

Diversity & inclusion, dignity & respect?

One couple's journey of accessing
in-home aged care services.



This case study outlines the experiences of Garry and Les, a couple navigating and accessing in-home aged care services. Their story and experiences provide an important reminder that all consumers have the right to receive respectful and dignified aged care services, that meet their individual needs and diverse life experiences, which are safe, welcoming and inclusive.

The principles of dignity and respect in the delivery of aged care are not new to the sector, nor are they future aspirations. These principles have long been identified as central to providing high quality person centred care.

All older Australians navigating and accessing aged care services have different and diverse needs, often with rich or complex histories with a wide range of identities, characteristics, interests, and life experiences. For those receiving community aged care, their home is a place of safety and comfort.

Case Study

“Back in my career I managed a home and community care service”.

The bane of my existence when we were looking for providers [was finding providers who were lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans/transgender, intersex, queer, asexual, plus (LGBTIQA+)¹ inclusive]... I started looking and I found a Rainbow Tick Accredited provider, which I thought great, problem solved. Left my number with them [they said] “we’ll get back to you towards the end of next week”. Because of the way the aged care system was to change, they stopped aged care. So I was back to the drawing board. We were looking for community based aged care. I thought this should be easy, I managed home and community care services, I thought I knew the sector, the way everything worked, no!

People think the *NDIS* is a minefield to navigate, it’s easy compared to the *My Aged Care* system. The biggest problem [or] the biggest obstacle, I came up with was easily finding community aged care providers who were Rainbow [Tick] accredited. It would be really nice if you could type in *Rainbow Tick Accredited My Aged Care Providers* and you come up with a list in your area. Going to the *My Aged Care Portal* and typing/looking for [services] with LGBTIQA+ as part of this is what we do WOW – 8/10 organisations do that according to them² but when you actually talk to them you get stories like “LGBTIQA+ irrelevant” that was actually said to me by a provider. Irrelevant! Another response was “well we don’t really need to worry about that” [because we haven’t got any of those people] Yes! – that was what wasn’t said.

It was really important [to us to find an LGBTIQA+ aware and inclusive provider] but we never got this. It was really important because my husband when he came out of hospital after his stroke, self-isolated. He needed to contact and connect back to our and his community. It wasn’t just me. But to have someone who knew, what we’d been through – well not exactly what “we’d” been through but had an understanding or personal experience of it [the LGBTIQA+ community/older people – our history and culture]. We had one worker sent [from our provider], one worker walked in, looked around the lounge room and went, “You should put away most of this stuff because it’s not correct to

have in a house.” In other words, this person wanted us to “de-gay” the household. Look I’m big enough to turn around and say something to someone who says this to us – “there’s the door – go!” And that’s what I did.

This is my house. My home, my safety net, my cave – whatever, or our cave at the time. Yes this may be your workplace, your workplace happens to be in our house – why should we de-gay it because it offends your senses? If it offends, why the hell are you coming to a gay household to start off with? And why the hell are you working in aged care?

It was literally the next shift that another worker came in but halfway through the shift he turned to me and said, “How long have you been gay?” And I answered him – “since I was 16 I self-recognised”, and his response was “Hmmm so you were gay before it became fashionable?” When I rang them [the provider] to complain about it – “oh we do training on that.” I said, “well do you monitor its effectiveness – now that I’ve made a complaint, what’s going to happen?” [The provider] “Oh we’ll look into it” And I never heard back. My fear is – as I said I’m big enough to deal with that, and stand up to it, but with someone [else] who is already isolated, already in fear of [aged care in their home] “if I say something [complain] about this, does that mean I don’t get anymore services?”

It’s easy for me to do it [complain], but I put myself in the position of my late husband Les, if he’d been at home by himself, with no one else there after what he went through health wise, he’d lost his confidence, he lost his voice, he lost his ability at times to put his words together, there are a lot of people like that – who don’t have the ability to be who they were.

¹ There is a range of acronyms in use in the aged care sector to describe, gender and bodily diversity, identities and/or communities. Throughout this resource, we have used LGBTI (lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans/transgender, intersex) and LGBTIQA+ (lesbian gay bisexual, trans/transgender, intersex, queer, asexual, plus). Both acronyms are used in the sector e.g. the *Aged Care Act* and a range of frameworks use LGBTI, and the *CHSP Manual* uses LGBTIQA+.

² Garry’s navigation was prior to the introduction of the *Specialisation Verification Framework* – previously providers could tick being a special needs specialist service without any evidence/verification.



General Reflections

- In what ways did the Aged Care Sector, including service providers, fail Garry and Les?
- What strategies could be put/are in place within your service to ensure similar experiences don't occur?
- How does your service actively demonstrate it is safe, welcoming, and inclusive to LGBTIQ+ people accessing services, including within their homes?
- Considering a rights-based approach and the *Strengthened Aged Care Quality Standards*, how are the needs of Garry, Les and other older LGBTIQ+ consumers supported by the Sector and the *Standards*?
- How does your organisation gather feedback from consumers to change, innovate and improve services to respond to consumer needs?
- Thinking about your organisation's page on the *My Aged Care portal*, how would your service be perceived by LGBTIQ+ consumers?
- Garry entered the Aged Care Sector before the *Specialisation Verification Framework* was introduced. How might *LGBTI Specialisation Verification* help LGBTI consumers to navigate services, now and into the future?
- Have you participated in training regarding the experiences and needs of older LGBTIQ+ people?



www.csdgrampians.org.au/diversity/garrys-story

DIVERSITY & INCLUSION, DIGNITY & RESPECT: INFORMATION FOR SERVICE PROVIDERS

Aged Care Act and Strengthened Aged Care Quality Standards

The *Aged Care Act* and the *Strengthened Aged Care Quality Standards* require aged care service providers to structure, design and deliver care around the choices and needs of each person. Providers who recognise and actively respond to the diverse experiences, values, and needs of each person are well placed to provide care in accordance with sector requirements and, most importantly, the rights and needs of each person.

Aged Care Act

www.health.gov.au/our-work/aged-care-act

Strengthened Quality Standards:

www.agedcarequality.gov.au/providers/quality-standards

Specialisation Verification Framework

While everyone receiving aged care services must be treated with dignity and respect, and have their identity, culture, and diversity valued, some providers go beyond, tailoring services to meet the needs of a range of specific groups. These aged care providers can apply to have their services independently verified against the *My Aged Care provider Specialisation Verification Framework* and promote this achievement on *My Aged Care*.

Specialisation Verification can help older people from diverse and specific communities identify services who have awareness of their needs and experiences, improving their navigation and experiences of care.

For service providers, achieving *Specialisation Verification Framework* may help in attracting new consumers and developing a reputation as a provider of choice.

Specialisation Verification for Aged Care services

www.health.gov.au/topics/aged-care/providing-aged-care-services/reporting/specialisation-verification-for-aged-care-services

Older LGBTIQ+ people, their histories & accessing aged care services

Many older LGBTIQ+ people have experienced a lifetime social stigma and discrimination and have lived a significant proportion of their lives without any rights or protections. While anti-discrimination legislation across Australia means it is unlawful to discriminate, many older LGBTIQ+ people still experience subtle or overt discrimination. Consequently, many are hesitant to access aged care services, anticipating discrimination or disapproval, especially when allowing services into their home, often their only safe space throughout life.

Older LGBTIQ+ people often experience barriers in navigating and accessing aged care services. Many have little knowledge of the range of aged care services available and may lack informal support, such as family, to assist them to navigate the system. Service providers who communicate awareness, commitment and inclusivity empower older LGBTIQ+ people to receive the care they may need as they age.

Since 2012, older LGBTIQ+ people have been included in the *Aged Care Act*, with guidance frameworks, strategies and resources available to support LGBTIQ+ informed and inclusive service delivery. By understanding their unique histories and needs, service providers can deliver LGBTIQ+ inclusive, person-centred, and trauma-informed care.

Participating in education and training about the needs and experiences of older LGBTIQ+ people, and engaging with LGBTIQ+ community organisations, enables service providers to better understand and meet the needs of older LGBTIQ+ consumers.

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LGBTIQ+ TRAINING & SUPPORT: CHSP

Val's LGBTI Ageing & Aged Care
Val's is funded to support the CHSP sector with free information and support including monthly, online LGBTIQ+ awareness training, workshops, and tailored support for providers to achieve Specialisation Verification Framework (LGBTI).
valslgbti@latrobe.edu.au
www.latrobe.edu.au/arcschs/vals

USEFUL RESOURCES

LGBTIQ+ inclusive language guide
www.vic.gov.au/inclusive-language-guide

Exploring Diversity & Wellness, A Toolkit for Reflective Conversations
www.csdgrampians.org.au/exploring-diversity-and-wellness

Diversity & Wellness in the Strengthened Quality Standards Workshop Series
www.csdgrampians.org.au/resources/diversity-sqs

LGBTIQ+ COMMUNITY ORGANISATIONS - INFORMATION, EXPERTISE & SUPPORT

These national and state-based LGBTIQ+ peak and community organisations can provide information, and support regarding the experiences and needs of older LGBTIQ+ people.

National LGBTIQ+ Organisations

AGMC (Aust. GLBTIQ Multicultural Council)
www.agmc.org.au/

Intersex Human Rights Australia (IHRA)
www.ihra.org.au

LGBTIQ Health Australia
www.lgbtiqhealth.org.au

Rainbow Health Australia
www.rainbowhealthaustralia.org.au

State-based LGBTIQ+ Organisations

ACON (NSW)
www.acon.org.au/

Gender Centre (NSW)
www.gendercentre.org.au/services/seniors-support

GLBTI Rights in Ageing Inc. (WA)
www.grai.org.au

Living Proud (WA)
<https://www.livingproud.org.au>

Meridian (ACT)
www.meridianact.org.au

NTAHC (NT)
www.ntahc.org.au/#dm

QC (QLD)
www.qc.org.au

South Australian Links (SA)
www.dhs.sa.gov.au/how-we-help/lgbtiqa
www.cotasa.org.au/programs-and-services/lgbti-information

Switchboard Victoria (VIC)
www.switchboard.org.au

Thorne Harbour Health (VIC)
www.thorneharbour.org

Transgender Victoria (VIC)
www.tgv.org.au

Working it Out (TAS)
www.workingitout.org.au

