider and include LGBTIQ+ people, their families and communities in policy creation, program delivery and evaluation

Collect and use data in a way that lets us understand and meet the needs of LGBTIQ+ individuals and communities

Provide LGBTIQ+ people with easily accessible information about their rights

Ensure LGBTIQ+ people can live their lives safely and feel safe inside and outside their homes

Improved support for LGBTIQ+ victims of crime



REPORTING & ANALYSIS

TWO TIERS OF REPORTING WILL SUPPORT US IN MONITORING PERFORMANCE AGAINST THE STRATEGY.

Directorates will report against whole of government Action Plans that support the delivery of the Strategy and will update actions over the life of the Strategy.

An Outcomes Framework will track performance against the three objectives identified in the Strategy and assist us to measure the impact of the actions we are taking.

Progress against actions will be reported annually to government and made publicly available via an annual statement of performance by the Minister for Social Inclusion and Equality.







HOW

WE



GOT



HERE



