

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander LGBTIQ+ Sistergirl and Brotherboy domestic and family violence consultation report for the Northern Territory

Consultation report for Changing with pride: A national framework to prevent violence
against LGBTIQ+ people



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Acknowledgement of Country

Our Watch and Rainbow Health Australia at the Australian Research Centre in Sex, Health and Society (ARCSHS) acknowledge and pay our respects to the Traditional Owners of the land on which our offices are located, the Wurundjeri people of the Kulin Nation. As national organisations, we also acknowledge the Traditional Owners and custodians of Country across Australia, and pay our respects to them, their cultures and their Elders past, present and future.

Our Watch and Rainbow Health Australia also acknowledge organisations and advocates working to advance and protect the human rights, health, wellbeing and safety of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander LGBTIQ+ people, including Sistergirls and Brotherboys.



This report was prepared by Jackson Fairchild and Karla McGrady for Rainbow Health Australia and Our Watch.

About Rainbow Health Australia and Our Watch

Rainbow Health Australia (RHA) supports LGBTIQ+ health and wellbeing nationally through research and knowledge translation, training, resources, policy advice and service accreditation through the Rainbow Tick. RHA is a program of the Australian Research Centre in Sex, Health and Society (ARCSHS) at La Trobe University. Through evidence and capability building and sector coordination, RHA is a national leader in the prevention of violence against LGBTIQ+ people. An integral part of RHA's work is building partnerships with government, researchers, community, organisations and service providers to create equity and inclusion.

Our Watch is Australia's national organisation for the primary prevention of gender-based violence. We work to embed gender equality and prevent violence where Australians live, learn, work and socialise. Our Watch provides the national leadership, evidence, implementation capability, workforce development, public reach, and coordination needed to embed prevention across systems, institutions and communities. We convene governments, researchers, practitioners, peak bodies, community leaders, and specialist sectors to strengthen the connections between policy, evidence, and implementation.

We sincerely thank everyone who took part in these consultations.
Your insights and support have been invaluable to the development of
*Changing with pride: A national framework to prevent violence against
LGBTIQ+ people.*

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Executive summary

This report summarises the findings of a consultation process with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans and gender diverse, intersex, queer, asexual and aromantic (LGBTIQA+), Sistergirl and Brotherboy community members, leaders, Elders and organisations in the Northern Territory.

This work is part of a national consultation aimed at shaping *Changing with pride: A national framework to prevent violence against LGBTIQA+ people*. The development of this framework has been led in partnership by Rainbow Health Australia and Our Watch.

Consultation took place in September 2025. This report is shared to demonstrate accountability to participants and the communities they serve. It is also published as a community-owned resource to support ongoing advocacy and policy reform at local and state levels, and to guide culturally safe and effective practice for practitioners and sector leaders.

This report is intended to be read alongside the *National consultation report for Changing with pride*, while also standing on its own as a Northern Territory-specific account of what was heard and what needs to change.

This report is one of 2 reports focused on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Sistergirl and Brotherboy communities. A report focused on findings from consultation in Queensland has been developed separately, in recognition of the unique experiences and needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander LGBTIQA+ Sistergirl and Brotherboy communities in each region. The Queensland ional consultation reports can be found at www.ourwatch.org.au/change-the-story/changing-with-pride

KEY FINDINGS INCLUDE:

- Violence prevention and response must be community-led and grounded in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander self-determination. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander LGBTIQA+ leadership and organisations need sustained resourcing and authority to lead an integrated response to violence on community terms and in sustainable ways, and to partner with mainstream systems to lift safety and capability.
- Primary prevention should directly address the impacts of colonisation, including imposed gender norms, homophobia and transphobia. There are practical, culturally safe approaches that help communities yarn about gender, stigma, power and violence; challenge the myth that gender and sexual diversity is 'new'; and reconnect with cultural memory, Lore and healing.
- Education is a key prevention lever across communities and systems, including schools, police, health care, courts and support services.
- A worsening social climate is intensifying risk, including a broader backlash against social progress and a global rise in racism, transphobia, homophobia and misogyny. Male online influencers, social media and political discourse are shaping harmful attitudes, particularly among boys and young men, and increasing resistance to gender equity and LGBTIQA+ inclusion work.
- Urgent action is needed to address gaps in family violence and first response systems that often fail Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander LGBTIQA+ Sistergirl and Brotherboy people, and can cause further harm, especially in regional and remote areas.
- Justice and legislative reform are needed to strengthen protections and improve accountability.

Consultation approach

The goal of this consultation was to engage Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander LGBTIQ+ Sistergirl and Brotherboy community members, leaders, Elders, and organisations and their allies in culturally safe and inclusive ways to:

- better understand the lived experiences of domestic, family and intimate partner violence for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander LGBTIQ+ Sistergirls and Brotherboys, and what drives this violence
- better understand how the drivers of violence against Aboriginal women overlap with the drivers of violence for LGBTIQ+ communities
- build relationships with key leaders and advocates in LGBTIQ+ Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities
- learn what Aboriginal LGBTIQ+ communities see as essential actions for preventing and responding to violence
- ensure Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives and expertise are included in the stakeholder report and framework.

The consultation engaged participants through a combination of individual and group in-person yarns. Sessions were co-facilitated by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander facilitators with LGBTIQ+ awareness and an external consultant trained in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural safety.

Consultation was guided by the following principles, developed in consultation with Our Watch's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Strategy team and key stakeholders:

- Avoid being extractive. If we are seeking advice, wisdom and innovative practice knowledge from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, we must meet them in the spirit of genuine partnership. This means prioritising authenticity and relationship-building over transactional consultation. Engagement should be seen as the first step in an ongoing relationship.
- Recognise that no two communities are the same, and adapt approaches to respect local context.
- Acknowledge and value the knowledge shared by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders by ensuring that their voices influence outcomes.
- Commit to upholding Indigenous people's rights to control, maintain, protect and develop their Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property (ICIP) in accordance with Article 31 of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. We acknowledge that the insights from the consultation may incorporate ICIP and agree that ownership of any ICIP will remain with the relevant Traditional Owners. We promise to only use ICIP in accordance with this agreement and will attribute the relevant Traditional Owners. If either Rainbow Health Australia or Our Watch wants to use the ICIP in any other way, they must first get permission.
- Clearly communicate the purpose of the consultation, how input will be used, the limitations of the project, and follow up with participants on outcomes.
- Recognise that conversations around prevention in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities often include healing, which can bring up difficult issues. For LGBTIQ+ Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander people this can be particularly sensitive and difficult to talk about with people who don't have shared lived experience. We need to ensure adequate support is available during consultations to support this.

- Recognise that conversations are very likely to involve discussion of violence itself. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities don't separate the concepts of prevention, early intervention, response and recovery in the same way. We need to appreciate and hold the generous offering of those who attend the discussion. Asking people not to talk about violence will not be appropriate and could even be harmful.
- Engage local Aboriginal organisations to guide the process and support co-facilitation where possible. Where possible, use existing relationships to make an initial connection. Where this is not possible, engage an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff member to accompany us.
- Pay community members, organisations, and facilitators for their time, and ensure Aboriginal-led spaces and services are financially supported where possible.
- Approach this type of work with humility, curiosity and good intentions. This is the most important principle of all.

Participant safety and wellbeing was prioritised throughout the consultation. The facilitation approach was culturally safe and trauma-informed, and debrief and referrals options were available for anyone who needed immediate support. Confidentiality agreements were used to protect privacy. Participants provided verbal or written consent, and information was captured through note-taking, or audio-recording where permission was given.

The consultation was guided by the understanding that, for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander LGBTIQ+ Sistergirl and Brotherboy communities, violence prevention cannot be neatly separated from early intervention, response, recovery and healing. Instead, these are addressed alongside each other, connected and shaped by lived experience, cultural context and local priorities. As a result, this report brings together findings across prevention, early intervention, response, and healing and recovery, where available.

Feedback was sought from key community leaders and advocates during the drafting of this report to ensure what was shared is reflected in an accurate and appropriate way. Where quotes are included, participants have been de-identified and their consent obtained.

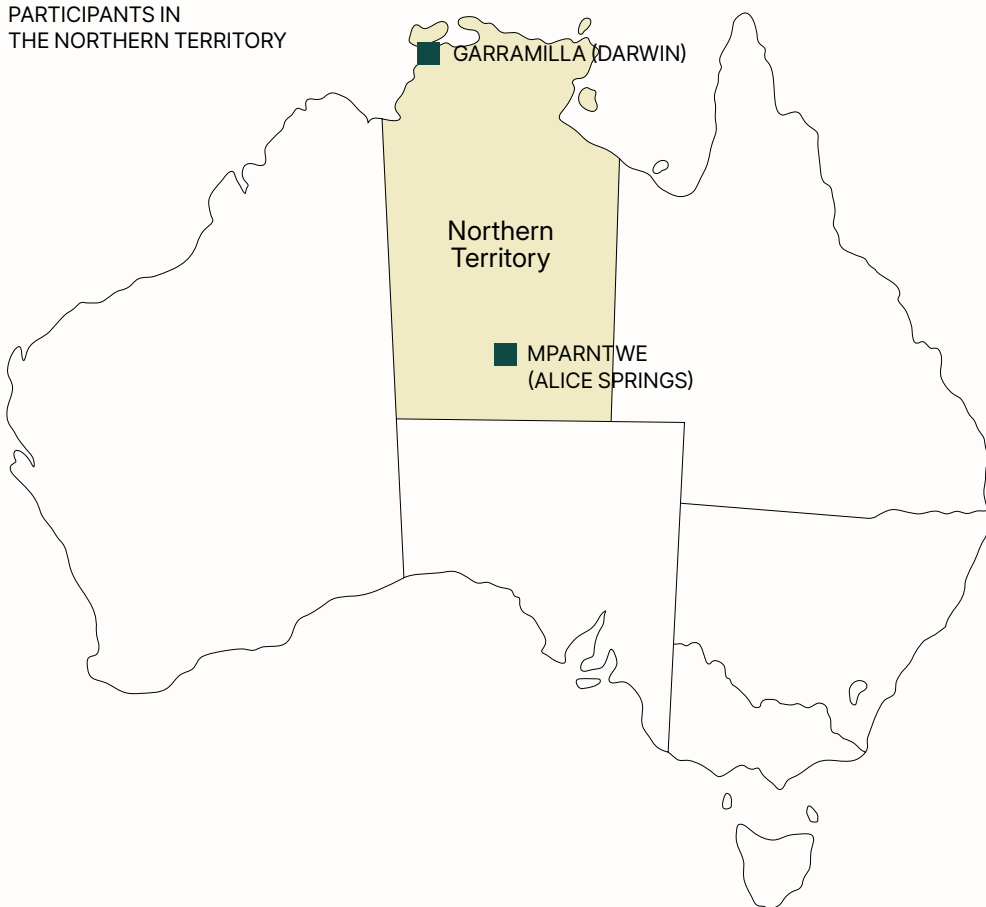
Participants

A total of 24 people participated in the consultation from Mparntwe (Alice Springs) and Garramilla (Darwin).

Participants were invited based on the following criteria:

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander LGBTIQ+ Sistergirl and Brotherboy people
- Elders and respected community members
- Aboriginal community-controlled organisations
- LGBTIQ+ organisations and advocates
- services and programs that work closely with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities in key settings, such as family violence and LGBTIQ+ health and wellbeing.

PARTICIPANTS IN
THE NORTHERN TERRITORY



Key findings

What drives violence against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander LGBTIQ+ Sistergirl and Brotherboy people?

There was broad agreement among participants that violence against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander LGBTIQ+ Sistergirl and Brotherboy people is driven by the ongoing impacts of colonisation, intergenerational trauma and racism. Colonisation, they said, had disrupted culture and language, imposed binary gender norms, and introduced transphobic and homophobic stigma through religious indoctrination.

They were clear that gender diversity and sexuality diversity existed in Aboriginal communities in the Northern Territory prior to colonisation, including trans people, but that missionary influence impacted what could be spoken about openly, with sexuality and gender diversity pushed into silence even when 'everybody knew'.

Several participants described how gender norms and stigma have been absorbed into community norms over generations – to the point where many people do not realise what ideas are truly part of their culture, and what has been imposed and become ingrained.

One Sistergirl in Darwin said:

'We were born in two cultures. When I was growing up, my mom didn't want me to be with all the girls. I grew up in a mission where I was with the boys, play boy sports, but I was always girly. And every time when they say, oh, you can't do this, and they'd smack you. They say to you, 'If not, you're going to be punished.' And they say, you know, you gotta grow up to be a man. You gotta have children. But in the old society, in the old days, everybody was all in together. Women go out hunting with the children. Men go out hunting with the boys. But in my community, the Tiwi Islands, we are the protectors of the women and men.'

Participants also described the impact of a worsening social climate due to national and global surges in racism, transphobia, homophobia and misogyny, and a broader backlash against social progress.

Many participants spoke about the effects of the Voice to Parliament referendum result. They described a strong sense of hurt, grief and betrayal across Aboriginal communities at the 'No' vote, alongside an increase in openly racist behaviour, and feeling that the result had given people permission to be more openly hostile. Participants said there was little meaningful follow-up or support for communities after the referendum, which left people to carry that impact on their own. They noted that this has compounded the experience of isolation and stress for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander LGBTIQ+ people, who are already navigating racism, stigma, violence and exclusion.

Practitioners and leaders in both Alice Springs and Darwin described homophobia as a key mechanism for enforcing gender norms among men and boys, often through bullying and violence that penalise anyone who is perceived to step outside expected roles. Homophobia was also said to play a role in resistance to both LGBTIQ+ inclusion work and gender equity programs. One prevention practitioner in Alice Springs said that many parents in her groups supported the idea of gender equity, particularly for girls, but still felt hesitant to encourage their sons to break free of gender stereotypes for fear of their being seen as gay.

In Darwin, participants noted that students in local schools are being exposed to extreme online content, including sexually violent material and graphic violence. They reported boys and young men frequently repeating messaging from online influencers and political discourse, and voiced concern that both misogyny and transphobia among boys and young men had also dramatically intensified. Young boys are specifically targeted for this type of online content.

One practitioner in Darwin said:

'It's really hard nowadays. We fight against so many stereotypes and fake news as well. So many young people will say that they follow influencers from the manosphere. These are young people who are, you know, captains of the footy team. And they'll repeat back word-for-word things these men have said. Most recently, I had someone say something that a politician had said in America. I'd never even heard these extreme thoughts before, but we're up against these really extreme concepts.'

Participants also described the impact of worsening social and economic conditions. For example, in Alice Springs, there is growing inequality, an increased supply of drugs entering the township, almost no housing, and worsening poverty. There used to be a small but active grassroots movement advocating for inclusion and rights that also played an important community role preventing and responding to violence. This movement has slowly diminished due to burnout among community advocates, a result of both the ongoing impacts of racism, stigma and violence, and the day-to-day demands of trying to sustain advocacy and safety work with limited resources and support.

Grassroots community events have, over time, been replaced by mainstream pride events with corporate sponsorship. These can feel sanitised and mainstreamed, and as a result, less culturally safe and less inclusive for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. It also has the effect of minimising or reducing the harm that is experienced by the community by falsely implying total acceptance within the broader community, which was described by participants as not the experiences of their everyday life. Together, this means that many of the organisations in Alice Springs do not have active relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander LGBTIQ+ Sistergirl and Brotherboy people, which limits their ability to provide support and advocacy in culturally safe ways.

Participants also described a set of barriers that can make violence harder to name and harder to respond to. When violence occurs within Aboriginal or LGBTIQ+ families and relationships, it is too often used against the community as 'proof' of harmful stereotypes, which raises the stakes for speaking up or seeking help. Participants also spoke about how little public recognition follows the deaths of Aboriginal women, and said it is even rarer for Aboriginal LGBTIQ+ people. They pointed to the recent deaths of Sistergirls and gay men that were linked to intimate partner violence as examples that received almost no media attention.

Even in larger population centres such as Alice Springs and Darwin, participants said there are very few services that feel safe for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Sistergirls and Brotherboys to access. They described an even more severe lack of support outside these locations. This lack of support, and lack of fellow community to lean on, means that many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Sistergirls and Brotherboys leave their home communities and migrate to larger townships or to larger cities interstate, where they are more likely to find acceptance and access to support.

What does domestic, family and intimate partner violence against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander LGBTIQ+ Sistergirl and Brotherboy people look like?

Consultation confirmed that violence against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander LGBTIQ+ Sistergirl and Brotherboy people is widespread in both Alice Springs and Darwin. Participants reported that violence is common in intimate relationships, within family and community, as well as from outside Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. In some instances, participants said these experiences were similar to those faced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, including intimate partner violence, sexual harassment and rape. Violence can also present in ways specific to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander LGBTIQ+ Sistergirl and Brotherboy people, shaped by stigma about gender and sexuality, and as punishment for not conforming to expected roles.

For example, participants described the fetishisation of trans and gender diverse people, particularly Sistergirls, as driving high levels of sexual harassment, sexual assault and intimate partner violence. In Darwin, participants reported that there had been 4 or 5 Sistergirl deaths in the last 2 years due to gender-based violence. They said that Sistergirls are targeted due to shame felt by their partners, families and community for not conforming to gender norms. These deaths are often not recognised as gender-based violence, as Sistergirls are often misgendered as men by family and police.

Victim-survivor advocates spoke about violence from the systems that were meant to help them; being treated as less worthy of protection; and having their identity and humanity denied and support refused due to stigma. They described social exclusion as another form of violence, noting that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander LGBTIQ+ Sistergirl and Brotherboy people are often excluded or even banished from community and family support. This often leads to people being forced to leave their Country, resulting in social, psychological and spiritual harm, and in some cases families also being punished under Traditional Law for their child's LGBTIQ+ identity.

One Sistergirl said:

'I was a sister girl, transgender one. I had to follow girls. And they said, you jump another. You gotta go the main way. You can't do this. You can't do that. Otherwise, you curse your family. I didn't believe that, and then they when I was a little boy growing up, they wouldn't be a men's business. They want me to do men's ceremony. They wanted me to be traditional, like a traditional men have kids, but I didn't, because I grew up as feminine, but I still went because of my father's culture and his ideal of what a real man. Then when I came out, I was still playing with girls, and then that's when traditional punishment came. My mother, my father, my grandmother and grandfather and my mom's sister, they all got bashed. If they're bashing me, traditionally, they put spear through my leg, but they didn't. My family had to break that curse, and so I was free, but I wasn't free as free because I didn't have any rights, or I didn't have any thing to protect me.'

Services

Consultation found major gaps in the service system for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander LGBTIQ+ people experiencing violence in both Alice Springs and Darwin. There was particular concern for Sistergirls who are not seen to 'pass', gay men, and victim-survivors experiencing violence from their family of origin. Participants noted that these gaps are especially acute for refuge services, leaving victim-survivors without a safe place to go when they need to flee and hide from violence. As a result, the burden of responding to this violence more often than not falls to community members themselves, sharing housing, financial resources and information to keep each other safe.

Of particular urgency is the lack of refuge and housing options. In some instances, rigid binary eligibility rules mean Sistergirls are misgendered, deemed ineligible, or placed with men, which puts them at high risk of further violence. Regardless, in many places, there are no available refuge or housing services at all.

Participants also noted that promotional materials about services are often not accessible for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander LGBTIQ+ people and need to be at the right level and in the right language. In many communities, violence is not always described in the same language as services use. Local terms such as 'being cheeky' or 'humbugging' hold meanings that services may miss if they rely on narrow definitions. This makes it easier for violence to go unrecognised.

Participants also stressed that identity categories do not always map neatly onto mainstream LGBTIQ+ terminology. Some people may not identify or present as 'trans' in the way that services expect, which then affects their access to safety and support.

Participants cautioned against treating Sistergirls and Brotherboys as simply 'Aboriginal trans women and trans men' because this can erase lived realities and exclude those whose identity is fluid, multi-layered or changes over time. Others said an over-reliance on terms such as 'domestic violence', which are so strongly associated with cis heterosexual women, means that some LGBTIQ+ people may not recognise their own experiences as violence, and that broader definitions are required.

Participants described stigma and discrimination within the service system itself as an additional risk, meaning that many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander LGBTIQ+ Sistergirl and Brotherboy victim-survivors avoid seeking support for fear of stigma, having their privacy compromised, or being rejected. Similar risks were noted for LGBTIQ+ workers, who described experiencing discrimination from colleagues and abuse from the community for who they are.

Participants also highlighted gaps beyond crisis response. They described limited access to healing programs, relationship education, counselling and behaviour change support that are safe and appropriate for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander LGBTIQ+ Sistergirls and Brotherboys. They also pointed to a lack of accessible services to respond to depression, anxiety and trauma. Infrastructure gaps were also raised, including the absence of unisex toilets in some Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and rural towns, which participants described as a barrier to safety and dignity in everyday life.

Service leaders in both Alice Springs and Darwin acknowledged the gaps in services, and discussed the challenges of achieving meaningful change while operating under significant strain. They described high demand, high risk and repeated deaths that were stretching services to crisis mode, leaving little time or capacity to build relationships, adapt practice, or do the sustained work that inclusion requires. At the same time, they acknowledged that action must be taken and called for greater resources and capacity-building to help achieve this. They noted that currently there are calls for needs-based funding in the NT, and services are experiencing extreme underfunding at both territory and federal level.

Police and justice

Participants described police and justice systems as failing to provide safety, fairness or confidence for many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander LGBTIQ+ people experiencing violence. They described repeated barriers for those seeking help, including experiencing discrimination, not being believed, and misidentification of who is using violence. In Alice Springs, participants reflected that there used to be a greater degree of LGBTIQ+ inclusion within the local police, but said this has significantly reduced over time. There is rising community concern about racism and prejudice within the police force itself and the flow-on implications for the community. As one participant put it:

'It gives permission to disrespect. To be inhuman. To be unkind. To be intolerant and to be really righteous about it. To be aggressive and violent about it, to feel entitled to take action about it, to ignore poverty, to ignore disadvantage.'

Participants across the Territory also highlighted significant safety issues in custodial settings, giving accounts of distressing experiences and poor treatment, particularly for Sistergirls in men's facilities.

What's needed

Community-led prevention and response

Forming a strong thread through the discussions, participants described the need for the community to be supported and resourced to lead prevention and response work in line with principles of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander self-determination. Efforts to prevent violence against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander LGBTIQA+ Sistergirl and Brotherboy people will not be effective, and will likely cause harm, if they are designed *for* the community rather than *with* the community.

Participants stressed the importance of resourcing and elevating Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander LGBTIQA+ leadership to enable them to create the conditions for communities to have their own conversations about healing, safety, law, identity, Lore and belonging on their own terms. They also stressed the need to resource (and, where absent, establish) organisations that represent these communities, so that they can provide prevention, response and healing programs in culturally safe ways, and also partner with the broader prevention and response systems to build their capacity to better meet the needs of their communities.

Addressing the impact of colonisation through primary prevention programs

Participants identified a range of ways that primary prevention can help prevent violence by addressing the impacts of colonisation. They said that prevention programs can play an important role in nurturing cultural memory, including holding on to and protecting stories and pre-colonial Lore relating to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander LGBTIQA+ Sistergirls and Brotherboys. This is critical as, without intervention, what remains will continue to be rapidly lost and will be lost forever.

Prevention practitioners working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities discussed the importance of community engagement that is practical, relational and culturally safe. They described interactive activities that help communities yarn about gender, power and violence in concrete ways. One activity involved sorting toys into pink and blue boxes to explore how gender expectations are created and enforced, who is primarily using violence, and what this means for children and families. These practitioners also said that while homophobia can create

'sticky points' when discussing gender norms for boys, it also provided an opportunity to open up a conversation about the origins of homophobic beliefs in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. They talked about using a timeline activity to unpack the myth that diverse gender and sexual identities are a Western idea imposed on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. In this activity, participants mark when they believe particular gender ideas entered their culture, creating space to yarn about how gender stereotypes and rules were introduced, reinforced and normalised over time. This helps people to recognise that many harmful gender norms, including homophobia and transphobia, are tied to colonisation rather than culture. In some cases, this activity also created opportunities to reconnect with cultural memory.

As one facilitator described:

'One bloke at the end of the session was telling me his story. He said, I want to tell you about this story out where my country is. He said they used to have a watering hole that all of the men would go to. And then he said they saw all of these people swimming in the water. All these people had long hair, beautiful, bodies fit, gorgeous. He said they got closer, and they weren't women and they weren't men. And he said this is a story that we have from way, way, way back. He said, I want to share that with you. And these people were so fit and so healthy. And this was this story where they would all come together, and this was this place of healing.'

Education and cultural safety

Education came through as another practical lever for prevention, both within communities and across the community. Participants in both Alice Springs and Darwin repeatedly emphasised the need for more education to build understanding, empathy and respect within Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, and in all settings where Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander LGBTIQA+ Sistergirl and Brotherboy people live, work, learn, play and seek support. This included education, police, health care, courts, support services and legal services. Emphasis was placed on programs that promote the rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander LGBTIQA+ Sistergirls and Brotherboys to love, happiness, respect, understanding, care, support and respectful relationships. Education is also needed to raise awareness of the prevalence and drivers of violence within Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander LGBTIQA+ Sistergirl and Brotherboy communities, to support early identification and help-seeking.

Respectful relationships education in schools was discussed as both a major opportunity and a pressure point. Participants discussed the expectation that respectful relationships education would be rolled out across schools from Term 1, 2026, but said schools were already 'drowning' and looking for funding just to purchase programs. They emphasised that effective delivery requires whole-of-staff training and shared practice, not one-off sessions. They also noted that LGBTIQA+ content is often limited in scope, which can lead schools to choose shorter, lighter coverage even when deeper work is needed, including responding to students' questions about Sistergirls, Brotherboys and gender diversity. They also made repeated calls for respectful relationships programs that are designed with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander LGBTIQA+ Sistergirl and Brotherboy communities, which will create opportunities for people to explore healthy ways of relating and to enjoy happy, loving relationships.

Safe spaces and inclusive services

Participants were clear that, on its own, raising awareness about violence experienced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander LGBTIQ+ Sistergirl and Brotherboy people is not enough, and can be risky if it increases visibility without commensurate access to services, especially family violence refuge and housing services. Participants recommended reviewing service contracts to allow services to offer support to a broader range of victim-survivors, including Sistergirls, gay, bisexual and queer men, and boys over 12 years.

Participants also called for capacity-building across the Territory to improve workforce skills and confidence. They said this is best done in partnership by local LGBTIQ+ and family violence services and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander LGBTIQ+ Sistergirl and Brotherboy leaders, supported by a partnership brokering approach.

In Darwin and the Tiwi Islands, participants specifically highlighted the need for dedicated safe spaces for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Sistergirls and Brotherboys. As one participant put it:

'For Black Brotherboys and Sistergirls in the top end, they don't have a safe space to go just for themselves. You've got women's shelters and men spaces, but they need their own space for them to go and speak to other people like them.'

Participants also called for organisations to employ Sistergirls in identified positions, to advocate for pathways to other agencies, and liaise with Sistergirls about support services, programs, activities, and referral. In Darwin, participants also pointed to the need to train Night Patrols to better recognise and respond to violence affecting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander LGBTIQ+ Sistergirls and Brotherboys.

Justice and legislation

Participants called for a strengthening of the legislation to recognise and protect the identity and humanity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander LGBTIQ+ Sistergirls and Brotherboys. They stressed that consultation with community is critical in shaping these reforms.

Alongside broader reforms, participants also identified practical changes they believed could improve safety and accountability now, calling for improved compliance mechanisms for existing legislation to ensure discrimination has real consequences. They noted one positive change under the Domestic and Family Violence Act, which tasks judges with determining who is most in need of protection and with intervening when police seek mutual orders despite there being a clear history of abuse from one party to another. However, further investment is needed to embed this change within judicial practice, including training for police and judges on domestic violence dynamics, what questions to ask, and how to understand the bigger picture rather than relying on a single incident. Another mechanism requested by participants was to place LGBTIQ+ liaison officers within police in communities and towns to support communication, improve cultural safety and build awareness. Urgent action is also needed to address risks to Sistergirls in custodial settings.

One senior justice official noted that the Northern Territory currently treats race-motivated violence and men's violence against women as aggravated. They called for changes to the NT Criminal Code to additionally recognise homophobia and transphobia as aggravated features that can be prosecuted as more serious offences.

Next steps



Rainbow Health Australia and Our Watch extend our deepest thanks to all those who participated in this consultation. In particular, we thank Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander LGBTIQ+ Sistersgirls and Brotherboys for your trust and for helping us ensure that your experiences and needs inform the development of *Changing with pride*.

Successful implementation of *Changing with pride* will require sustained investment, genuine partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander LGBTIQ+ Sistersgirl and Brotherboy communities, and a long-term commitment to community-led change. This includes resourcing local leadership, strengthening culturally safe prevention and response systems, and turning the knowledge shared through this consultation into practical action.

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