Odyssey Victoria

LGBTIQA+ Inclusive Practice Guide

Odyssey Victoria Practice LGBTIQA+ Inclusive Practice Guide

Version 1.6

June 2026

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Contents

Acknowledgement of Country 1
Glossary of terms 2
Introduction 3
Purpose and principles 3
How to use this guide 3
Core principles of inclusive practice 4
Creating LGBTIQA+ cultural safety 4
- Why it matters

Intersectionality 5
Examples of intersectionality 5
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander
- Disabilities
- Refugee status and people seeking asylum
- Religious minority backgrounds
- International students
- Neurodiversity
- Older adults
- Intersex variations

What cultural safety looks like in practice 6
- Inclusive language and communication
- Representation and visibility
- Affirming policies and practices
- Trauma-informed and intersectional support
- Community engagement and co-design
- Education and capacity building

Inclusive practice strategies 7
Inclusive data collection, privacy, and confidentiality ... 7
- Required standard of practice
- Secure information handling
- What to ask
- Responsibilities
- Inclusive service design

Organisational visibility 8
- Rainbow visibility at OV

Staff training and cultural competency 9
- Training priorities
- Best practice

Organisational policies and consumer participation 9
- Inclusive policies
- Consumer participation

Speak up culture 9
Examples of discrimination 10
- Legal and institutional
- Workplace
- Education settings
- Healthcare
- Social and cultural discrimination
- Everyday discrimination
- Microaggressions

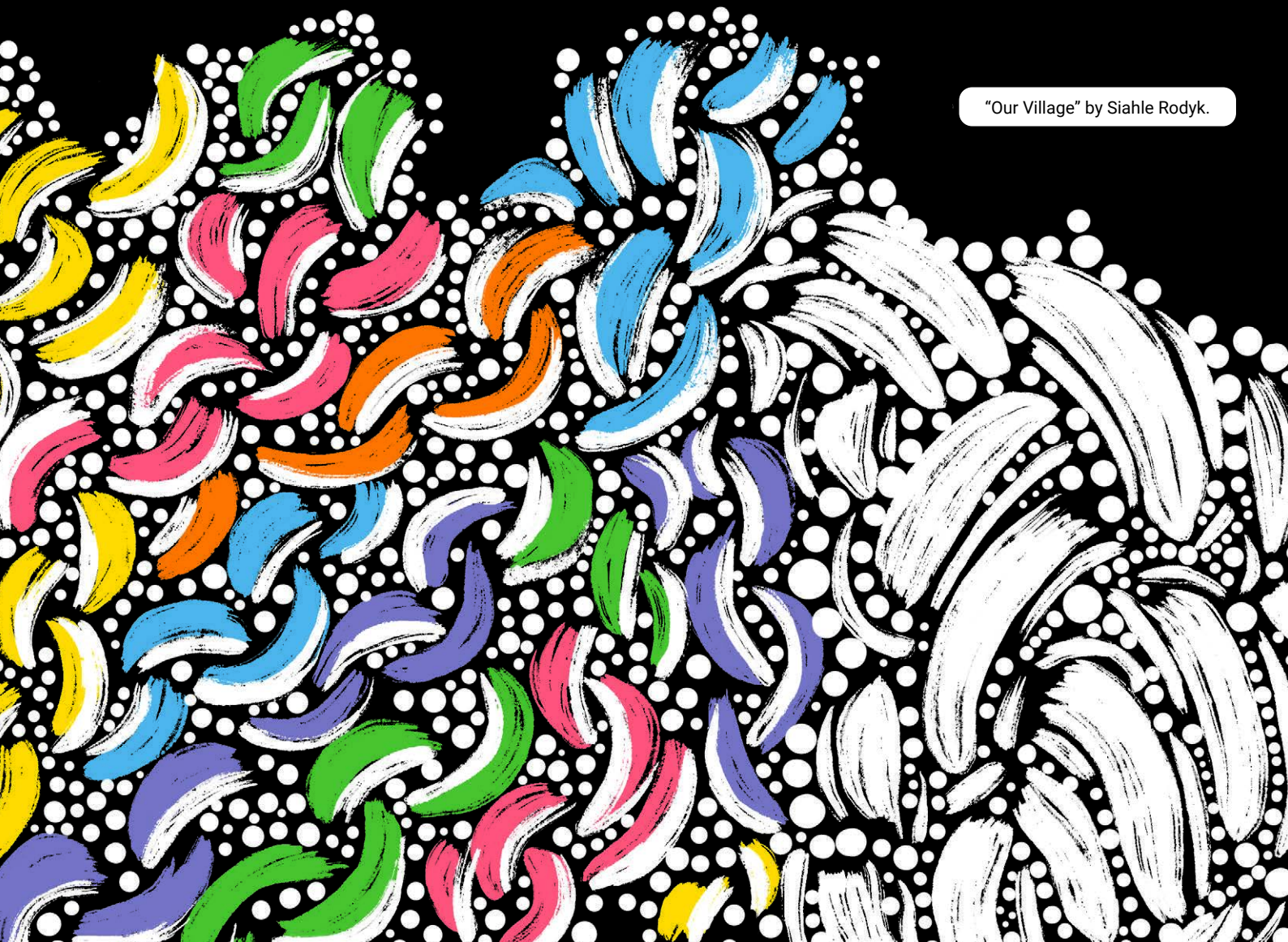
Key elements of the OV speak up culture 11
- Psychological Safety
- Clear pathways
- Visible commitment
- Responsive action
- Education and empowerment
- Examples
- Expected staff behaviours

Protecting LGBTIQA+ young people and children's privacy and safety 11
Supporting LGBTIQA+ staff 12
- Commitments and actions

Conclusion 12
Addendum: written communication style guide 13

Acknowledgement of Country

Odyssey Victoria (OV) acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of the lands and waters on which we work and acknowledge that sovereignty was never ceded. We pay our respects to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, their Elders past, present and emerging. We recognise their enduring connection to Country and their centuries of understanding about the lands we live on. We commit to walking together in the spirit of reconciliation, respect and healing.



"Our Village" by Siahle Rodyk.

Glossary of terms

Refer to CFCA Resource Sheet: LGBTIQA+ communities – glossary of common terms for further definitions

Allyship: A term used to describe the status or role of a person who advocates, or actively works for the inclusion or uplift of a marginalised group using their own power, position and/or privilege.

Cisgender/cis: Refers to people whose identified gender is the same as the gender they were assigned at birth.

Heteronormative: Describes attitudes or behaviours consistent with traditional gender roles and the false assumption that heterosexuality is the one natural expression of sexuality.

Intersex: An umbrella term for the natural variation in sex characteristics (e.g. chromosomes, hormones, genitals or other anatomy) that does not fit typical definitions of male or female; intersex people may identify with any gender and sexual orientation.

Gender identity: A person's internal sense of their gender (e.g., woman, man, nonbinary).

Gender expression: How a person presents their gender through appearance, dress and behaviour.

Legal identifiers: Legal information such as name and date of birth which are routinely collected when accessing a government or health service.

LGBTIQA+: An umbrella term referring to lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, queer/questioning, asexual, brotherboy, sistergirl and other diverse identities. Also described as 'Rainbow'.

Microaggression: Refers to language, action or an incident which delivers indirect, subtle or unintentional discrimination or 'othering' against a person or a group.

Queer: refers to a range of sexual orientations and gender identities; often used as an umbrella term to refer to the full range of rainbow identities. Still considered rude for historical reasons by many older LGBTIQA+ people.

Rainbow: A term used in this guide to refer to LGBTIQA+ people and communities.

Sex characteristics: refers to physical parts of the body related to development, regulation and reproductive systems (e.g. gonads, chromosomes, genitals, hormones, breasts, facial and pubic hair)

Sexual orientation: A person's enduring physical, romantic and/or emotional attraction to others (e.g., lesbian, gay, bisexual, pansexual, asexual).

Sistergirl/Brotherboy: Terms used by some Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to describe gender identity and roles.

Introduction

This guide describes Odyssey Victoria's approach to culturally safe, inclusive and affirming practice for LGBTIQA+ people. It outlines our purpose and core principles, the relationships we commit to build with the people who use our services and engage with our staff, and the practical ways we embed inclusion across service delivery, governance and workforce development. It is a document that orients new staff, informs training and policy review, and guides our evolution so that our practice continually aligns with our values and evidence-informed care.

Purpose and principles

Odyssey Victoria (OV) is committed to providing culturally safe, inclusive, and affirming services for LGBTIQA+ people. This guide outlines best practice standards for respectful engagement, inclusive data collection, visibility, intersectionality, and staff training.

Knowledge levels about LGBTIQA+ identities and relevant issues will vary substantially in any group of people, especially in workplaces. This resource is intended both as a statement of the value of Rainbow community to the OV community and a guide for employees to support their understanding and promotion of inclusive, affirming practice in the workplace.

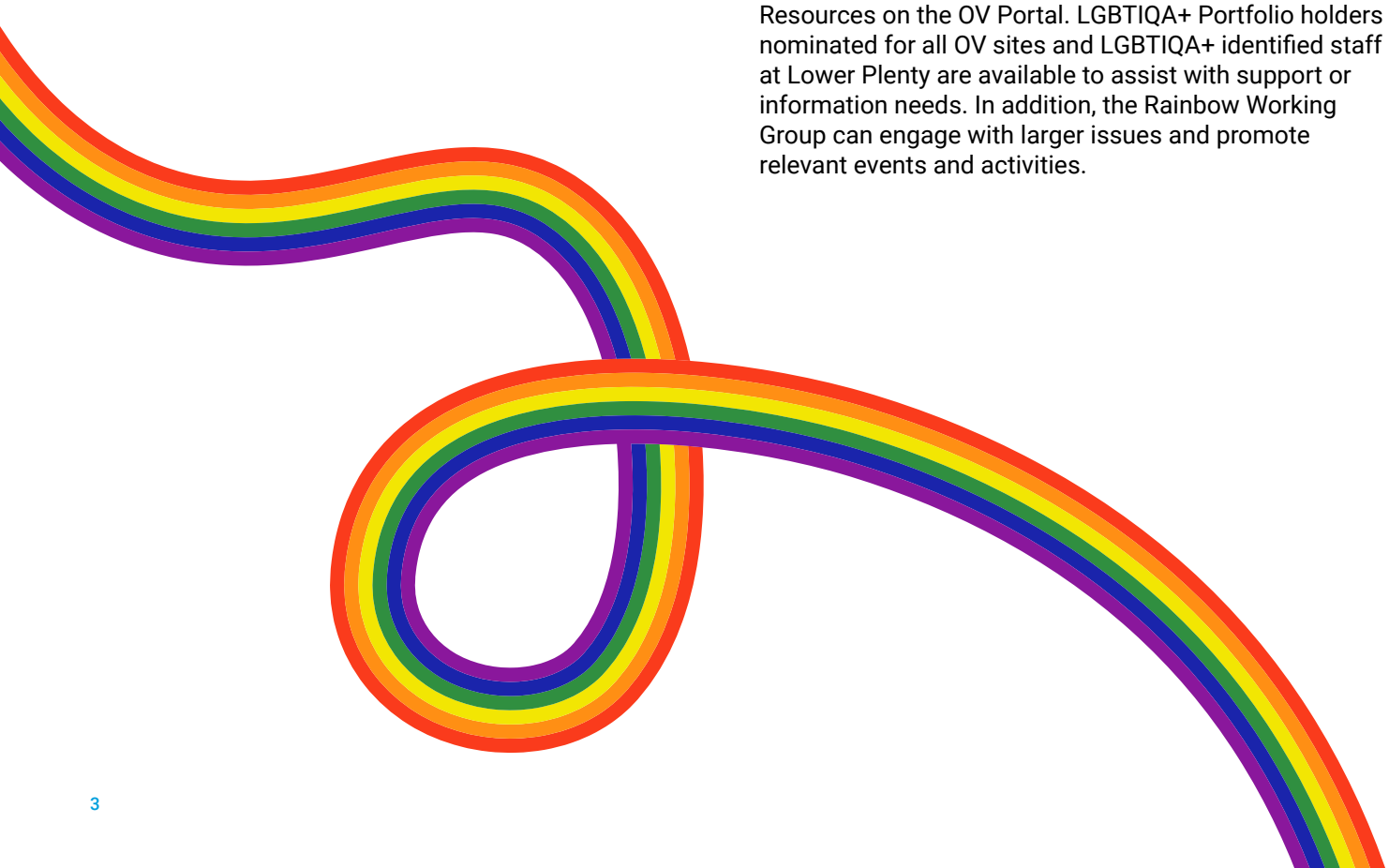
Note: the terms 'LGBTIQA+', 'queer', 'gay', 'rainbow', etc will be used interchangeably in this document to refer to people who do not identify as part of cis-gender / heterosexual (i.e. heterosexual) communities.

How to use this guide

Knowledge and confidence around LGBTIQA+ identities and relevant issues will vary among staff. This guide is both a statement of Odyssey Victoria's prioritisation of Rainbow inclusion and a practical resource that supports staff to understand and promote inclusive, affirming practice in the workplace. Staff are expected to apply the guide in daily interactions, documentation, supervision and service design, and to seek further resources and training whenever needed.

This practice guide refers to key concepts relating to gender identity, gender expression and sexuality and the expected standards required when working at OV. It should be provided to all new staff early in their employment to educate and assist with aligning their understanding of required behaviours and practices when working with and for LGBTIQA+ clients and colleagues. It can also be used to guide staff who may need more information or direction in appropriately responding to clients or staff.

It is recommended this guide be used with Rainbow Resources on the OV Portal. LGBTIQA+ Portfolio holders nominated for all OV sites and LGBTIQA+ identified staff at Lower Plenty are available to assist with support or information needs. In addition, the Rainbow Working Group can engage with larger issues and promote relevant events and activities.



Core principles of inclusive practice

Odyssey Victoria commits to the following core principles of LGBTIQA+ inclusive pactice:

- **Affirmation:** Diverse sexual orientations, gender identities and expressions, and intersex variations are recognised and affirmed.
- **Client-Centred Care:** Services are customised to individual need and lived experience.
- **Cultural Safety:** The service environment is free from discrimination and stigma.
- **Intersectionality:** Staff understand how overlapping identities shape experiences of marginalisation.
- **Visibility:** LGBTIQA+ people are seen, heard, and represented across all part of the service.
- **Accountability:** continuous learning and inclusive practice are promoted across all levels of the organisation.

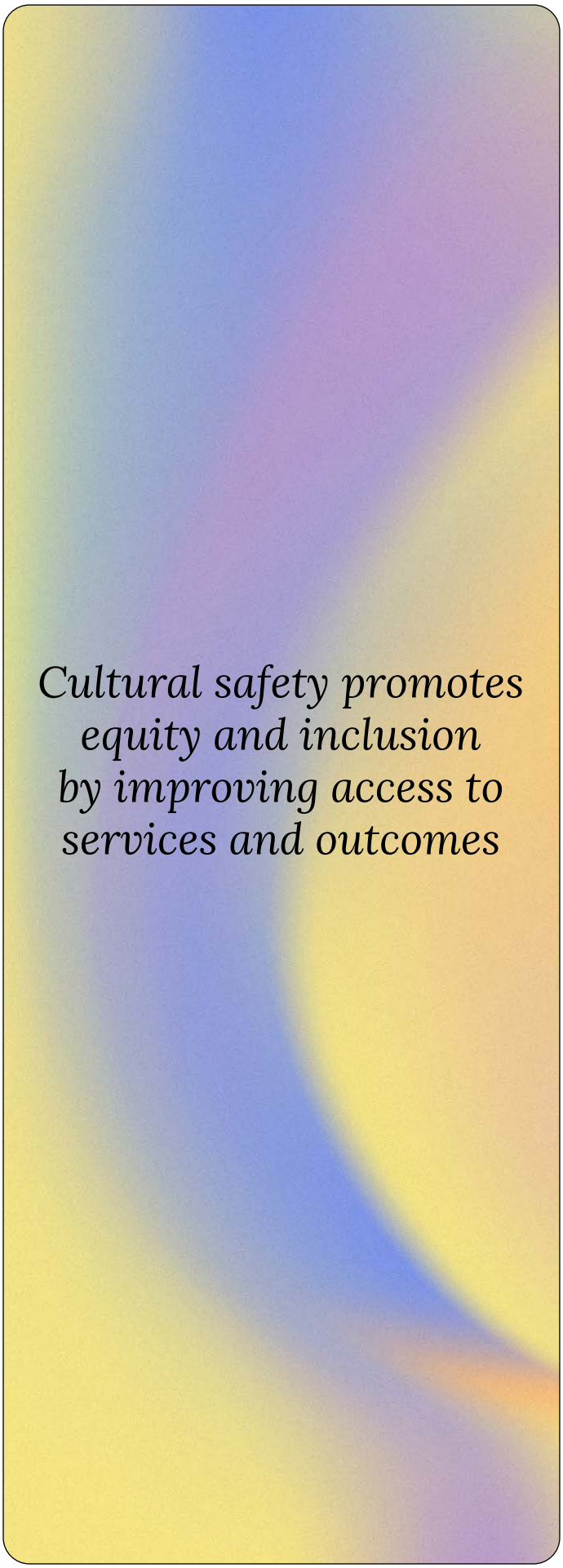
Creating LGBTIQA+ cultural safety

LGBTIQA+ stands for 'Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transsexual, Intersex, Queer/Questioning, Asexual with the + symbol representing other diverse sexual orientations, gender identities and sex characteristics such as Non-Binary, Pansexual or Two-Spirit, SisterGirl and BrotherBoy and leaves space for the evolution of sexual identities and orientations.

LGBTIQA+ cultural safety exists where individuals of diverse sexualities, gender identities, and intersex variations feel respected, affirmed, valued, and free from discrimination. It involves recognising and removing systemic barriers, actively challenging bias, and embedding inclusive practices across all levels of service delivery.

Why it matters

The promotion of Rainbow inclusion and respect is to the benefit of both individual clients and staff and the wider OV community. Cultural safety promotes equity and inclusion by improving access to services and outcomes; it builds trust and engagement so that people feel safe to disclose relevant aspects of identity; it supports mental health and wellbeing by reducing distress, trauma and isolation; and it aligns with human rights, trauma-informed care and ethical service delivery. Workplaces where LGBTIQA+ employees feel safe and included, experience higher employee engagement and productivity.



Intersectionality

‘Intersectionality’ refers to the interconnected nature of social identities - such as race, gender, sexuality, disability, age, and class - and how these intersections contribute to unique experiences of discrimination and privilege.

Intersectionality acknowledges that social identities interconnect and shape unique experiences of discrimination and privilege. LGBTIQA+ people may be Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander, from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds (CALD), living with disability or neurodiversity, older or younger, experiencing homelessness, trauma and/or mental health challenges, international students or people seeking asylum, or people of faith. These overlapping identities can compound disadvantage and increase barriers to accessing safe, inclusive services.

Examples of intersectionality

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander

A Sistergirl (a First Nations person who has a feminine spirit but was assigned male at birth) seeking crisis accommodation may be rejected within their own community and/or the outside world, due to transphobia while also experiencing cultural disconnection linked to colonisation. They may be rejected from a women’s shelter and other services, unable to find the supports they need. The person experiences increased risk of suicide, homelessness, and service avoidance due to mistrust and systemic exclusion.

Culturally safe and inclusive services support trust and healing, reduce rates of homelessness and suicide, and increase empowerment through community-led support and representation.

Disabilities

A queer person with a mobility impairment may be unable to access a building without stairs or a lift. They may be assumed to be non-sexual or heterosexual by staff. These barriers prevent them accessing necessary services. They experience increased feelings of isolation, not being seen, are at increased risk of abuse, and lack of appropriate support.

Accessible environments and affirming staff lead to greater independence, increased social inclusion and reduced isolation and better health and wellbeing through individualised services that allow them to be their whole self.

Refugee status and people seeking asylum

A gay person with refugee status may fear disclosing their identity due to trauma, risk of deportation, or rejection from cultural communities. Their trauma remains untreated, they live with a lack of access to culturally safe support and become part of the hidden homelessness.

Trauma-informed and confidential services promote safety and recovery, greater access to housing, healthcare, and legal support and strengthened resilience and community connection.

Religious minority backgrounds

A trans Muslim woman may avoid faith-based services due to past experiences of exclusion or judgment, leaving them spiritually isolated, increasing shame and mental distress, and reducing help seeking. Inclusive faith-based services reduce negative outcomes and create opportunities for interfaith dialogue and acceptance.

International students

A bisexual student may be forced to hide their identity to maintain sponsorship from family or avoid being reported to their home country's authorities. They may fear losing their visa status and the emotional distress can cause disruption to their studies. Supportive and inclusive environments promote authenticity, improved well-being and academic performance, stronger peer networks and advocacy opportunities.

Neurodiversity

A non-binary person with Autism may find intake processes overwhelming and may not feel safe disclosing their gender identity due to past trauma. They may struggle with communication, sensory environments, or navigating complex systems. Sensory-aware and simplified service processes increase engagement, enhanced self-expression and identity affirmation, reduced vulnerability and improved mental health.

Older adults

An older gay man may avoid disclosing his sexuality due to fear of discrimination in aged care, especially if he was previously arrested for being gay. They may have lived through criminalisation and medical pathologisation of their identity. They feel separated from others, feeling the need to mask or not engage. Affirming aged care services reduce loneliness and fear, preserve dignity and historical identity, opportunities for intergenerational connection and storytelling.

Intersex variations

An intersex person may not identify with the term "intersex" and may be retraumatised by invasive questions about their body or medical history. They are often excluded from LGBTIQA+ services, re-traumatised or misunderstood so they avoid services with consequent impacts on their health and autonomy. Increased visibility and inclusion in LGBTIQA+ spaces increases access and empowerment.

What cultural safety looks like in practice

Inclusive language and communication

Using correct names and pronouns consistently is a key feature of being inclusive. In addition, staff have been educated to avoid assumptions about gender, sexuality, or bodies. LGBTIQA+ identities are evident in everyday conversations, policies, and documentation.

Representation and visibility

Diverse LGBTIQA+ voices are featured in leadership, media, and decision-making. OV materials (e.g., posters, websites, forms) reflect a range of identities and experiences. OV staff celebrate queer, trans, and intersex history and culture in public spaces and events.

Affirming policies and practices

OV has clear anti-discrimination and anti-harassment policies that explicitly reference LGBTIQA+ people. OV forms allow self-identification (e.g., gender options beyond male/female). Staff and clients/residents are offered gender-neutral bathrooms and facilities.

Trauma-informed and intersectional support

Staff training in trauma-informed care recognizes the impacts of LGBTIQA+ discrimination. OV services are culturally responsive to intersecting identities (e.g., race, disability, faith) and confidentiality and safety is a focal point for all client information.

Community engagement and co-design

Diverse representations of LGBTIQA+ people are involved in designing programs, services, and policies. OV actively considers lived experiences and values community knowledge. Queer community-led initiatives are funded and supported.

Education and capacity building

In addition to diverse training options, OV uses education to challenge stereotypes and misinformation. Respectful dialogue and reflection is encouraged in workplaces, schools, and services.

Inclusive practice strategies

Best practice delivers clear steps to reduce opportunities for error, exclusion or isolation. These include the following:

- Avoid assumptions about sexuality and identity based on appearance, cultural background, or documentation.
- Use culturally appropriate language and offer self-description options.
- Proactively provide access to culturally specific services and peer-led supports.
- Support staff to understand the impact of racism, ableism, ageism, and other systemic oppressions on clients, colleagues and the community.
- Include intersectional identities in advisory groups, training, and consumer participation.

Inclusive data collection, privacy, and confidentiality

Inclusive data collection helps tailor services, advocate for funding and improve visibility. It ensures LGBTIQA+ people are counted and respected supports and by being counted, Rainbow communities are included in systemic change.

OV clinicians have an ethical and legal obligation to safeguarding sensitive identity-related information from unauthorised disclosure, including details about their sexual orientation, gender identity, and intersex status.

Required standard of practice

Clients are asked how they wish to be identified, including name and pronouns, and use these consistently. Clients are encouraged to self-describe their identity and sexuality in their own words and in a safe space. This is particularly important in a rural context or in a places where discrimination is more likely. Staff engage with clients to understand who they feel comfortable knowing about their LGBTIQA+ identity. A client's LGBTIQA+ status is never disclosed to others (including family or other services) without explicit, informed consent.

OV staff use self-identified names and pronouns for clients and colleagues. Sexual orientation and gender may change over time or be experienced as fluid. For this reason, individuals are able to update and correct their information at any time.

Staff are trained in sensitive data collection and confidentiality protocols. Clinicians ask these questions in private settings, and provide inclusive forms with multiple-choice and free-text options including 'prefer not to say' and 'prefer to self-describe'. Individuals can update information over time, recognising that sexual orientation and gender identity can be fluid. Intersex status is distinguished from gender or sexuality.

Note - It is important to avoid blending or confusing intersex status with gender or sexuality. Being intersex is a natural variation in biological sex characteristics that does not fit typical definitions of male or female. Intersex individuals may identify with any gender and sexual orientation.

OV clinicians collect only necessary identity-related data, store that data securely and ensure only authorised access. Clients are given a clear explanation of how their information will be used, stored and shared, including any limits to confidentiality (e.g. duty of care, legal reporting obligations) in a respectful and clear manner. Informed consent is obtained before externally sharing identity-related information.

Secure information handling

All client records are securely stored within the relevant client information system (CMS), which limits access to authorised staff and requires authentication processes. The CMS accommodates chosen names and gender markers **without forcing disclosure of legal identifiers** (e.g. name, date of birth).

Sensitive information is flagged to prevent accidental disclosure. Any data breaches, including inappropriate access, are promptly investigated and affected clients are supported with transparency and care. Staff are trained to understand the potential impact of breaches and the importance of discretion.

What to ask

- Pronouns and preferred titles
- Gender identity (e.g., male, trans woman, nonbinary, gender fluid, Sistergirl, Brotherboy)
- Sexual orientation (e.g., pansexual, bisexual, queer, asexual)
- Intersex variation (if relevant)
- Relationship status and living arrangements
- Emergency contacts

Responsibilities

OV Managers are expected to model appropriate behaviours, alert their staff to required training and support them to complete it. In addition, they assist in identifying relevant resources for individual staff who would like to learn more or who need additional training or practice.

In addition, **managers of clinical teams** are expected to conduct regular audits on information relating to LGBTIQA+ clients, such as case notes, to confirm that clients receive appropriate pronouns, are aware of Rainbow services and that relevant issues are reliably addressed in their treatment.

All OV staff are expected to ask questions and seek resources where they are unsure or lack confidence in correctly affirming and supporting LGBTIQA+ staff and clients. They should be able to confidently articulate, for example, the difference between gender identity, gender expression and sexual preference. They are required to proactively identify their pronouns in meetings and with clients and ask clients for their pronouns and commit to using each client's preferred pronouns.

All clinical staff are expected actively consider the impact of each client's identified sexual orientation and identity in their clinical work. LGBTIQA+ clients are routinely offered Rainbow service alternatives, where available.

Inclusive service design

OV's intake forms and processes allow optional disclosure of identity in a safe and affirming way. Private spaces are offered for discussions and group settings are set up so confidentiality is not compromised. Staff advocate for clients' privacy when interacting with external systems (e.g. housing, justice, health).

Organisational visibility

Visibility of LGBTIQA+ culture signals safety, inclusion, and affirmation. It helps Rainbow clients and staff feel seen, respected, and welcomed.

Rainbow visibility at OV

OV engages in many activities to enhance the visibility of Rainbow culture in every program and service location. Ongoing Rainbow Tick accreditation demonstrates OV has reached a high standard of commitment to LGBTIQA+ communities, and with annual accreditations, LGBTIQA+ actions and accountability continues to expand and improve.

Progress Pride flags, inclusive posters, and affirming messages are displayed in public spaces including reception areas, counselling rooms, toilets, bathrooms and staff offices. Inclusive content is found on electronic communications such as e-mail signatures, OV website and portal. Client flyers and brochures are provided, which explain inclusive practices and privacy protections. LGBTIQA+ resources are displayed in public spaces (e.g., support services, helplines, community groups).

OV Staff wear rainbow lanyards and pronoun badges and pronouns are listed on staff profile boards in residential services. Staff and residents are encouraged to wear the OV "You are loved" t-shirt when at work as part of their usual wardrobe. Gender-neutral toilets are available on all sites and are clearly signed.

LGBTIQA+ awareness days are celebrated across OV sites (e.g., IDAHOBIT, Trans Day of Visibility, Wear It Purple). Rainbow resident groups are promoted at all OV residential services.

Staff training and cultural competency

Staff knowledge and confidence directly impact the safety and quality of care for LGBTIQA+ clients. Training reduces unconscious bias, improves communication, and fosters cultural safety.

Training priorities

All staff, students, volunteers and the Board complete mandatory induction training on LGBTIQA+ inclusion for through the OV ELMO (Electronic Learning Management System).

Enhanced and/or immersive training and education opportunities are routinely provided. Include LGBTIQA+ inclusion in induction programs for new staff.

Regular training is available for all staff in the OV training calendar and by relevant partner organisations. Staff are provided with ongoing professional development with topics such as:

- LGBTIQA+ cultural safety
- Inclusive language and pronouns
- Unconscious bias and respectful workplace behaviour
- Intersectionality and minority stress
- Trauma-informed care for LGBTIQA+ people
- Responding to discrimination and harassment

Training is amplified by reflective practice sessions to share experiences and improve service delivery. LGBTIQA+ psychosocial and specific AOD issues are specifically considered in clinical review. This is supported by the use of evidence based LGBTIQA+ factsheets, guidelines and frameworks. Annual staff surveys can then assess cultural competency and identify gaps.

Staff can apply for LGBTIQA+ communities of practice, funded specialist modules, deep dives and/or and enhanced training opportunities which specifically target AOD use in Rainbow communities. Tailored training on supporting LGBTIQA+ team members is available to managers and HR staff.

The OV Privacy Officer completes LGBTIQA+ enhanced inclusive practice training.

Best practice

LGBTIQA+ training and/or specialist organisations are preferentially used to deliver training on rainbow topics. Rainbow training is introduced by an OV Executive to signal organisational commitment. A knowledge bank of LGBTIQA+ resources and referral services is available to staff.

Organisational policies and consumer participation

Inclusive policies

All OV policies reflect diversity and equity. They include LGBTIQA+ affirming statements in codes of conduct, websites, and email signatures.

- OV's gender-specific services are inclusive of trans, gender diverse, and non-binary people.
- OV does not hold a gendered staff dress code and supports self-expression of identity.
- LGBTIQA+ participation in OV governance and management groups is invited.
- OV's inclusive practice capabilities are collected and monitored to provide evidence for building and improving good practice.
- OV's Organisational Risk Register includes LGBTIQA+ issues, and incidents and feedback can be identified on the OV risk management system.
- Inclusive practice is built into the OV ISO quality cycle.

Consumer participation

LGBTIQA+ advisory groups have been established with intersectional representation. Rainbow identified staff roles and portfolios have been created. OV services are actively promoted to LGBTIQA+ communities.

The Rainbow Working Group, which includes Executive representation, delivers oversight of relevant activities, needs and supports across OV.

LGBTIQA+ specialist organisations are invited to participate in shared care and clinical review. LGBTIQA+ community organisations are asked to partner with OV to support program co-design and provide feedback.

Speak up culture

A Speak Up culture is necessary to create a psychologically safe, inclusive, and accountable environment where staff, clients, and residents feel empowered to raise concerns, challenge discrimination, and contribute to continuous improvement.

LGBTIQA+ people often experience discrimination, microaggressions, or exclusion in silence due to fear of retaliation, shame, or lack of trust in systems. A speak up culture helps prevent harm, promotes transparency, and strengthens organisational integrity. It supports early intervention, improves service quality, and builds trust between staff and clients.

Examples of discrimination

Legal and institutional

- Lack of legal recognition for same-sex relationships, or preferred gender identity.
- Restrictions on adoption by same-sex couples or transgender individuals.
- Barriers to accessing gender-affirming healthcare, including refusal of treatment, age-related delay or lack of insurance coverage.
- Exclusion from military service or other public roles based on sexual orientation or gender identity.

Workplace

- Being fired or not hired due to being openly LGBTIQA+.
- Harassment or bullying from colleagues or supervisors.
- Lack of inclusive policies, such as absence of gender-neutral bathrooms or non-discrimination clauses.
- Unequal pay or promotion opportunities compared to cisgender / heterosexual peers.

Education settings

- Bullying or exclusion of LGBTIQA+ students by peers or staff.
- Curricula that erase or ignore queer histories and identities.
- Punishment for expressing gender identity, such as dress code violations.
- Lack of support services, like inclusive counselling or Rainbow student groups.

Healthcare

- Misgendering or refusal to use correct pronouns by medical staff.
- Assumptions about sexual behaviour leading to inappropriate or irrelevant medical advice.
- Refusal of care or substandard treatment due to identity.
- Mental health professionals pathologizing queer identities.

Social and cultural discrimination

- Rejection by family or community, including being kicked out of home.
- Violence or threats, including hate crimes.
- Exclusion from religious or cultural institutions and events.
- Media representation that stereotypes or erases LGBTIQA+ people.

Everyday discrimination

- Being stared at, mocked, or harassed in public spaces.
- Denial of service at businesses or events.
- Assumptions that queer relationships are less serious or just a phase.
- Microaggressions, such as invasive questions or backhanded compliments.
- 'Microaggression' refers to language, action or an incident which delivers indirect, subtle or unintentional discrimination or 'othering' against a person or a group. It is often missed by heterosexual/mainstream communities and may require specific attention for understanding.

Microaggressions

- "You don't look gay" which implies there's a "correct" way to present as LGBTIQA+.
- "You're too pretty to be a lesbian". This language reinforces heteronormative beauty standards and stereotypes e.g. implying lesbians are less attractive or do not value attractiveness.
- "I never would have guessed you're trans." This seems like a compliment but implies that being transgender is not as valued as being mainstream and invalidates trans identities and experiences.
- "I support you, but…" statements followed by comments that invalidate that support by dismissing or contradicting it.
- Tokenism: including someone in a group or event to comply with policy or flag your group or team is diverse, without valuing their input or identity.
- Assuming identity
- Assuming pronouns
- Asking invasive questions about someone's body or transition.
- Using incorrect pronouns after being corrected.

We recognise the unique experiences and challenges faced by Rainbow staff and are dedicated to ensuring equity, respect, and opportunity for all.

Key elements of the OV speak up culture

Psychological Safety

All staff and clients feel safe to express concerns about how they are treated without fear of punishment, disadvantage or ridicule. Respectful open dialogue and feedback is encouraged in team meetings, supervision, and client forums to support communication and understanding.

Clear pathways

OV provides multiple, accessible ways to raise concerns which include:

- Contact officers
- Health & Safety Representatives (HSR's)
- Employee Assistance Program (EAP)
- Whilstblower & Protected Disclosure Officers (WPO's)
- Clinical and Professional Supervision
- Online Incident and Hazard Reporting (Riskware)
- Anonymous feedback forms
- Internal complaints procedures
- External reporting options (e.g. Human Rights Commission)

Visible commitment

OV leadership models inclusive behaviour and responds constructively to feedback. Anti-discrimination and inclusion statements are prominently displayed in public and staff areas.

Responsive action

Reports of discrimination, harassment, or exclusion are taken seriously and given a prompt response. Where possible OV communicates outcomes and improvements resulting from such reports and from other feedback.

Education and empowerment

Staff and clients are trained about their rights, responsibilities, and how to speak up safely. Speak up scenarios are included in training and induction and OV promotes allyship and bystander intervention strategies.

Examples

A transgender resident reports being misgendered by another resident. Staff respond immediately, affirm the resident's identity, and provide education to the other resident.

A staff member notices a colleague making inappropriate jokes about sexuality. They raise the issue in supervision, and the team receives refresher training on respectful communication.

A bisexual young person feels unsafe in a gendered program. They use an anonymous feedback form to request more inclusive language and are invited to co-design a new intake process.

Expected staff behaviours

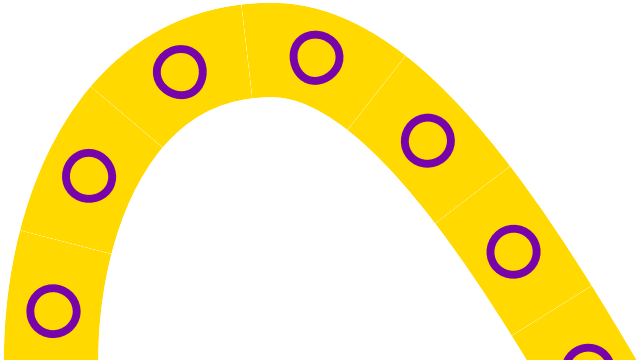
- Use affirming language and mirror the terms clients use when speaking with them.
- Check in regularly with clients about their safety and comfort.
- Encourage feedback and thank clients for speaking up.
- Avoid defensiveness; instead take responsibility, listen, learn, and act.

Protecting LGBTIQA+ young people and children's privacy and safety

OV respects and protects the privacy and wellbeing of children who identify as LGBTIQA+, particularly in situations where disclosure to family members or other parties may pose a risk to their health, safety, or emotional wellbeing. OV staff will not disclose a child's sexual orientation, gender identity, or related information to family members, guardians, or external parties without the child's informed consent, except where legally required or necessary to prevent imminent harm. Decisions about disclosure will be guided by the principles of child safety, autonomy, and best interests, considering potential risks such as family rejection, abuse, or psychological harm.

Staff are aware of the complexity and dynamics of being out, particularly for young people. They are led to by the child on the names/ pronouns/ identifiers used in any circumstance. The principles of confidentiality apply; however, staff should establish with the young person the way in which they identify in any context (e.g. School may be different from services, or family). They show support by using appropriate or preferred identifiers in the different contexts where a child may be out or not out.

Where concerns exist about a child's safety in their home environment, clinicians will follow mandatory reporting obligations and engage appropriate child protection services. All actions will align with human rights principles, anti-discrimination laws, and child safe frameworks.



Supporting LGBTIQA+ staff

Odyssey Victoria is committed to providing a workplace that is inclusive, affirming, and safe for all staff, in particular, those who identify as LGBTIQA+. We recognise the unique experiences and challenges faced by Rainbow staff and are dedicated to ensuring equity, respect, and opportunity for all.

Commitments and actions

Inclusive culture and visibility

OV maintains Rainbow Tick accreditation and actively promotes LGBTIQA+ visibility through internal communications, events, and storytelling. Signage and symbols (e.g. Pride flags) are inclusive, and shared spaces advertise affirming messages. Staff wear visible affirming and supportive LGBTIQA+ symbols or messages, respect others' pronoun use and include pronouns in email signatures.

Inclusive policies and Facilities

All OV programs have inclusive recruitment and induction processes in place.

HR policies have been reviewed and updated to ensure they consider LGBTIQA+ needs, including:

- Affirming gender preference in the workplace (Gender Affirmation Support).
- Inclusive parental leave for rainbow families.
- Flexible leave for medical, legal, or personal needs related to gender identity.
- Provide access to gender-neutral toilets and change facilities across all sites.

Anti-discrimination and safety

OV maintains a zero-tolerance approach to discrimination, harassment, or bullying based on sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression. Staff are trained to recognise overt and covert behaviours that negatively impact and are supported to call them out; OV management provides clear, confidential, and accessible pathways for reporting discrimination or misconduct. All complaints are investigated promptly and sensitively, with appropriate support provided to affected staff.

Wellbeing and support

To increase responsiveness to LGBTIQA+ staff, Rainbow inclusion is incorporated into OV's wellbeing and support plan. Contact officers who identify with the LGBTIQA+ Community are identified across OV sites to support staff who have questions or require additional information. Peer support networks are promoted including an internal LGBTIQA+ staff group. For external assistance, Employee Assistance Program (EAP) providers are trained in LGBTIQA+ cultural safety and staff are encouraged to request that expertise when accessing the service.

Leadership and accountability

All executives and managers model inclusive behaviours and actively support LGBTIQA+ inclusion. LGBTIQA+ inclusion goals are specifically endorsed in executive and manager position descriptions and performance reviews. To confirm the effectiveness of these actions, staff experiences are monitored via anonymous surveys and feedback mechanisms, to inform continuous improvement.

Community engagement and advocacy

Publicly endorsing and actively engaging in the Rainbow community is a critical part of OV's profile. OV includes external LGBTIQA+ events such as Midsumma Festival, Pride March, and IDAHOBIT and encourages staff to participate. Partnerships with LGBTIQA+ organisations are sought to strengthen cultural competency and community connection. OV reliably and publicly advocates for LGBTIQA+ rights and inclusion in broader health and community services.

Conclusion

Odyssey Victoria recognises that to properly deliver LBGTIQA+ inclusiveness as a core feature of our organisation, management and staff must continue to fulfill the requirements in this framework, and maintain a commitment to learning and growing in rainbow practices and understanding. The benefits of doing this will outweigh the effort required and will continue to resonate in delivering safe and respectful services to all of the communities OV works with and for.

LGBTIQA+ inclusive written communication style guide

This style guide supports consistent, culturally safe and affirming written communication across Odyssey Victoria. It translates the LGBTIQA+ Inclusive Practice Guide into practical writing standards for emails, policies, reports, forms, social media, signage and internal documents. It aligns with Odyssey Victoria's values, Rainbow Tick expectations, and trauma-informed care principles.

Tone and voice

Core Tone

All written communication should be:

- Warm, respectful and affirming
- Clear, plain English and accessible
- Non-judgemental and trauma-informed
- Strengths-based, not deficit-focused

Voice Principles

- Centre lived experience and self-determination
- Write *with* people, not *about* them

Don't

- Use clinical, legalistic or euphemistic language unless required
- Frame LGBTIQA+ identities as problems, risks or exceptions

Example:

✓ *We work to ensure everyone feels safe, seen and respected."*

✗ *Managing LGBTIQA+ issues*

✗ *Accommodating gender diversity*

Language standards

- Self-identification as the primary rule
- Chosen names and pronouns, consistently across all documents
- Identity-affirming language, as preferred by the individual
- "LGBTIQA+", "Rainbow", or specific identities where relevant

Don't

- Use assumptions based on names, pronouns, appearance or documentation
- Use gendered language unless explicitly confirmed
- Outdated, medicalised or pathologising terms

Avoid	Use
Husband/wife (unless confirmed)	Partner
Guessing pronouns	They/them (until advised otherwise)
Lifestyle, preference	LGBTIQA+ person
Disorder, condition	Intersex variation

Names, pronouns and references

- Use correct names and pronouns consistently in:
  - ◊ Emails
  - ◊ Case notes
  - ◊ Reports
  - ◊ Minutes and action tables
  - ◊ Forms and databases
- Default to gender-neutral language if unsure
- Correct mistakes briefly in writing and continue appropriately

Example:

✓ *Apologies, they will attend the appointment tomorrow.*

Don't

- Disclose someone's identity in writing without consent
- Use legal names where a chosen name is known and appropriate
- Make explanations in documents that centre the staff member's learning rather than respect for the person

Visibility and affirmation

Written communication should signal safety and belonging, never require disclosure.*** Written materials should consistently reinforce that Odyssey Victoria is a rainbow-affirming organisation, including references to:

- Rainbow Tick accreditation (where appropriate)
- Inclusive language in email signatures
- Explicit statements of inclusion in policies, flyers and reports

Organisational Visibility

Where relevant, written materials may reference visible affirming practices, including:

- Staff wearing rainbow lanyards
- Staff and residents wearing Odyssey Victoria "You are loved" Rainbow-affirming t-shirts
- Pride flags and inclusive signage at sites

Documents, policies and reports

- Use gender-neutral language by default
- Clearly explain privacy and confidentiality where identity is referenced
- Ensure examples reflect diverse identities without tokenism

Don't

- Use unnecessary gender markers in forms and templates

Example:

✓ *Clients are invited to describe their identity in their own words.*

✗ *Clients must select their gender.*

Emails and internal communications

- Include pronouns in email signatures (where staff choose to do so)
- Use inclusive greetings (e.g. *Hello everyone*, *Hello team*)

Don't

- use gendered assumptions in group communications
- Over-explain inclusion language
- Use defensive wording if identity-related concerns are raised
- Omit or be silent where inclusion should be explicit

Social media and public-facing communication

- Use warm, hopeful and community-focussed language
- Link inclusion to care, recovery, dignity and belonging
- Celebrate Rainbow visibility naturally, not only on awareness days

Example:

✓ *A rainbow over our residential rehab today - a reminder of hope, healing and belonging.*

Don't

- Out individuals without explicit written consent
- Use corporate or performative language
- Treat Rainbow inclusion as symbolic only

Trauma-informed writing lens

- Recognise the impact of discrimination and minority stress
- Use clear, respectful language
- Reinforce psychological safety and Speak Up culture

Don't

- Blame, judge or minimise

Intersectionality

- Acknowledge that identities intersect and shape experience
- Reflect diversity across culture, faith, age, disability and experience

Example:

✓ *People's identities intersect in different ways and influence how they experience care and safety.*

Don't

- Use "one-size-fits-all" language

Speak up culture

Example:

✓ *Thank you for raising this.*

✓ *We take this seriously.*

✓ *Your feedback helps us improve.*

✗ *That wasn't our intention.*

✗ *We treat everyone the same.*

✗ *There's no policy breach.*

Review and accountability

All written materials should be:

- Reviewed periodically with Rainbow Working Group input
- Updated as language and best practice evolve

Consistent with:

- Rainbow Tick standards
- Child-safety frameworks
- Privacy and confidentiality requirements

Odyssey
Victoria