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Understanding the circumstances and experiences of young lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex and gender questioning people who are homelessness in Australia: a scoping study

FINAL REPORT

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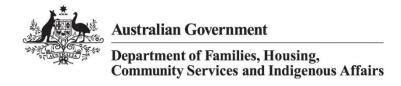
Project No. FP10

UNDERSTANDING THE CIRCUMSTANCES AND EXPEREINCES OF YOUNG LESBIAN, BISEXAUL, TRANSGENDER, INTERSEX AND GENDER QUESTIONING PEOLE WHO ARE HOMELESS IN AUSTRALIA: A SCOPING STUDY

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Acknowledgements

Acronyms

AHRC	Australian Human Rights Commission
ARCSH	Australian Research Centre in Sex, Health and Society
CHURP	Centre for Housing, Urban and Regional Planning
LGBTIQ	Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender Intersex and Gender Questioning
NAHA	National Affordable Housing Agreement
NSW	New South Wales
NYC	National Youth Commission
PICYS	Perth Inner City Youth Service
SHS	Specialist Homelessness Services
UK	United Kingdom
USA	United States of America

Executive Summary

Year/Project No:	2013/FP10
Project title:	**Understanding the circumstances and experiences of young lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex and gender questioning people who are homeless in Australia in Australia: a scoping study**

This paper is the final report of a scoping study for the Federal Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs investigating 'Understanding the experiences of young lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex and gender questioning people who are homeless in Australia'.

The purpose of this study is to contribute new knowledge of the circumstances, dimensions and experiences of young LGBTIQ people who are homeless. Currently there is a gap in Australian research that is dedicated to understanding this cohort and how to better tailor programs and services to meet their specific needs. The study addressed two research questions:

- What are the experiences of homelessness for LGBTIQ people and how do these experiences differ from what is currently understood about homelessness in Australia?; and

- How can the policies and practices of accommodation and service providers be improved to assist LGBTIQ people transition out of the homelessness support system and into independent living and mainstream services?

The study involved three stages of data collection and analysis. Stage one involved a highly targeted review and synthesis of the relevant literature on LGBTIQ homeless people, including any existing research on the pathways into homelessness for this group, and their support/housing needs. Stage two involved a series of interviews and focus groups with service provider workers across sites in Adelaide and Sydney. The literature review identified that service provision is a fundamental aspect of the experiences of homelessness for LGBTIQ people. For this reason, and also due to the fact that recruiting people who have experienced homelessness will potentially occur through service providers, meeting with these workers was scheduled as the first stage of the field research. Stage three involved interviews with young LGBTIQ homeless people which also took place across those two cities. These interviews were designed to identify and understand the nature and incidence of homelessness for LGBTIQ young people and what services they found to be effective and not effective.

Broadly the overall findings presented in this report are consistent with existing literatures that address aspects and experiences of young LGBTIQ young people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. The study found that there are reasons to be positive about certain specific developments and

areas of expertise that exist within some areas of the community services sector in Australia. The study has identified areas of existing local expertise where an investment of additional resources, as well as the development of nation-wide networks of practice and research, would enhance current service delivery for LGBTIQ people in Australia.

The study has identified a number of specific issues to be addressed in policy and practice:

The study identified that the homogenisation in the way and what type of data is currently collected means that there is little understanding of the number of young LGBTIQ people that are presenting for assistance. Data collected needs to be inclusive of sexual diversity and gender identity as a way of better targeting support and accommodation needs for this cohort.

There are structural barriers around the lack of appropriate and safe housing stock. At a policy level the provision of a range of accommodation to meet the increasing needs of young LGBTIQ people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness is critical. It should focus on long-term support in their transition to independence and provision of a pathway from crisis to medium to long term housing stock. Further, provide models of service provision which incorporate the scope to provide targeted follow up support to young LGBTIQ people up to 25 years of age to better prepare their transition out of homelessness and into independent living.

A requirement for co-ordinated action is a consistent theme to emerge out of national and international literature on young LGBTIQ homelessness. There is a critical need to put in place an interconnected and co-ordinated youth transitions system that has a focus on promoting positive pathways for young LGBTIQ people as its core responsibility.

There is a need for policy makers to encourage integration of transition supports for young LGBTIQ people, from inter-governmental and Commonwealth and State levels, through to coordinated youth agencies and networks at the local level. There is overwhelming evidence from research and practitioners that young LGBTIQ homelessness is a complex phenomenon with complex causes and integrated solutions are needed.

This research has identified the need for a longer term view in supporting young LGBTIQ people. Programs that have a 'strengths-focus', that is locally-based programs that show young LGBTIQ people how to help themselves. Life skills training for young LGBTIQ people should include understanding tenancy guidelines (rights and responsibilities, preparation and presentation for tenancy interviews, building positive relationships with landlord and with services). Given the use of shared households, it would also be useful to develop their communication and negotiation skills.

There needs to be recognition and investment in existing leaders, a facilitation of cross-state information sharing, and the establishment of locally-relevant policy and practice standards that are consistent across agencies and with

international standards that meet Australia's international human rights obligations.

A focus and commitment to staff training to support workers to engage more effectively with young people of different sexual and gender orientation needs to be undertaken by all agencies and service workers in the public, community and health sectors. It is evident that individual-level LGBTIQ awareness and cultural competency training should form a core part of the professional process of all health and social service workers. The involvement of young LGBTIQ people should be an integral part of these training schemes.

LGBTIQ awareness and cultural competency training should also be extended to young heterosexual people who access support and accommodation services.

There should be a requirement that all agencies that seek government funding to assist homeless young people can demonstrate an awareness and cultural competency of LGBTIQ issues and populations at the institutional level and to adopt non-discrimination policies for LGBTIQ youth. This should also be evident in formal agency policy.

There are a number of actions government and agencies can take to improve the well-being of young LGBTIQ homeless people. To paraphrase a previous study we believe that – at least in part – policy makers need to step into the shoes of, in this case, homeless young LGBTIQ people in order to see how these people understand their circumstances and current living conditions (Beer *et al.* 2005). The development and implementation of appropriate policy responses needs to be responsive to the desirability of empowering these young people, developing their abilities and strengthening their self-worth. It is also highly desirable to include the relevant agencies in identifying and acting upon new programs and policies. Governments and agencies need to work together – with young LGBTIQ people – to identify the most appropriate solutions for them. Effective intervention in LGBTIQ youth homelessness offers potentially very substantial benefits for society as a whole and for local communities in particular (Beer *et al.* 2005). Policies and strategies targeting LGBTIQ youth homelessness are critical in addressing unemployment and welfare dependency; in reducing those health costs associated with homelessness; in contributing to stronger families and stronger communities; and, helping to reduce other public expenditures in the long term.

This can be best achieved with the active involvement of, and participation in, young LGBTIQ people in the development and implementation of programs that can assist them. They know what they need and what could make a difference in their lives. Young LGBTIQ people have much to offer in this process. They should be key contributors in devising strategies and support systems that can navigate them out of homelessness and into sustainable independent living. Young LGBTIQ people need, and have a right to be part of solving this public issue.

Section One: Introduction

1.1 Scope of the study

This paper is the final report of a scoping study for the Federal Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs investigating 'Understanding the experiences of young lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex and gender questioning people who are homeless in Australia'.

The purpose of this study is to expand on existing research on the experiences of young LGBTIQ people who are homeless, to identify existing gaps in knowledge and ultimately identify best practice recommendations for working with LGBTIQ people who experience homelessness. The study has two guiding research questions:

- What are the experiences of homelessness for LGBTIQ people and how do these experiences differ from what is currently understood about homelessness in Australia?; and

- How can the policies and practices of accommodation and service providers be improved to assist LGBTIQ people transition out of the homelessness support system and into independent living and mainstream services?

This report builds on and extends the first output of this study, a targeted literature review which focused on three main themes: the paucity of Australian research on LGBTIQ people and homelessness, what is currently known about the experiences of LGBTIQ people who are homeless in Australia and local and international policy and best practice recommendations. This component of the study updates our understanding around these issues, which is critical given the rising number of people presenting as homeless in a period of escalating housing affordability crisis in Australia. A key theme is that LGBTIQ people are over-represented in homeless populations; are likely to experience a higher incidence of the negative outcomes associated with homelessness; and homophobia and transphobia are commonly experienced in accommodation services. It is also the case that, in comparison to sector developments in the USA and policy advances in the UK, Australia has a poor track record regarding addressing homelessness for LGBTIQ people.

1.2 Structure of the report

The report begins with a brief review of existing empirical material and critical and policy literature. The study also collected primary data from interviews and focus groups with service workers and young LGBTIQ people who had or are experiencing homelessness.

The study was organised into three sequential stages:

Stage one involved a review and synthesis of the relevant literature on LGBTIQ homeless people, including any existing research on the pathways into homelessness for this group, and their support/housing needs. The findings of this stage are discussed in Section Two and are structured to address the following questions:

- What can we learn from contemporary international and national literature on LGBTIQ people who experience homelessness?

- Is homelessness a recognised problem for this cohort?

- Are there existing policies and services that specifically recognise the needs of LGBTIQ homeless people?

Stage two involved interviews and focus groups with service provider workers across sites in Adelaide and Sydney. The literature review identified that service provision is a fundamental aspect of the experiences of homelessness for LGBTIQ people. For this reason, and that recruiting participants would potentially occur through service providers, meeting with service providers was scheduled as the first stage of the field-work research. This stage was structured to address the following questions:

- What kinds of services currently exist to support LGBTIQ people who experience homelessness (focus on Adelaide and Sydney) and what is the demand for these services?

- What challenges currently exist in providing appropriate housing and social support services to LGBTIQ people who experience homelessness?

- How can policies and programs be better tailored to support LGBTIQ people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness?

In Sydney the service provider workers who participated in the study included Twenty10, The Gender Centre, headspace and Yfoundations. Approaches were made to include three additional agencies operating in the outer-western suburbs of Sydney. These agencies declined the invitation. In Adelaide, St John's Youth Service Inc., UnitingCare Wesley Port Adelaide and Anglicare agreed to participate in the study. The decision was made to include agencies that worked specifically with LGBTIQ people and those generic based agencies as a means of offering a contrasting and comparative analysis. The findings of this stage are reported in Section Three.

Stage three involved interviews with young LGBTIQ homeless people which also took place across those two cities. As this is a scoping study and confined to a relatively small sample base the study has focused on young LGBTIQ people aged between 16 and 25 years of age. The rationale for confining this research to young people aged between 16 and 25 years of age

was three-fold. Firstly, the quality of the data obtained in the total number of interviews conducted may not have provided meaningful findings across a much broader age range. Secondly, young LGBTIQ people between the ages of 16 to 25 years of age are not a homogenous category. Vast differences in experience and aspirations can and do exist between those young people aged from 16 years to 18 years compared to young people aged from 18 - 19 to 25 years of age. Thirdly, differences of experience and treatment by agencies exist between those young people who identify as LGB and transgendered young people.

These interviews were designed to identify and understand the nature and incidence of homelessness for LGBTIQ people and more specifically build on existing Australian literature which investigates the experiences of LGBTIQ homeless young people when accessing accommodation and other social services. This stage was structured to address the following questions:

- What are the pathways into and out of homelessness for young LGBTIQ people and are they geographically different?

- What services currently exist and how are they experienced by young LGBTIQ young people?

- What kinds of services and service delivery models and approaches do young people find most effective and when are services ineffective in supporting them into stable housing?

The people we aimed to recruit as participants in stage three were likely to have experienced personal trauma, which, existing research suggests, is likely to have been compounded by their interactions with service providers. They are also representative of a cohort that is frequently asked to participate in research which might be university-based research, but also news reporting and non-professional research. The service agencies that were involved in the study were highly protective of their clients because of a view that the voices of this cohort have not been incorporated into policy or program changes in the past. This was a particular issue in Sydney. The findings of this third stage are reported in Section Four.

1.3 Background

In early 2008 the Australian Government delivered a White Paper: 'The Road Home: A National Approach to Ending Homelessness', placing homelessness on the political agenda. The White Paper outlined a number of ambitious targets for reducing homelessness, including halving overall homelessness by 2020. At its core the White Paper advocated three strategic responses for preventing homelessness:

1. Turning off the tap: services will intervene early to prevent homelessness;

2. Improving and expanding services: services will be more connected and responsive to achieve sustainable housing, improve economic and social participation and end homelessness for their clients;

3. Breaking the cycle: people who become homeless will move quickly through the crisis system to stable housing with the support they need so that homelessness does not recur (Commonwealth of Australia, 2008: ix).

Homelessness is a pressing issue across Australia (Beer *et al.* 2005, Chamberlain and McKenzie 2006; Rosenthal 2006). While there have been many non-government organisations and local governments adopting a range of accommodation models to respond to the growing complexity of homelessness over the last decade, there remain significant gaps in what constitutes best practice when developing accommodation models and support programs specifically for LGBTIQ people who experience homelessness. Very little research has been conducted into how pathways into homelessness for young LGBTIQ people differ from those of other homeless people or to what extent LGBTIQ people experiencing homelessness are confronted by different or unique challenges (Rosenthal 2006: 281; Zufferey and Kerr 2004). Building on the existing Australian research, connecting up state-based qualitative studies on the experience of homelessness, and exploring international policy approaches in relation to homelessness for LGBTIQ people are therefore necessary in order to develop an understanding of how effective these models and support programs are in assisting LGBTIQ clients.

Section Two: The literature

The purpose of this literature review is to provide a concise and clear overview of relevant literature on homelessness as experienced by LGBTIQ people. Surveying the existing literature in this way helps to demonstrate why and how sexual orientation and gender identity have a bearing on the experience of homelessness. Reviewing existing literature also allows us to identify in a more precise way any gaps in knowledge so as to position the next stage of the project more effectively in the context of existing knowledge and research.

In carrying out the literature review it became apparent that to date little research has been undertaken on this topic in Australia. For this reason a selection of international research and policy literature is incorporated in the results reported below. In particular, literature from the UK and the USA was reviewed and is discussed in the findings. Both the UK and the USA have similar definitions of homelessness with that of current Australian research. The three countries also have commensurate social and political systems making a comparison of social trends and policy approaches feasible. Additionally, the USA and the UK have different areas of strength in addressing homelessness as experienced by LGBTIQ people. Incorporating these two nation-states into the discussion thus provides points of similarity

and points of difference in terms of existing response to homelessness as experienced by LGBTIQ people.

In summary the key findings of the literature review are that LGBTIQ people are over-represented in homeless populations, experience higher incidence of the negative outcomes associated with homelessness, and regularly experience and/or witness homophobia and transphobia in accommodation services. While these are consistent findings in Australia and in international contexts, existing policy and practice in Australia lags behind the comparator nation-states considered in the literature review. Despite this, there are areas of existing expertise in Australia that, with government support and increased funding, could be further developed upon and extended to create a nation-wide improvement in service delivery for LGBTIQ young people who are homeless.

2.1 Paucity of Australian research on LGBTIQ people and homelessness

In 18 years only three reports specifically investigating homelessness for LGBTIQ people have been undertaken in Australia. Each study had been initiated by, or in association with, service providers and were stated-based and primarily qualitative. The first of the three research reports was undertaken in New South Wales in 1995 and was initiated by Twenty10, a community service organisation that provides accommodation and other social services for young people of diverse genders, sexes and sexualities. The other two reports were undertaken in Perth in 2003 by the Perth Inner City Youth Service and in Queensland in 2005 as a collaborative project of the Queensland Youth Housing Coalition and Open Doors Youth Service Inc. No report specifically or exclusively discussed the experiences of transgender or intersex people who were homeless in Australia and transgender, intersex and gender questioning people were under-represented due to recruitment difficulties.

Despite the geographic and time differences between these research projects, their findings are consistent. LGBTIQ young people are over-represented in homelessness populations. Where questions on the pathways into homelessness were asked, young people reported a variety of reasons and among them was parental rejection on the basis of sexual orientation. These young people interviewed also reported directly experiencing and bearing witness to abuse, harassment, and violence in accommodation and other social services on the basis of their sexual orientation and/or their gender identity. These studies depicted a picture of young LGBTIQ people who, despite experiencing repeated breaches of care, significant disadvantage and personal and social challenges, were resilient and articulate.

Two of the research projects specifically explored the question of service provision to LGBTIQ young people. This was an issue that was raised in both the Queensland and the NSW study, though it was a more developed feature of the Queensland study. In the Queensland survey 78% of service provider participants (a total of 23 service providers) indicated that 'they presently

provided housing to LGBT people, or had done so in the past' (Maberley and Coffey 2005: 26), establishing that LGTBIQ young people regularly access accommodation services. Respondents were then asked to identify any 'issues that affect LGBT young people in SAAP services' (Maberley and Coffey 2005: 26). Among the responses given by service providers were issues that the authors of the report characterised as a: 'Lack of appropriate resources and understanding within specific communities; ... Lack of LGBT specific mentors and networks within specific communities;...Homophobia, intolerance and discrimination by peers' (Maberley and Coffey 2005: 27). The study found that LGBTIQ people were not explicitly included in their equity and discrimination policy statements.

Further, these three studies revealed inadequate service provision, a lack of inclusive equity policies and, even where they did exist, there continued to be failures to ensure the safety of LGBTIQ young people. Yet many workers and service organisations indicated genuine concern for the needs of LGBTIQ clients and a willingness to improve their practice and their organisations' ability to properly serve young LGBTIQ people. In the Queensland study the question was posed: 'Would services attend training about supporting LGBT young people in housing?'; 74% of respondents indicated that that they would. Service providers were also asked: 'Would it be useful, in resources or training forums, to hear experiences of young LGBT people?' of which 91% of respondents indicated positively. This suggests that there is strong support for sector training to improve service delivery to LGBTIQ youth and a recognition that workers would like to be more aware of the issues affecting LGBTIQ young people's experience of housing services.

While there is a willingness to improve service delivery, the ability to do so is impacted by a lack of structural supports. At the time of the 2005 survey no supported accommodation service existed in Queensland which specifically served the needs of LGBTIQ young people. This means that there was no organisation that could draw on existing expertise in order to deliver sector training to accommodation service providers in Queensland. This lack of structural support to improve sector practice is an issue that is likely to be experienced in most Australian states. Despite the high incidence of homelessness for LGBTIQ people, Sydney is the only city in Australia at this time to have accommodation services which specifically serve LGBTIQ people.

There are research projects which have addressed the social experiences and circumstances of same-sex attracted young people in Australia more generally. Of particular relevance are the 'Counting Themselves In' reports which have been undertaken by researchers based at La Trobe University in Victoria (for example Hillier *et al.* 1998; Hillier *et al.* 2005). While the issue of homelessness is not directly addressed the reports include young LGBTIQ people's experiences in the community, including what kinds of supports young people experience; what kinds of supports they value and what kinds of supports that young people feel that they lack; the kinds of homophobic violence that they experience in the community and the connections between

these negative experiences and negative outcomes such as poor mental health, self-harm and substance misuse (Hillier *et al.* 1998: 53-54).

A key finding of the 1998 report was that same-sex attracted young people reported a high incidence of harassment and abuse occurring in school contexts (Hillier *et al.* 1998: 2-3). As one participant described:

> ...the first person I told I was gay betrayed me by telling all my friends. They in turn verbally and emotionally abused me until I was feeling so low I thought I was having a nervous breakdown. I basically left school (Ivan, aged 16 cited in Hillier *et al.* 1998: 33).

On the basis of this finding the authors recommended that high schools needed to develop programs to address harassment about sexual orientation through dedicated education (Hillier *et al.* 1998: 5, 73). While a strategy like this might not appear to have an explicit connection to homelessness as experienced by LGBTIQ young people, bullying and violence in schools can contribute to stress which lead some LGBTIQ young people to leave home. Eradicating homophobic and transphobic harassment and violence from schools would therefore potentially have an impact on homelessness for LGBTIQ young people. In other words, while generalised interventions to improve the experiences of young LGBTIQ are not likely to be adequate to end homelessness for LGBTIQ young people in themselves, improving the experiences of LGBTIQ young people at a systematic level is likely to assist towards this goal.

2.2 Why sexual orientation and gender identity are important in addressing homelessness

> Homelessness can happen to anyone (*The Road Home A National Approach to Reducing Homelessness* Commonwealth of Australia 2008: 14)

The 2008 White Paper on homelessness recognised that anyone in our community can become homeless. Despite this recognition little research has to date been undertaken in Australia specifically addressing the experience of homelessness for LGBTIQ people. Despite this paucity of literature, there are several reasons why an understanding of how homelessness is experienced by people of diverse genders, sexes, and sexualities is needed. In international critical literature and reports, as well as the few Australian investigations undertaken into the issue, it is consistently reported that LGBTIQ people are over-represented among homeless populations. In part this might be explained by the fact that parental rejection, and/or abuse in the family and the community on the basis of sexual orientation and/or gender identity are causes of homelessness for many young LGBTIQ people. What is more, existing literature also revealed that LGBTIQ people experience higher rates of the negative outcomes associated with homelessness such as physical and sexual victimisation and poor mental health. Perhaps even more troubling, existing Australian and international research has highlighted that homophobia, transphobia, and heterosexist abuse and violence are regularly

experienced by LGBTIQ people accessing accommodation and other social services. This negatively impacts on homelessness for LGBTIQ people.

2.3 LGBTIQ people are over-represented in homeless populations

In existing research from Australia, the USA, and the UK, a recurrent finding is that LGBTIQ people are over-represented in homeless populations (for example Rossiter 2003: 24; Hyatt 2011: 1; Maberley and Coffey 2005: 19; Roche 2005: 4). In different national contexts different kinds of data are drawn on to estimate the percentage of LGBTIQ people within the homeless population. Despite methodological differences, and acknowledged difficulties in estimating homelessness, the findings are consistent: the over-representation of LGBTIQ people in homeless populations is an international trend. Research data reporting on the incidence of homelessness for LGBTIQ people in Australia, the USA and the UK are summarised below.

Current census data used to estimate homelessness in Australia does not record characteristics on sexual orientation or gender identity. This is an issue that is discussed in more detail later in the report. Estimates of the rate of LGBTIQ people who are homeless in Australia are derived from other data sources. A 1997 research project with marginalised youth found that same-sex attracted young people are over-represented in homeless populations (Hillier, Matthews and Dempsey 1997) and a more recent research project into youth homelessness in Melbourne which asked questions about sexual orientation and sexual attraction, found that same-sex attracted young people were over-represented in homeless populations (Rossiter *et al.* 2003: 24).

In literature from the USA it is estimated that while LGBTIQ people make up only 5 - 10% of the general population in the USA, in some states LGBTIQ young people constitute approximately 40% of the youth homeless population (Hyatt 2011: 1). Statistics on homelessness can be fraught due to difficulties involved in defining homelessness and accessing target research groups – issues that can become even more complex when it comes to capturing data on sexual orientation and gender identity. Nonetheless research conducted across the USA and the UK revealed that LGBTIQ people are over-represented in homeless populations. For example a 2011 paper reporting on a survey of public high school students in Massachusetts revealed that 20% of the young people surveyed who were homeless identified as gay, lesbian or bisexual whereas only 5% of the entire survey sample identified as gay, lesbian or bisexual (Corliss *et al.* 2011: 1686). The findings from this particular paper were based on two comprehensive surveys of students undertaken in 2005 and 2007 with a representative sample of public high school students. The surveys included questions asking students to anonymously record their housing status and sexual orientation in the one survey.

Over-representation of LGBTIQ people in homeless populations is also reported in the United Kingdom, though with similar reservations about the difficulties arising in accurately keeping data on this issue (O'Connor and

Molloy 2001: 16; also Roche, 2005). In the UK rates of homelessness vary across countries. One major UK report notes evidence that British research carried out in the 1990s estimated that 11% of same-sex attracted young people were homeless or insecurely housed, while research from Scotland taken at this same time period estimated that one third of the same-sex attracted young people left home 'as a result of their sexuality becoming known' (O'Connor and Molloy 2001: 16). This trend is similar in the Irish Republic, though figures are twice as high for LGBTIQ respondents deemed to be living in poverty in Ireland (O'Connor and Molloy 2001: 16).

In estimating and reporting on the rates of homelessness for LGBTIQ people it is important to note that a high percentage of young people from this group are likely to be 'invisible' in existing accommodation services. 'Invisible' either because they do not disclose their sexual orientation or gender identity to service providers (for example Maberley and Coffey 2005: 37-38) and so are not included in official estimates, or because they are uncomfortable accessing accommodation services – and so live precariously in privatised relations of dependence (PICYS, 2003: 25-26; O'Connor and Molloy, 2001: 68-70).

With the acknowledged limitations that arise in accurately measuring homeless populations, and the lack of systematic data kept in Australia, there is substantive evidence that LGBTIQ people are over-represented in homeless populations. While individual estimates given in specific reports may be open to dispute, the over-representation of this group is a consistent finding in both national and international research. Hence there is a need for a better understanding of why LGBTIQ people experience homelessness and how effective existing services are in supporting this cohort transition out of homelessness and into secure and stable housing.

2.4 Pathways into homelessness for LGBTIQ people

In some studies the major causes of homelessness for young LGBTIQ people are similar to heterosexual young people: family conflict and family violence (for example Cochran *et al*, 2002: 774). Furthermore, research has revealed that patterns of family conflict and the initial experience of homelessness can occur well before young people have disclosed their sexual orientation. However, as one paper points out this kind of temporal trajectory does not in itself prove that the causes of homelessness are unconnected to sexual orientation because perception of sexual orientation can impact on family dynamics even if the young person has not yet 'come out' (Rosario *et al.* 2012: 191).

Where causes of homelessness for young people are reported in survey data as an outcome of 'family conflict' and 'family violence', there is rarely a follow up set of questions which unpack these responses. That is, surveys of this type, including those carried out in Australia do not usually ask participants to identify the causes or reasons *behind* family conflict and family violence. Hence researchers are given only a partial indication of the *actual* reasons why young people become homeless. If the underlying cause of family

conflict or family violence is parental rejection on the basis of the young person's sexual orientation or gender identity, then the apparent similarity with the causes of homelessness for heterosexual young people is misleading and inaccurate.

While sexual orientation and/or gender identity might not be a direct cause of family conflict, homophobic and/or transphobic violence experienced in other spheres of life outside the home can have a direct or indirect role in contributing to a young LGBTIQ person's decision to leave home. One young woman participating in a 2003 Perth study provided an account of the events leading her to becoming homeless:

> I left home when I was 15. I didn't come out properly then. At school I had a run in with a couple of people and I was getting abused at school because I told a couple of people that I was a lesbian but I wasn't sure if I was. My mum didn't know so they didn't know why I was getting bashed up and so that I was taken out of school for my own protection. I don't really remember it was all really complicated. Then later that year I told my mum that I wanted to move out. There were stacks of secrets, abuse and stuff; it was just easier to move out (Cited in PICYS 2003: 24).

It is evident from this quote that even if the family conflict she experienced was not directly related to her sexual orientation it may have been a contributing factor. Given the young woman had not disclosed her sexual orientation at home, homophobic violence that she experienced in the wider community, specifically at school, compounded her stress which may have contributed to her becoming homeless. Bullying and harassment are recognised by the Australian Human Rights Commission as causing homelessness among the population in general and in relation to LGBTI people specifically (AHRC nd). Furthermore, in Australian research on the experiences of young LGBTIQ people, homophobic and transphobic violence, harassment and abuse are consistently reported as commonplace for young people and can lead them to become homeless (PICYS 2003: 24-25; Hillier *et al.*: 2005:47). Experiences of this kind are unlikely to be captured in survey data of homeless young people in Australia because there are no questions relating to sexual orientation, gender identity or violence they may have experienced in the wider community. However one major report from the UK acknowledged that these issues are contributing causes of homelessness (O'Connor and Molloy 2001: 17).

The causes of homelessness for LGBTIQ people, specifically young people, reveals that understandings of the causes of homelessness from existing research can be misleading because of a failure to provide detailed information on the causes of family conflict and violence as well as the experiences of homophobic and transphobic violence and harassment that may contribute to them becoming homeless. Hence there is an issue that existing research may have *underestimated* the extent to which homelessness among these groups is related to gender identity and/or sexual orientation.

Studies that explicitly report examples of this are evident. Parental rejection and family violence based on sexual orientation and gender identity have been cited as causes of homelessness for young LGBTIQ people in Australian (for example PICYS, 2003: 7; Hillier Turner and Mitchell, 2005: 1), USA (for example Rosario, Scrimshaw and Hunter, 2012: 186; Mottet and Ohle, 2003: 4), and UK studies (for example Roche, 2005: 4).

Australian research, partly due to the small quantity and partly by design, has provided fewer accounts of the experiences of young people who experience parental rejection and abuse related to their sexual orientation or gender identity leading them to become homeless. One exception was a 2003 study conducted in Perth. The authors of the study summarised the pathways into homelessness for young people of diverse genders and sexualities in the following terms:

> Thirty percent of the young people, who participated in the research, identified sexuality as the primary reason for leaving home. *For all of the young people disclosing their sexual identity to their parents resulted in before forced to leave home* (PICYS 2003: 24-25, emphasis added).

For LGBTIQ young people homophobic and/or transphobic abuse in the family and/or in the wider community – including school communities – often precedes homelessness, and either directly or indirectly contributes to LGBTIQ people becoming homeless or insecurely housed. It is evident from the literature that the data currently collected in Australia on reasons why young people become homeless are inadequate in capturing abuse and violence related to sexual orientation and gender identity, whether this is experienced in the home or in other social contexts. This constitutes a significant gap in existing knowledge on the causes of homelessness for LGBTIQ young people.

2.5 Higher prevalence of the negative outcomes associated with homelessness for LGBTIQ young people

A third key finding from the literature investigating the experiences of homelessness for LGBTIQ people is that, among (specifically young) LGBTIQ people who are homeless, there is a higher prevalence of the negative outcomes associated with homelessness as compared with their heterosexual counterparts (for example Hyatt 2011: 2; Corliss *et al.* 2011: 1686-1687; Cochran *et al.* 2002: 774-775; Ray 2006: 2-3, 66-70). The emphasis on *young* LGBTIQ people here arises from the literature that has focused on young people. The negative outcomes associated with homelessness for youth include: physical and sexual victimisation; substance abuse; mental health issues such as depression; suicidal ideation; and 'risky' sexual practices (Corliss *et al.* 2011; Cochran *et al.* 2002). The literature highlighted that LGBTIQ youth report higher rates of some of these outcomes outside the issue of homelessness (Cochran *et al.*, 2002: 775). Thus LGBTIQ young people are in general more likely to experience victimisation and report suicidal ideation (see for example Hillier *et al.* 2006: vii-ix; Wolfson 1998: 51-

52).   These issues are compounded for LGBTIQ young people who are homeless, specifically where they have experienced parental rejection or family violence on the basis of their sexual orientation and/or gender identity.

2.6 The experiences of LGBTIQ people in accommodation and other social services

Literature from Australia, the USA, and the UK have documented similar findings for young homeless people who are LGBTIQ in accessing services, with the incidence of harassment, violence and homophobic and transphobic abuse consistently reported. What is particularly relevant about this finding is that it means that, even in instances where the *original causes* of homelessness are *unrelated* to sexual orientation and gender identity, once homeless, sexual orientation and gender identity can and often do have a significant impact on the experiences of LGBTIQ people. Research from the USA also found that homophobic and transphobic violence is commonly experienced by LGBTIQ young people once homeless (for example Ray, 2006: 5; Mottet and Ohle, 2003: 3-6).

In Australia young LGBTIQ people are not immune from homophobic and transphobic abuse and violence occurring in accommodation and other social services. A 1995 report into homelessness as experienced by gay, lesbian and bisexual young people in New South Wales found that while all of the young people surveyed had experienced discrimination, violence and harassment at some point in their lives, a fairly significant sample of the young people interviewed, 8 of 27, (just under 30%), also reported experiencing 'violence, discrimination or harassment in institutions or in the services that they used' (Irwin *et al.* 1995: 31). More recent studies undertaken in Perth in 2003 (PICYS 2003: 26-27) and in Queensland in 2005 (Maberley and Coffey 2005: 39-40) have found that the experience of homophobic violence and harassment for LGBTIQ people accessing services continues to persist.

Mirroring the findings of the UK study cited above, the study undertaken by the Perth Inner City Youth Service (PICYS 2003: 26-27) found that young people not only experienced harassment and felt unwelcome to disclose their sexual orientation and/or gender identity in some accommodation services but reported that, on this basis, some young people preferred to sleep rough rather than access accommodation services. Young people participating in this study identified that at times the harassment that they experienced came from workers, while for other young people it was fellow service users who bullied, harassed, or otherwise made them unwelcome and unsafe (PICYS 2003: 26-27). Participants in a similar study investigating the experiences of LGBT young people in supported accommodation in Queensland also reported experiencing, as well as witnessing, transphobic and homophobic harassment and violence by fellow service users.

On this point it is worth highlighting that existing research has found that the attitudes of some workers to LGBTIQ young people go beyond being uncomfortable and unwelcoming to being openly hostile and abusive. A young person from Queensland relays:

> I don't know how many bible verses get thrown at you...just like continually arguing with me to the point that I'd be in tears, like every single time I saw them...I was sinning I was evil. Like they weren't being nice about it that's for sure. It was all a phase I was going to grow out of it. They were definitely sure (Cited in Maberley and Coffey 2005: 42-43).

This example is not the only incidence of this kind of abuse of a young person's right to respect, safety and security and of the most fundamental duty of care. Other young people describe similar experiences:

> The way you are is not the right way; you are sinning every time you do an act in your people's way. It's a sin. This is someone who is supposed to be helping homeless people and she is driving me into the freakin' ground (Cited in Maberley and Coffey 2005: 43).

There are also consistent accounts in Australian research of young people experiencing situations of harassment from fellow service users where workers do not intervene, leaving the young people to deal with the situation alone. In these instances not only is duty of care breached, but the idea that homophobia and transphobia are socially acceptable is tacitly reinforced for these young people. As noted above, the consequence of this kind of treatment is that LGBTIQ young people often feel safer on the streets than they do in 'supported' accommodation.

2.7 Australian research to date: What is currently known about the experiences of LGBTIQ people who are homeless in Australia?

As noted above there is little research investigating homelessness for LGBTIQ people in Australia. There are two factors contributing to this paucity of literature. Firstly, little research specifically investigating LGBTIQ people and homelessness has been undertaken in Australia. Secondly, and perhaps more significantly, the existing homelessness data that is kept in Australia does not track sexual orientation or gender identity as relevant characteristics. The scarcity of systematic research undertaken into this topic in Australia is not proof of a lack of expert knowledge on this issue *per se*, but rather is a result of a lack of data collected. While there is little data kept at a systematic level, Australia has some respected accommodation and social service organisations that have been working to support LGBTIQ people in housing and other needs: these organisations are repositories of tacit and sometimes of formalised knowledge that is not tapped into by mainstream research. Further, at the policy level, housing is a state-administered portfolio issue. While this is not a concern in itself, it potentially limits opportunities for research to be undertaken across state borders: the reports into this topic that

do exist in Australia have all been state-based inquiries. These points are elaborated below.

2.8 Failure to recognise sexual orientation and gender identity as relevant characteristics in data on homelessness

It was identified that in Australia three different sources of data are typically drawn on to estimate incidence of homelessness, its causes, and the social groups which are most at risk of experiencing homelessness. The three key data sources are census data; research with high school students which specifically investigates homelessness; and the reporting forms supported accommodation service providers (formerly known as SAAP providers now known as Specialist Homelessness Services) are required to lodge electronically as part of their reporting requirements. As discussed below none of these data sources capture statistics on sexual orientation or gender identity. This situation is not unique to Australia, but it does raise difficulties in terms of understanding the experience of people who are homeless, understanding the prevalence of homelessness in relation to particular identity characteristics, and developing appropriate service models to support those groups at most risk of homelessness.

Another key source of data on homelessness is surveys of youth homelessness. In Australia there have been two major research investigations into youth homelessness. The first report was commissioned in 1989 by the Australian Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, known as the Burdekin report (O'Connor, 1989). A more recent study was undertaken in 2008 under the auspices of the National Youth Commission (NYC) which found that youth homelessness had doubled in the intervening decade (Eldridge *et al.* 2008: V). Leading homelessness researchers, David MacKenzie and Chris Chamberlain (2008) also produced a report on youth homelessness as a part of the Counting the Homeless 2006 project. The report itself was released in 2008.

Not of all these reports investigated the causes of youth homelessness. Where the issue is addressed in the reports, findings are fairly consistent. The 1989 report identified young people 'being kicked out' (O'Connor 1989: 43); 'being removed by police or child welfare department' (O'Connor 1989: 45); 'child leaves home on own impetus' (O'Connor 1989: 46); 'loss of employment' (O'Connor 1989: 47) and/or 'loss of parent' (O'Connor 1989: 48) as the main causes of homelessness. The Report also described that these young people often had long experiences of abuse and family conflict prior to becoming homeless (O'Connor 1989: 25-42). In the 2008 NYC report the primary causes of youth homelessness were given as 'family breakdown, often stemming from parental conflicts or a collapse of their relationship with a husband/wife or partner. Some young people who were living independently become homeless because they can't afford living expenses including rent' (Eldridge *et al.* 2008: 7). None of the reports included statistics on sexual orientation or gender identity of respondents.

The most significant gap in existing research data occurs at the level of government reporting requirements for Specialist Homelessness Services (SHS). The SHS reporting requirements have recently been reviewed with a major shift to electronic data storage rather than paper copies implemented. In effect, this means that there is now a single nation-wide database that keeps data on clients accessing supported accommodation services. Data documented on this electronic reporting form does not include sexual orientation or gender identity of clients. The electronic form service providers are however required to complete for each client accessing their service only asks for data in relation to the sex of the client: 'male' or 'female'. Treating sex in this way, as fixed and as either/or status, means that the existence of intersex clients cannot be recorded on these forms. Recording data on sex in this binary either/or way also means that clients who are transgender, whose sex on their birth certificate may be other than their lived gender are also discounted. It is worth noting that some transgender clients do not want to be included within the category of transgender.

Furthermore the options provided for seeking accommodation services, sexual orientation and gender identity are not accounted for as presenting issues. Yet as has been discussed in parental rejection, as well as violence and abuse on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity in the wider community can be causes of homelessness for LGBTIQ people. Existing data in Australia not only fails to adequately capture the experiences of LGBTIQ people or reflect the rates which they access services: data prevents the experiences of these groups reinscribing narrow and inaccurate sex binaries that inscribe a hetero-norm.

2.9 Without data but not without expertise: The need to recognise anecdotal and tacit knowledge

Australia has respected organisations that have been undertaking practical work in this area for several decades. What is lacking in the Australian context is data collection and research practice at a *systematic national* level. Therefore, any attempt to address these gaps in knowledge and practice should be undertaken in partnership with the existing organisations, practitioners, and researchers who have knowledge and expertise at practical and academic levels.

Two organisations identified in the literature as having established expertise in this area are: Twenty10, a not-for-profit organisation in NSW which has provided accommodation and other social services for young people of diverse genders, sexes and sexualities for 30 years; and the Australian Research Centre in Sex, Health and Society (ARCSH), based at La Trobe University. ARCSH have established expertise in undertaking research in the area of sexuality and gender and is the research centre where the 'Counting Themselves In' reports were undertaken. This is not an exhaustive or even a comprehensive list of organisations that have practical expertise in and around LGBTIQ youth and homelessness. They are two organisations that were identified as having taken part in research into the everyday lives of

LGBTIQ young people, including either directly or incidentally reporting on the experience of homelessness and social services.

This suggests that LGBTIQ people on the whole have been neglected in mainstream research on homelessness in Australia. With regard to data that government expect from Specialist Homelessness Services to record, the experiences of young LGBTIQ people is omitted. Existing reporting systems do not allow data to be recorded that would track sexual orientation and gender identity as causes of homelessness. More troubling is the way in which data are recorded which may prevent the very possibility of transgender and intersex people accessing specific services.

2.10 Local and international responses and best practice recommendations

It is the case that Australia is not unique in failing to incorporate sexual orientation and gender identity characteristics in systematic data collection efforts. Both the USA and the UK have recently recognised a scarcity of resources and data on this issue. However, as discussed in detail in the next section, unlike Australia, the UK and the USA have in recent years sought to address and redress the issue of homelessness for LGBTIQ people.

2.11 Best practice standards: Insights from the USA

The USA is an example of innovation at the level of developing sector best practice models, recommendations and standards. The UK, in contrast, has become a model of policy development. Particular locations in the UK such as Wales are of specific relevance in terms of potential for policy advances in this area. Both best practice standards from the USA and policy developments from the UK are discussed below. Also discussed are the areas of sector practice in Australia that are worth analysis in the later stages of this project.

Youth homelessness is a significant issue in the USA. The Department of Health and Human Services estimates between 575,000 and 1.6 million young people to be homeless in the USA (Ray 2006: 1). As noted above earlier young LGBTIQ people are over-represented among youth who are homeless in the USA. In response to these figures not-for-profit organisations have for several decades been undertaking independent research, sometimes in partnership with philanthropic organisations, and other child welfare organisations, to understand the needs of LGBTIQ young people, determine the extent to which they are being met by current service standards, and develop best practice recommendations for working with and supporting young LGBTIQ people into safe and secure housing.

At the level of state and federal policy a key recommendation from USA best practice was to establish *additional* funding streams to

> 'provide housing options for all homeless youth. [And] require that recipients of these funds are committed to safe and appropriate treatment of LGBT homeless youth, with penalties for non-compliance including the loss of government funding' (Ray 2006: 7).

It also recommended that additional resources be invested to: 'Permit dedicated shelter space and housing for LGBT youth' as well as LGBT awareness training and demonstrated cultural competency for all health and social service workers (Ray 2006: 7).

Additional recommendations have been made which offer more detailed guidelines for workers (for example Lambda Legal *et al.* 2009; Wilber *et al.* 2006). One recommendation of particular note was the intake procedures and the need to provide forms which capture data on sexual orientation and gender identity (Lambda Legal *et al.* 2009; 4). It was recommended that young people should be given the opportunity to record these personal details on intake forms – *but that they never be forced to do so* (Lambda Legal *et al.* 2009; 4). This recommendation is of particular pertinence to the Australian context because data on sexual orientation and gender identity are not currently kept by accommodation services.

Another example of practice innovation that has been undertaken in the USA are 'Listening Forums' facilitated by the Child Welfare League of America and Lambda Legal as part of their research report into the experiences of LGBTQ young people in the care system. The Listening Forums followed a particular methodology (Woronoff and Estrada 2006: 350-356) and sought to create spaces where sector workers could hear directly from young people about their experiences. Very important methodological and structural systems were in place to make the Listening Forums sensitive to the needs of young people. Firstly, participation was always strictly voluntary. Secondly, no transcripts were taken and the Forums were not open to the public. Thirdly, young people were not asked to reflect on and share their experiences. Rather, they were merely given the opportunity to if they chose. This is an important distinction: young people need to be respected and therefore should not to be treated simply as an information source from which data can be extracted without personal consequences.

2.12 Equality and housing: Policy developments in the UK

Homelessness has been on the policy agenda for some time in the UK. Policy developments in this area have been complex and cannot be dealt with in detail here. The specific aspects of UK policy on homelessness that have a bearing on the way that homelessness for LGBTIQ people is understood are discussed below.

A key shift has been the consolidation of the separate discrimination acts in 2010. In the UK sexual orientation and gender reassignment are now

protected characteristics in the UK Equality Act (2010). Perhaps more significantly, the Equality Act (2010) specifies certain positive duties for key public institutions to ensure that they are working to achieve equality for those groups recognised in the Equality Act. It is this commitment that has led to a need to better understand and address homelessness for LGBTIQ people in the UK.

Housing is one of the policy areas that is included in 'Working for Lesbian, Bisexual, and Transgender Equality: Moving Forward' (UK Government 2011) on which the following commitments to action are made:

> Work with LGB&T support organisations, housing providers and their representative bodies to provide guidance and support to social landlords on the accommodation needs of LGB&T tenants, where appropriate.

> Work with housing sector organisations to develop new best practice guidance for social landlords on preventing and tackling anti-social behaviour, including protecting tenants who are subject to homophobic and transphobic harassment and hate crime (UK Government, 2011a: 8).

There has also been a substantial growth in UK research into homelessness for LGBTIQ people with widespread recognition that LGBTIQ people accessing accommodation services have particular needs (see Homeless Link 2009-2012). It is not possible to determine whether this investment has positively impacted on rates of homelessness for LGBTIQ people in the UK as, like in Australia, data on sexual orientation and gender identity have not historically been kept. What is clear however is that a concerted practical effort has been undertaken to recognise that homelessness is a salient issue for equality groups and requires specific and particular policy and practice approaches to ensure that efforts to eradicate homelessness work to the benefit of all who experience it. In the words of the Welsh Assembly Government, as quoted above: 'a one size fits all approach will not suffice. Services need to be responsive to and designed around the varying needs of the people who use them' (Welsh Assembly Government 2009: 4).

Wales provides a relevant case in point when considering policy developments in the UK. The Welsh Assembly Government has established a Ten Year Homelessness Plan for Wales, 2009-2019 (Welsh Assembly Government, 2009). Upon its release the plan underwent an Equality Impact Assessment to 'ensure that... [it did] not adversely affect or discriminate against any equality group and to consider how the policy may help to further develop equality' (2009: 5). Evaluation of the plan in terms of its ability to meet the needs of equality groups was undertaken in consultation with established organisations and researchers in the relevant areas – building on and strengthening the government's partnerships with research and sector workers in the area of homelessness and equality (Welsh Department of Environment, Sustainability and Housing n.d.). Australia has sector strengths

in this area – it is simply that investment has not been made to develop these strengths and facilitate strong and responsive relationships with government.

2.13 Recognising limitations and strengths in the Australian policy and sector context

Compared to the investment and work involved in developing nation-wide best practice recommendations in the USA and the UK Government's policy commitment to international leadership in recognising and realising the rights of LGBTIQ people, Australia has a disappointing track record by comparison. Some local council governments (for example Sydney City Council) do recognise that LGBTIQ people are over-represented in homeless populations. However no systematic research or policy currently exists in Australia. Furthermore, in Australia there is only one organisation which specifically provides for the accommodation needs of LGBTIQ young people and one organisation that specifically provides for the accommodation needs of transgender people. Both services are based in Sydney.

Section Three: Interviews and focus groups with service workers

This section presents the findings of the fieldwork undertaken in Sydney and Adelaide. It sets out to report on the views and opinions that were expressed by service workers and largely reflects their views – rather than our interpretation – of the current environment, practices and challenges. One of the conclusions to emerge from this review is the considerable diversity in approach across services, within and between cities. Of the agencies involved in this study only two, the Gender Centre and Twenty10 dealt specifically with people with diverse genders, sexes and sexualities.

During 2013 focus groups and interviews were conducted in Adelaide and Sydney with 29 service workers. These meetings explored:

- What kinds of services currently exist to support LGBTIQ people who experience homelessness and what is the demand for these services?

- What challenges currently exist in providing appropriate housing and social support services to LGBTIQ people who experience homelessness?

- How can policies and programs be better tailored to support LGBTIQ people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness?

As this is a scoping study conclusions drawn from these interviews and focus groups are indicative only. In Adelaide interviews and focus groups were conducted with service staff at St John's Youth Service Inc., UnitingCare Wesley Port Adelaide and Anglicare while in Sydney staff employed at

Tweny10, headspace, the Gender Centre and Yfoundations participated in this study.

3.1 Support services for LGBTIQ young people who are homeless.

In Adelaide LGBTIQ young people rely on mainstream generic services provided for young and older people who are at risk of, or are currently homeless. Service workers rely on linking up a range of external services as part of their case management of clients. According to participants interviewed, there are no LGBTIQ specific services operating in the western suburbs, while in the northern suburbs there is one. Recognising the gap in support for young LGBTIQ people at risk of homelessness Reconnect, operating out of Elizabeth, established a support group in 2012 for gay men under 25, which young LGBTIQ women are welcome to and do attend. The group meet fortnightly and the meetings are used to assist with a range of issues from general support, health issues, housing and finances. This service worker has taken on an unofficial case management role of some of the group members around housing needs. A service worker from PHaMS (Personal Helpers and Mentors Group), a newly funded program within Anglicare, has an unofficial role in providing mentoring for these young people. Bfriend, a LGBTIQ specific service located in the CBD offers peer support and a source of connection for LGBTIQ people, however it is not a service specifically tailored to young people. It is a program that is advertised widely with all agencies including Reconnect however the distance young LGBTIQ people have to travel to get into the city to attend Bfriend activities is a barrier.

In Adelaide service workers voiced a concern with the lack of specific health related services for young LGBTIQ people. Services such as Second Story and Shine are relied on to assist this cohort with health issues, counselling and as a drop in centre. Shine has three locations: the city CBD and in the western and northern suburbs while Second Story is also located in the city CBD and to the west of the city. Service workers also rely on Streetlink which is located in the inner city. All three services are publically known and well regarded for being 'LGBTIQ-friendly' by service workers and young people.

While dealing with a much larger population of LGBTIQ young people, Sydney currently has two specialist agencies, the Gender Centre and Twenty10 which work specifically with people with diverse genders, sexes and sexualities. Twenty10 works predominantly with young LGBTIQ people. Current services provided by Twenty10 include the phone counselling service, various health related issues and a range of support groups, drop-in service, mentoring schemes and case management. While many of these services are evident in various forms in Adelaide the support groups and mentoring schemes provided by Twenty10 and the Gender Centre are developed to specifically cater for people with diverse genders, sexes and sexualities.

Agencies that held emergency or transitional housing provided on-site support to residents. Each young person is case managed and additional support

may include living skills, financial management and advocacy. Where transitional accommodation is offered as a longer term option support mechanisms are put in place with the aim of assisting residents become independent. In the case of Twenty 10 one of the conditions agreed to by young LGBTIQ people who access their transitional housing is that a percentage of their income is held by Twenty 10, which is used to assist in the payment of the lease or for 'setting up' expenses when the young person moves into independent accommodation. In Adelaide there are no LGBTIQ specific accommodation services.

3.2 The challenges that currently exist in providing appropriate housing and support services for young LGBTIQ homeless people

> *It's not just about them having a roof over their head. It's about mental health issues, it's about financing and budgeting issues, it's about education or schooling or employment issues, it's about medical issues. There's a whole plethora of things that go along with that, can I be successful as a tenant in my own place?* (Service worker, Adelaide).

Housing is considered one of the hardest parts of the job for many of the service workers interviewed. This is due to housing affordability, housing that is safe and in outer suburban areas that are well serviced in terms of public infrastructure, services and transport. A shortage of appropriate housing and the pressure this can create in responding adequately to young LGBTIQ people at risk of homelessness is considered chronic. Agencies that held emergency housing or had an allocation of beds were often unable to move young people on which greatly lengthened waiting times for young people requiring emergency accommodation. As more young people are coming out there is a strong flow of LGBTIQ young people seeking accommodation services placing even greater burden on a finite housing stock. This was acknowledged as an issue in both cities. For many having enough appropriate housing that is a blend of crisis accommodation, transitional, medium and long term was considered key in addressing this shortage.

There was general concern regarding the range of accommodation that LGBTIQ people transition into in the western and northern suburbs of Adelaide. Much of the accommodation that is available for young people is considered not ideal. Many of the options, particularly independent living accommodation are located in poor socio-economic areas that are unsafe. For a young LGBTIQ person it is considered more unsafe because of bullying, victimisation and stereo-typification that they experience by neighbours. To the north of the city there is a reliance on share housing which is not necessarily safe or affordable. As one service worker noted many of the younger LGBTIQ people are at the mercy of other housemates who can be untrustworthy and at times abusive.

In Sydney, three of the agencies interviewed cited mainstream services rejecting young people accessing housing on the grounds of them being transgendered. This practice of non-acceptance does extend to LGBQ young people. As one Twenty10 staff noted it was a common theme to have a mainstream service provider 'ring up and explain that it is apparent that they have been working with a person who is gay, queer or gender questioning…so we thought we would refer them onto you'.

According to service workers interviewed young LGBTIQ people are more likely to experience negative social outcomes than their heterosexual counterparts. Service workers in Adelaide and Sydney were concerned about having to use boarding houses as an accommodation option for young people. As one service worker lamented 'sometimes it's probably safer for them to be transient and couch surfing than going into a boarding house'. The overt presence of alcohol, drugs and general issues of safety were cited as barriers to using boarding houses as options for young clients. Complaints about young LGBTIQ people experiencing homophobia and physical threats in these lodgings were further sources of unease for service workers. Many accounts of landlords being inappropriate in terms of increasing rents or claiming financial compensation for damages that were not caused by these young people were provided. As one service worker noted young LGBTIQ people are quite vulnerable and they don't believe they have a voice and so can lose money in these circumstances.

Similarly service workers described limitations to integration and collaboration. Case management often relies on getting other services linked in and involved in a young person's case which has mixed outcomes. Connecting up of services is often ad-hoc. Many of the service workers commented on wanting to foster relationships across agencies to better tailor case management for young people, however many workers cited being time-poor because of increasing workloads, the receptiveness of inter-agency relationships, and a lack of confidence when dealing with the gender/sexual orientation of clients by generic agencies as reasons for a lack of collaboration. The competitive tendering process that takes place between agencies was also given as a possible barrier to closer working relationships.

For some workers, there was an awareness that they may not be familiar with the full range of services provided by other agencies. Many of the workers in Adelaide suggested an emphasis on 'regionalisation' of support services was an issue.

Many of the service workers argued that the expectation on young LGBTIQ people was unrealistic. Enabling young people broad access to community supports whether it is education, medical or of a financial nature often relies on the young person to advocate for themself. There was a view that there is a problem where there is an expectation that they can make adult decisions and live adult lives, yet they may be children, teenagers or a young adult with experiences of trauma and little life experience. So the expectation that they can navigate an adult world while dealing with trauma at the same time was considered inappropriate. As one service worker commented:

'How do you communicate that you are confused about your sexuality or are gender questioning? And you are dealing with family conflict, or have a mental health issue, or have no money. So accessing services where there is not a sensitivity to trying to engage and understand their situation or even their age group only compounds their problems'.

According to many of the service workers, there is a very stark difference between the experience, capacity and care needed for young LGBTIQ people in the age range of 15-16-17 years compared to an older cohort of 20-25 year old.

The homogenisation of homelessness in the way and what type of data is collected was an issue raised by workers in both cities. Service workers expressed frustration that the main reporting system doesn't include gender or sexual diversity, therefore there is a significant invisibility of this cohort and therefore little understanding of a more accurate number of young LGBTIQ presenting for assistance. Further, there is a concern that data collection is viewed as a sort of punitive responsibility in relation to funding rather than being used as a valuable resource to better direct services.

While Twenty10 and the Gender Centre services offer training around definitions, worker values strategies for supporting LGBTIQ clients to other agencies and government departments (e.g. NSW and Victorian police) there is still a cultural change required within youth services. In Adelaide, NAHA training workshops that are provided to specialist homelessness and domestic violence service employees, are relied on, and encouraged by, those agencies involved in this study. However not all staff engage in this form of training as an ongoing practice. In both cities service workers reported that there are staff, who work with young LGBTIQ people that have had no training in understanding gender diversity/sexualities. Currently staff who hold qualifications for working in the community services sector do not undergo any formal core training in understanding gender diversity/sexuality. Service workers in Adelaide and Sydney highlighted that there continues to be confusion in terminology particularly around transgendered people amongst agencies and workers.

3.3 Policies and programs that can be tailored to support LGBTIQ people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness

While not confined solely to young LGBTIQ homeless people the 'core and cluster' model of support accommodation was identified as an appropriate form of housing especially where there are different age groups and LGBTIQ and heterosexual young people. A concern raised by service workers is that the age gap between 14-15 and 18-20 year old cohort can be significant in terms of life experience, and the level of support and care. The key is also to provide a safe environment for all clients. The provision of a common building as well as independent living units attached to the main building can address issues of high need support or bullying, harassment or abuse that can, on

occasions, occur between young heterosexual people and a young LGBTIQ person.

Many service workers identified that parental rejection for young LGBTIQ people was a concern. Where young people are coming out and it has created issues within the family, providing respite accommodation so that the young person has somewhere safe to live while service workers try to bring the family back together could prevent the young person from entering into a pathway of homelessness.

Where private accommodation is the more appropriate option, the opportunity for services to better support young people into this form of housing option was raised. This could include financial assistance so that housing considered more appropriate from a location perspective could be rented out at a lower cost or providing better support for young people signing leases. The concern is that for some, they get caught in youth housing because they can't access public housing because they are not considered a high needs applicant.

The way the sector currently operates is problematic of consultation around outcome not consultation around what is the actual need and building from that. There is little reporting around practice. There is nothing around qualification until you are in management. At present there is no standard set in terms of qualifications, expectations for training for service workers which was considered problematic especially within the generic services.

To address issues of homophobia, transphobia and harassment training for both service workers and those young people who are accessing the services was considered necessary. The common view was that young LBGTIQ people should have a role in all training programs because they can offer first-hand accounts of their lived experiences of being LBGTIQ.

Section Four: Interviews with young LGBTIQ people

This section presents the findings of the fieldwork undertaken in Sydney and Adelaide. It also sets out to report on the views and opinions that were expressed by young LGBTIQ people and largely reflects their views – rather than our interpretation of their experiences. Stage three involved a total of 23 interviews with LGBTIQ young homeless people across the two cities. These interviews were designed to identify and understand the nature and incidence of homelessness for LGBTIQ people and more specifically build on existing Australian literature which investigates the experiences of LGBTIQ homeless young people when accessing accommodation and other social services. All participants had used services with the agencies involved in this study except Yfoundation.

This stage was structured to address the following questions:

- What are the pathways into and out of homelessness for LGBTIQ people and are they geographically different?

- What services currently exist and how are they experienced by LGBTIQ young people?

- What kinds of services and service delivery models and approaches do young people find most effective and when are services ineffective in supporting them into stable housing?

4.1 Pathways into and out of homelessness for LGBTIQ people

Earlier discussions with service workers and existing literatures on this issue confirmed the range of issues reported by those young LGBTIQ people interviewed with regards to their experiences of, and pathways into, homelessness. In both Adelaide and Sydney the young people participating in the study reported experiencing a number of other issues other than their sexuality that was connected to or complicated their experience of homelessness. This included the presence of mental health issues, chronic health conditions, domestic violence, family break-down, parent rejection of their sexuality/gender, lack of employment, lack of income.

Two of the transgendered young people interviewed are residing in supported housing in Sydney. The remaining 21 young people are currently in private rental. All those interviewed rely on the support of their case manager. In Adelaide five of the young gay men interviewed are currently sharing a house in the northern suburbs. It is difficult to determine at this stage whether all participants have successfully transitioned out of homelessness. Financial pressures are acute in all cases with six young people balancing independent living and schooling/higher education.

Those young LGBTIQ people interviewed who left home for reasons not related to their sexuality found that their experience of housing instability was complicated for reasons that were related to their sexual orientation. One young LGBTIQ person described experiencing homophobia and discrimination when staying in crisis accommodation by their heterosexual counterpart.

Those young people who are residing in boarding houses were negative of the experience because they were living with much older people of which many of these older residents had spent years living on the street or had been in and out of prison or had alcohol/drug problems. More often those young people interviewed experienced non-acceptance because of their sexuality or gender.

Interestingly within the group of LGBTIQ young people interviewed who had experienced boarding house accommodation from the northern suburbs of Adelaide expressed a desire to continue to live in the area despite the

presence of homophobia within the community. Reasons given by these young people was that they wanted to reconnect with their family, and in some cases with old friends, so it was considered that living in close proximity was important in rebuilding relationships.

A number of young LBGTIQ found that not having a rental history combined with their age was a barrier to renting properties. Landlords are reluctant to rent housing stock to a group of young people due to the stigmatisation and stereotyping associated with young people. Those young people who had experienced this believed their sexual orientation made this even more difficult.

4.2 Young LGBTIQ people experiences of services that currently exist

There were major differences reported in the experience of support services by young LGBTIQ people in Adelaide relative to Sydney. These differences mirrored the different service environments reported by service delivery staff in these two cities. Service workers re-affirmed the observations of young LGBTIQ people. In addition to the extreme housing shortage, they commented on the flow-on effects on other health and community services.

All young LGBTIQ people interviewed were positive of their experiences with those agencies involved in this study. They spoke of the advocacy work service workers had provided them, assistance in finding accommodation and relevant support. The common theme to emerge was that they would like more time with their case manager or support worker. However all young people interviewed understood that it was external time pressures on staff which made this difficult.

Many of the participants believed that service personnel would benefit from training that challenges stereotyping and stigmatisation of LGBTIQ people. Young people reported incidences where service personnel in other agencies made negative assumptions about them largely based on their sexual or gendered orientation. They often felt that this led them to be treated differently and sometimes even poorly. Many of the young people recalled incidences in other agencies where they either witnessed or experienced bullying or harassment. One young GLBTIQ person recounted "I witnessed it heaps of times in the youth refuge system and also one boy had a disability and wanted to try on my clothes. A male worker got really angry at me because he said "I'll make him gay". It was such an archaic belief on the worker's part'.

All of the four transgendered young people interviewed had negative experiences of discrimination by personnel within the health sector, particularly GPs. As one young person commented having more health services 'that are more open and more accepting of GLB communities…because it takes a lot of ball to walk up to your regular GP and say this is my problem'. For transgendered young people there was the further complication of having identification stating their name and sex which they did not relate to anymore. This was particularly problematic when

dealing with GPs where medication was required. This also extended to hospitals where it was acknowledged that better support systems were required for this particular cohort.

Of the four transgendered people interviewed two expressed concern around legal rights. They believed that many transgendered people did not know what their legal rights were which may contribute to them being in unstable accommodation, even homeless.

Some of the LGBTIQ people interviewed believed that there needed to be more political awareness of their issues which extended to local government which provide a number of local-based services accessed by this cohort. This was a consistently expressed issue for transgendered people interviewed.

4.3 Service delivery models and approaches that are most effective and not effective in supporting young LGBTIQ people

People do make a difference. One of the most common themes to emerge was the differences that individuals made to the experiences of young LGBTIQ people who are or have been homeless. Service workers, who were respectful, took the time to listen and understand their circumstances without making assumptions were considered to be trustworthy and very helpful. These workers were more often credited as the catalyst in assisting these young people cohort transition out of homelessness.

LGBTIQ support groups and mentoring programs were models that were considered to be effective by all those participants interviewed. Traditional ways of working with young people were viewed by many of the participants as punitive. Many of the young people interviewed felt that some agencies viewed them as being broken and in need of fixing. Yet what these young people wanted was to be treated respectfully. One example of a program that is considered to fill a gap in service provision and has been positively received by young clients is being piloted by Twenty10. The program relies on a strength-based model to assist a young person develop skill sets that they determine is important. Young people who have participated in this program have found it to be beneficial because they believed they experienced a deeper level of support around a particular skill development than what is possible through general case management.

From an organisational point of view this program relies on volunteers who meet clients off-site and unsupervised. The challenges for Twenty10 are ensuring a duty of care; and resource, planning and matching a young person to a volunteer is time consuming. The program is being received positively by young people who participate because it is the young person who nominates the skills they want to develop. An example given was learning how to cook - from the grocery shopping, having the money to purchase the ingredients, cooking out of a cook book, having the appropriate utensils to cook the meal through to cooking the meal. Other young people have used the mentoring scheme to model appropriate social relationships in public. For some young people just having someone to listen to them is what they value most.

All four of the transgendered people interviewed expressed a level of frustration in not having a service dedicated to assisting them in finding the various medical specialists and supports that they required. One transgendered person believed that trans-people needed additional support in finding employment because it was difficult getting a job because of appearance – 'some people have never come across the term transgender let alone met a trans-person'. A failure to secure employment only compounds their anxiety in maintaining stable accommodation and meeting their medical expenses.

Many of the young LGBTIQ people interviewed who had, or are in, unstable accommodation expressed feelings of low-esteem and anxiety as a result which was heightened when dealing with government agencies/department workers who treated them as a 'number'.

Different expectations for and ways of living in accommodation was evident between those young LGBTIQ people aged 16-18 years and the older cohort. Younger people interviewed were more comfortable in share accommodation while the older cohort actively sought to find accommodation where they lived alone in a self-contained built form. Those young people who were currently living in transitional housing expressed unease about what type of housing they would be able to access in the future based on housing affordability, location and availability.

6. Conclusions and Future Directions

All I want is a roof over my head and a bed and not to be treated like a second class citizen (Penny, cited in Irwin *et al.* 1995: 57).

Key findings from the literature
The literature reviewed demonstrates that LGBTIQ people are likely to be over-represented in homeless populations, and are at higher risk of the adverse outcomes linked to homelessness and housing insecurity. Also of significant concern are the issue of homophobic and transphobic harassment and violence that young LGBTIQ people experience at home, in the community and in accommodation services.

The literature reviewed suggests that Australian practice and policy falls behind in relation to advances in recognising and responding to the rights and needs of homeless LGBTIQ people, either through best practice recommendation, as is the case in the USA, or through government leadership in policy reform, as in the example from the UK. Australia has the capacity to perform to international standards by building on the existing expertise at research and sector level practice that have for too long been neglected in mainstream homelessness research and policy-praxis. Several measures are needed to achieve this: more detailed data collection; increased investment by government; and a connecting up of sector knowledge to

establish best practice standards at the national level. Ultimately, for LGBTIQ people, ending or reducing homelessness first requires acknowledging sexual orientation and gender identity as needing attention in policy and practice interventions on homelessness.

Key finding for interviews and focus groups with service workers
Service workers voiced their concern that there continues to be a chronic shortage of adequate and safe accommodation to assist young LGBTIQ people. With more young people coming out there is a greater number of LGBTIQ people seeking agency support and housing assistance. This was acknowledged as a problem in Adelaide and Sydney. Providing appropriate housing that is a blend of crisis accommodation, transitional, medium and long term that can support this cohort was considered a key in reducing the number of young LGBTIQ homeless people.

Many of the service workers expressed that they were often time poor when dealing with young LGBTIQ people who often have complex issues that need addressing. Service workers mentioned knowing of other staff employed in other agencies are having to case manage over 20 clients. Gender questioning/sexually diverse young people often present with multiple issues that they maybe contending with: mental health, drug/alcohol of physical/psychological abuse so it is being able to provide the support and programs to assist. Many of the staff interviewed spoke of a need to provide a holistic approach to support all facets of a client, understanding that many issues exist and that they are linked. In some cases this is not consistently practiced because of work load pressures.

Comments shared by service workers on the success of service integration were mixed but some participants outlined plans for possible future inter-agency collaboration. There is a reliance on social networks, friends or other family to house young people to avoid them becoming homeless particularly those young people aged 14-15 to 16 years. Currently support services specific to LGBTIQ young people are lacking with a reliance on individual service providers to initiate support programs that are in addition to their current workload. This is a particular problem in Adelaide however the outer suburbs of Sydney also experience a lack of support services specific for this cohort. This finding suggests the need to ensure that adequate social services are made available to support young LGBTIQ people who are at risk or are homeless.

The growing role of case manager work involves extensive external referral work however hands-on-relationship-building is critical for young people and particularly for young LGBTIQ people. Further there should be a wider use of a 'soft service wraparound' approach where young people can be actively involved in determining their needs rather than it being driven by the service provider.

It was evident in discussions with service workers that cultural awareness and competency of LGBTIQ issues was inconsistently understood or practiced across agencies that interacted with young LGBTIQ people. This was a

particular issue for those young transgendered people interviewed for this study. Homophobia, transphobia and general ignorance persists across support agencies, health professions and across the broader community. It was reported that this continues to be an issue where young heterosexual and LGBTIQ young people are accessing supported accommodation made available by generic youth agencies.

A focus and commitment to staff training to support workers to engage more effectively with young people of different sexual and gender orientation needs to be undertaken by all agencies and service workers in the public, community and health sectors. It is evident that individual-level LGBTIQ awareness and cultural competency training should form a core part of the professional process of all health and social service workers.

There should also be a requirement that all agencies that seek government funding to assist homeless young people can demonstrate an awareness and cultural competency of LGBTIQ issues and populations at the institutional level and to adopt non-discrimination policies for LGBTIQ youth. This should be evident in formal agency policy.

Interviews with young LGBTIQ people
It was evident that young LGBTIQ people cannot be categorised as a homogenous category. Differences in experiences between the younger ages of 15-16-17 year olds and those young people in their late teens and early twenties were marked. This was expressed in terms of accommodation,

A number of the younger LGBTIQ people interviewed believe that there should be more community youth centres for youth that enables integration between young LGBTIQ and heterosexual people. These centres would have active policies and practices which promote acceptance and non-discrimination.

To ensure the successful transitioning of young people into independent living there needs to be an increase in the number of case managers who can provide longer term one-on-one support. Supporting young people as they undertake training or education, or assisting them in finding employment is only a part of the role. The role of the case manager would include developing their 'soft skills' and having an active advocacy role when their clients deal with other agencies. The capacity of young LGBTIQ people to maintain independent and stable housing relies on this additional support as standard practice, particularly when dealing with young people aged in their early-to mid-teens.

Providing support to increase the number and type of mentoring programs and role model support that young LGBTIQ people can access was considered critical, particularly by those younger LGBTIQ people interviewed. All participants who had been in a mentoring program found it to be beneficial, however many of those interviewed would like the programs to be run over a longer period. For some participants there was a view that having a role model actively involved in their lives would be valuable.

The study has identified a number of specific issues to be addressed in policy and practice:

The study identified that the homogenisation in the way and what type of data is currently collected means that there is little understanding of the number of young LGBTIQ people that are presenting for assistance. Data collected needs to be inclusive of sexual diversity and gender identity as a way of better targeting support and accommodation needs for this cohort.

There are structural barriers around the lack of appropriate and safe housing stock. At a policy level the provision of a range of accommodation to meet the increasing needs of young LGBTIQ people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness is critical. It should focus on long-term support in their transition to independence and provision of a pathway from crisis to medium to long term housing stock. Further, provide models of service provision which incorporate the scope to provide targeted follow up support to young LGBTIQ people up to 25 years of age to better prepare their transition out of homelessness and into independent living.

A requirement for co-ordinated action is a consistent theme to emerge out of national and international literature on young LGBTIQ homelessness. There is a critical need to put in place an interconnected and co-ordinated youth transitions system that has a focus on promoting positive pathways for young LGBTIQ people as its core responsibility.

There is a need for policy makers to encourage integration of transition supports for young LGBTIQ people, from inter-governmental and Commonwealth and State levels, through to coordinated youth agencies and networks at the local level. There is overwhelming evidence from research and practitioners that young LGBTIQ homelessness is a complex phenomenon with complex causes and integrated solutions are needed.

This research has identified the need for a longer term view in supporting young LGBTIQ people. Programs that have a 'strengths-focus', that is locally-based programs that show young LGBTIQ people how to help themselves. Life skills training for young LGBTIQ people should include understanding tenancy guidelines (rights and responsibilities, preparation and presentation for tenancy interviews, building positive relationships with landlord and with services). Given the use of shared households, it would also be useful to develop their communication and negotiation skills.

There needs to be recognition and investment in existing leaders, a facilitation of cross-state information sharing, and the establishment of locally-relevant policy and practice standards that are consistent across agencies and with international standards that meet Australia's international human rights obligations.

A focus and commitment to staff training to support workers to engage more effectively with young people of different sexual and gender orientation needs to be undertaken by all agencies and service workers in the public, community

and health sectors. It is evident that individual-level LGBTIQ awareness and cultural competency training should form a core part of the professional process of all health and social service workers. The involvement of young LGBTIQ people should be an integral part of these training schemes.

LGBTIQ awareness and cultural competency training should also be extended to young heterosexual people who access support and accommodation services.

There should be a requirement that all agencies that seek government funding to assist homeless young people can demonstrate an awareness and cultural competency of LGBTIQ issues and populations at the institutional level and to adopt non-discrimination policies for LGBTIQ youth. This should also be evident in formal agency policy.

There are a number of actions government and agencies can take to improve the well-being of young LGBTIQ homeless people. To paraphrase a previous study we believe that – at least in part – policy makers need to step into the shoes of, in this case, homeless young LGBTIQ people in order to see how these people understand their circumstances and current living conditions (Beer *et al.* 2005). The development and implementation of appropriate policy responses needs to be responsive to the desirability of empowering these young people, developing their abilities and strengthening their self-worth. It is also highly desirable to include the relevant agencies in identifying and acting upon new programs and policies. Governments and agencies need to work together – with young LGBTIQ people – to identify the most appropriate solutions for them.   Effective intervention in LGBTIQ youth homelessness offers potentially very substantial benefits for society as a whole and for local communities in particular (Beer *et al.* 2005). Policies and strategies targeting LGBTIQ youth homelessness are critical in addressing unemployment and welfare dependency; in reducing those health costs associated with homelessness; in contributing to stronger families and stronger communities; and, helping to reduce other public expenditures in the long term.

This can be best achieved with the active involvement of, and participation in, young LGBTIQ people in the development and implementation of programs that can assist them. They know what they need and what could make a difference in their lives. Young LGBTIQ people have much to offer in this process. They should be key contributors in devising strategies and support systems that can navigate them out of homelessness and into sustainable independent living. Young LGBTIQ people need, and have a right to be part of solving this public issue.

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