



Four Demands For a Fairer WA

For all political parties in the 2021 Western Australian State Election

Youth Pride Network

The Youth Pride Network would like to acknowledge the Aboriginal people as the traditional custodians of the lands across Western Australia and in particular the Whadjuk Noongar people, the custodians of the land on which our office is based. We pay our respects to Elders past, present and emerging. Always was, always will be Aboriginal land.

What is this?

The Youth Pride Network has a vision for a Western Australia where LGBTIQA+ young people are fully included, accepted, and celebrated by their communities. Despite the progress we have made over decades of community activism, we are a long way from achieving this goal.

Successive governments in Western Australia have dragged their feet on providing the law reform and resources our community needs. While we are supported by an incredible network of peers, community organisations, and grassroots activists, the formal structures around us are yet to catch up.

With this paper, we're laying down a challenge for all political parties in Western Australia; if you want to attend our events, march in our Pride parade, or call yourself an ally, deliver us the reforms we need.

A note

We recognise that LGBTIQA+ young people are not a monolith and sit across many intersectional groups. Alongside the positions contained within this document, we support action in many other areas including but not limited to decolonisation and Aboriginal sovereignty, climate justice, a fully accessible WA and disability justice, decriminalisation of sex work, and fighting racism in all its forms. We support the groups that campaign for these issues and we encourage you to as well.

Thank you

A quick thank you to the community groups who we consulted with as well as the LGBTIQA+ young people who shared their opinions and experiences with us. Thank you to our LGBTIQA+ community elders who came before us and the work they've done to allow us the freedoms we have today.

Demand 1: Representation and leadership for our communities

At present, there is no accountable Minister for LGBTIQ+ Affairs in Western Australia. This means that there is no member of parliament responsible for the wellbeing of the LGBTIQ+ community, and who can act as a champion in cabinet for action to address our needs.

As a result, it is difficult to advance necessary legal reforms, coordinate public sector work across departments, or ensure that there is a thriving, dedicated sector to support the LGBTIQ+ community. To support the work of this Minister, dedicated and comprehensive funding needs to be made available across government to support adequate resources for LGBTIQ+ young people. In particular, we need funding to support LGBTIQ+ intersectional communities including but not limited to; LGBTIQ+ young people who are Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander, culturally and linguistically diverse, from refugee and migrant backgrounds, people of faith, based in regional and/or remote areas, and people with disability.

We need to:

1. Create a Ministerial portfolio for LGBTIQ+ issues, primarily responsible for:
 - a. Coordinating support for LGBTIQ+ people across government
 - b. Ensure that all State-run services, particularly those for people with disability, Aboriginal people, and culturally and linguistically diverse people have LGBTIQ+ inclusion strategies in place to increase safety in these services
2. Work with the LGBTIQ+ community to create a whole-of-government approach to LGBTIQ+ support, ensuring this includes funding for:
 - a. Community organisations that provide advocacy and collective voice to government
 - b. Provide specific funding to establish dedicated organisations run by and for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, people with disability, and culturally and linguistically diverse LGBTIQ+ people to connect their issues and priorities to decision-makers
 - c. Community services designed to assist with peer support, lived experience mentors and service navigation, in particular funding for Intersex Peer Support Australia and the Brave Network to operate in Western Australia
 - d. Core funding to the Rainbow Futures consortium to support collaboration across LGBTIQ+ community organisations

Demand 2: Improve the wellbeing of LGBTIQ+ young people

It is well known that there are disparities between the wellbeing of LGBTIQ+ and non-LGBTIQ+ young people.

Mental health - LGBTIQ+ young people face discrimination in all aspects of their life. This discrimination and abuse leads to disproportionately high rates of depression, anxiety, suicide attempts, and other mental health issues. Young people have a right to inclusive, needs-based mental health care that provides support in a safe and affirming environment. No young person should experience discrimination from a mental health professional. Mental health services that are LGBTIQ+ inclusive are currently beyond capacity, resulting in long waiting periods for young people in crisis. Many of the services that provide effective peer-support remain completely unfunded and this results in a lack of consistency and quality of care for the LGBTIQ+ community.

Homelessness - LGBTIQ+ young people make up a disproportionate number of young people experiencing homelessness, are more likely to be street present, and less likely to be accessing formal youth accommodation services. The *Equal Opportunity Act WA (1984)* currently provides religious exemptions that allow accommodation services to refuse support to young people based on their gender identity or sexuality. As a result, LGBTIQ+ young people face long wait times for the few accommodation services that will allow LGBTIQ+ young people.

Family & Domestic Violence - LGBTIQ+ young people experience family and domestic violence at similar rates to those of the general population. However, the LGBTIQ+ community faces significant barriers to accessing relevant support services. Providers often struggle to consider family and domestic violence outside of a typical heteronormative framework and, as a result, provide inadequate and ineffective care.

We need to:

1. Increase accessibility of health care by:
 - a. Providing funding for the widespread training of health and mental health professionals in LGBTIQ+ inclusive and affirming care. Strengthen accountability mechanisms such as robust, accessible, and independent individual advocacy and complaints monitoring
 - b. Providing funding to increase the capacity of LGBTIQ+ specific general, sexual, and mental health services
 - c. Providing funding for LGBTIQ+ peer-support mental health services
 - d. Providing additional funding to Perth Children's Hospital Gender Diversity Service to shorten wait times for services.
2. Adjust funding for accommodation services so that we:
 - a. Remove State Government funding for services that utilise religious exemptions to deny access to LGBTIQ+ young people

- b. Increase State Government funding to services that specialise in LGBTIQ+ care to improve their capacity to keep up with demand
- 3. Improve support for family and domestic violence by:
 - a. Providing training and funding to family and domestic violence services to ensure they are equipped to support the needs of LGBTIQ+ young people

Demand 3: Equality and Safety Under the Law

Western Australian legislation currently violates several tenants of international human rights law.

Moreso, current legislation fails LGBTIQ+ young people and leaves us vulnerable to daily violations of our minds, bodies, and human rights. The *Equal Opportunity Act 1984* still allows us to be expelled, fired, and rejected from services. It does not recognise sex characteristics as a protected category in the law, meaning that intersex people are completely unprotected from discrimination.

Western Australia is falling behind other states in working to stop harmful conversion practices and banning non-consensual surgeries on intersex infants and children. In Western Australia, it is expensive, degrading, and humiliating to undertake the bureaucratic processes required to change your legal gender and because of this many trans and gender diverse people are shut out from legal protection. We even lack the knowledge of how many hate crimes occur every year, we have no strategy in place to monitor, understand and reduce queerphobic violence. Strong legal reforms, done in collaborating with relevant communities, are needed to create a fair system for LGBTIQ+ young people to thrive in.

We need to:

1. Ban sexual orientation and gender identity conversion practices through:
 - a. Making practices that aim to “correct” someone’s sexual orientation or gender identity illegal
 - b. Working with survivors of these practices to ensure legislation is comprehensive and responsive to modern conversion practices
 - c. Implementing additional support in line with the [Sexual Orientation & Gender Identity Change Efforts \(SOGICE\) Survivor Statement](#)
2. Ban unnecessary medical procedures to modify sex characteristics of intersex children and infants, in line with recommendations from Intersex Human Rights Australia
3. Urgently reform the WA Equal Opportunity Act and urgently progress Law Reform Commission Project 111, with priority to:
 - a. Removing religious exemptions
 - b. Adding sex characteristics as a protected category
 - c. Recognising and protecting genders outside the gender binary
4. Urgently progress the recommendations from the Law Reform Commission Project 108 to improve gender recognition for trans and gender diverse young people
5. Explore and resource approaches to reducing hate crimes and hate speech against LGBTIQ+ young people

Demand 4. Safe and equal access to education

Inclusive education saves lives. All LGBTIQ+ young people deserve an educational experience where they are welcomed and celebrated for who they are. Most importantly, they deserve to learn in an environment free of bullying and harassment. However, research shows that LGBTIQ+ young people still experience high levels of bullying and harassment in school, and are not supported by teachers and school leadership to address this. Additionally, LGBTIQ+ young people leave school with little education on their identities, history, or bodies. Presently, we have a curriculum that treats LGBTIQ+ young people as if they don't exist.

For too long, scare campaigns and misinformation have dictated the curriculum instead of a commitment to upholding the human rights of LGBTIQ+ young people. Western Australia is falling behind the rest of the country and the rest of the world in providing LGBTIQ+ inclusive education and information to students.

We need to:

1. Resource programs to assist school teachers and leaders to support LGBTIQ+ wellbeing, including:
 - a. Urgently re-contracting and expanding Inclusive Education WA to restart their life-saving school support program
 - b. Creating state-wide, co-designed policies on supporting the transition and inclusion of trans and gender diverse students in primary and secondary schools
 - c. Creating state-wide, co-designed policies on supporting and including intersex students in primary and secondary schools, in line with the Darlington Statement
 - d. Including education about supporting LGBTIQ+ students into the WA teaching course
2. Embed LGBTIQ+ issues and identities within the education curriculum, by:
 - a. Embedding age-appropriate LGBTIQ+ relationship and sexuality education in the primary and secondary school curriculum, bringing Western Australia in line with states like Victoria and countries like England and Scotland (in line with the Growing and Developing Healthy Relationships curriculum)
 - b. Providing funding for widely accessible, peer-led relationship and sexuality educators to be available for primary and secondary schools
 - c. Ensuring anti-bullying programs in schools specifically address the needs of LGBTIQ+ students.
3. Ensure that intersex advocates and intersex young people lead the design and implementation of the above programs to ensure intersex needs are addressed and are not conflated with the needs of endosex LGBTQA+ students