

Australian Institute for  
Disaster Resilience



AIDR Recovery Matters webinar series

# LGBTIQA+ experiences in disaster and recovery

📅 20 April, 2021 ⌚ 2pm AEST

## GUEST SPEAKERS

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Liam Leonard – GAD Pod | Steve O'Malley – Fire Rescue Victoria



AIDR Recovery Matters webinar series

# Welcome

**Amanda Leck**

Executive Director, AIDR

# Acknowledgement of Country

AIDR acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of the various lands on which you all join us from today and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people participating in this event.

We pay our respects to Elders past, present and emerging and celebrate the diversity of Aboriginal peoples and their ongoing cultures and connections to the lands and waters across Australia.

AIDR Recovery Matters webinar series

Australian Institute for  
Disaster Resilience



# About today's theme

**Amanda Leck**

Executive Director, AIDR

# Housekeeping

- You will remain muted and your camera will not be activated for the duration of today's event.
- Today's event will be recorded and made available after the event.
- Please enter questions for our speakers in the Q&A function, not the chat box.
- Please use the chat box to share any thoughts or reflections during the presentation – remember to select 'all panellists and attendees' to ensure everyone can read your message.
- Please be respectful to each other when posting your comments or questions.

# Steve O'Malley AFSM

Steve O'Malley is a Leading Firefighter and Diversity and Inclusion Officer with Fire Rescue Victoria. He has been an operational firefighter for more than 32 years and is a graduate in the study of Human Rights.

Steve is a Board and Honorary Life Member of Women and Firefighting Australasia, a foundation member of the Emergency Management Victoria 'Gender and Disaster' taskforce and an Fire Rescue Victoria Family Violence Contact Officer. Steve is a long-standing presenter and advocate for prevention of violence against women and gender equity.



Gender & Disaster Pod

An initiative of WHGNE, WHIN & MUDRI

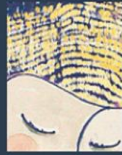
## **Australian Institute of Disaster Resilience Webinar Series**

### **LGBTIQA+ experiences in disasters and recovery**

Liam Leonard & Steve O'Malley, AFSM

*Virtual: April 20, 2021*

The GAD Pod acknowledges the Traditional Owners of the lands from which we meet.



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EXIT SITE

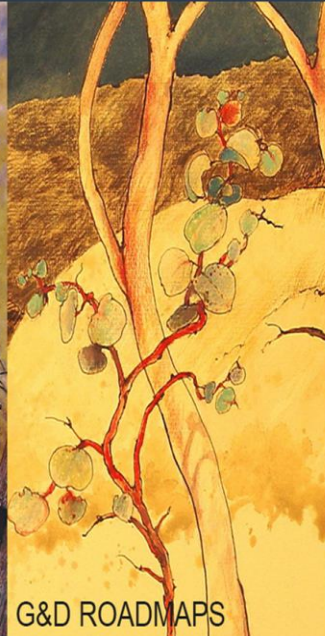
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EDUCATION & TRAINING



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# The Gender and Disaster Pod: GADPod

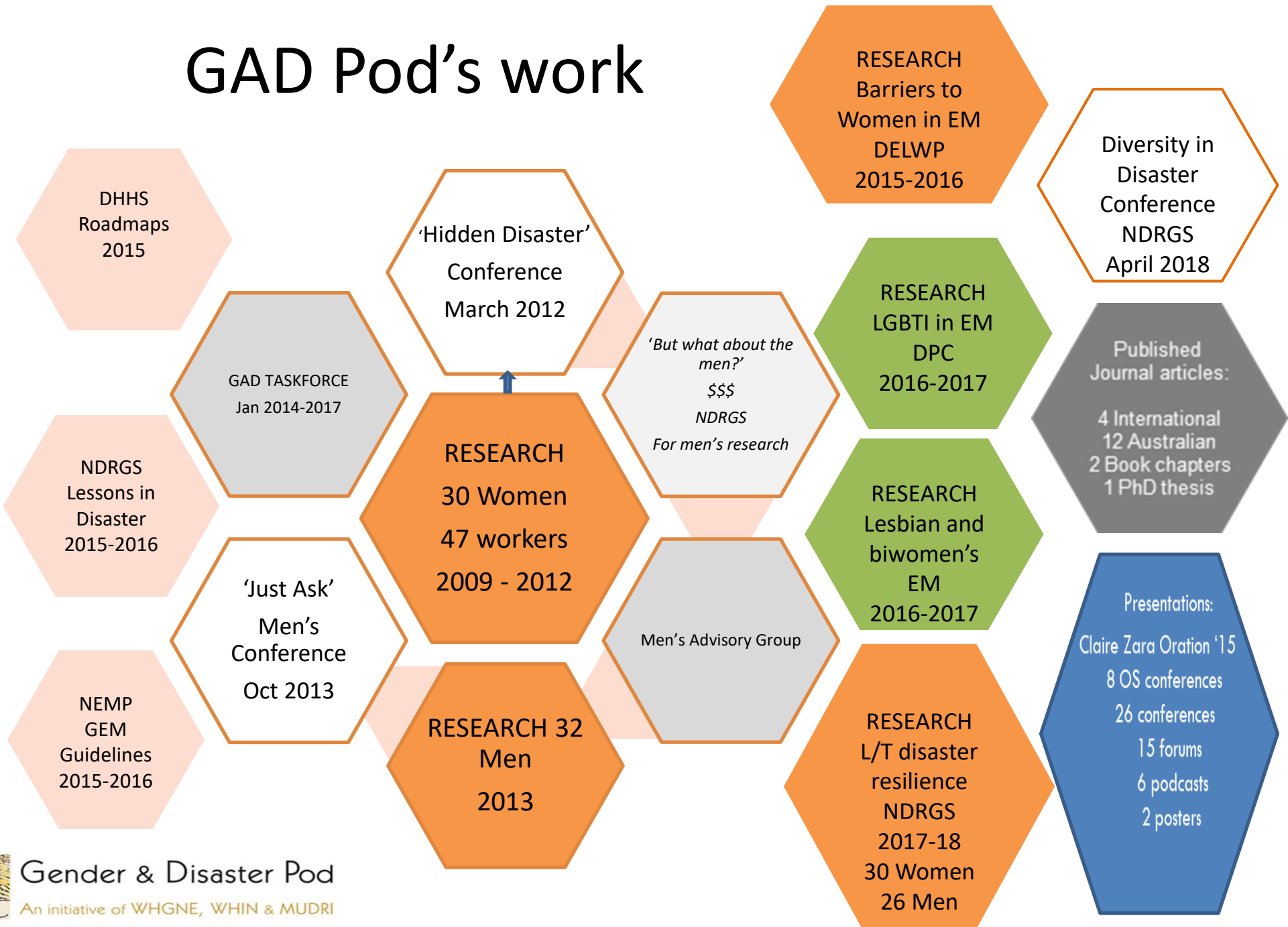
- The GAD Pod was established in 2015
- An initiative of Women's Health Goulburn North East (WHGNE) and Women's Health In the North (WHIN), working in partnership with Monash University Disaster Resilience Initiative (MUDRI)
- Provides expert research, advocacy, and training on how gender impacts on people's experiences of emergency situations, focusing on women, men and children
- Expanded its remit to include the emergency experiences and needs of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) people



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# GAD Pod's work



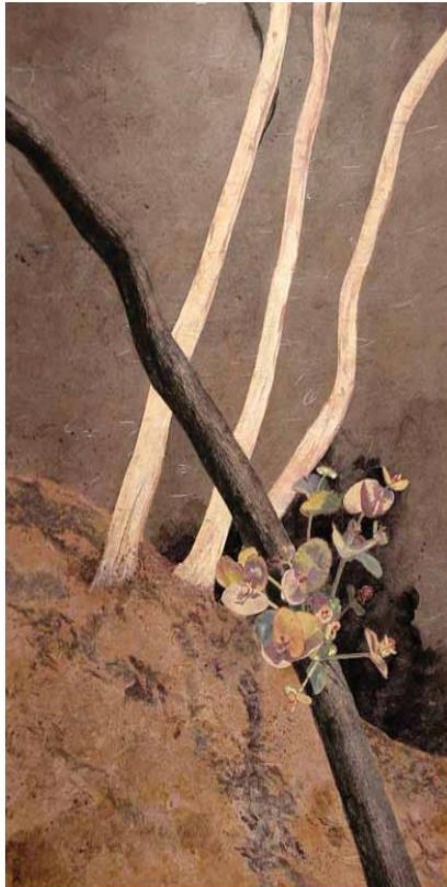
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# *The Way He Tells It: Relationships after Black Saturday (2011): What the researchers found*

## **'The way he tells it ...'**

Relationships after Black Saturday



Women's traditional reluctance to report violence against them was exacerbated in the aftermath of Black Saturday.

Women retracted accounts of violence. This indicates that much remains hidden, as women continue to fear repercussions from both the community and violent partners.



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# *Men on Black Saturday: What the researchers found*

## Men on Black Saturday

Risks and opportunities for change



- Disaster impacts can be severe and long-lasting
- Men do talk about their disaster experiences – just ask them
- Men, in particular, may be penalised for seeking psychological help
- Employment issues can be a major source of disruption
- Community aggression and male violence increase
- Alcohol abuse, mental health issues and suicide rise
- Gender norms are more salient



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# Lessons in Disaster

gendered violence and  
lessons in disaster

Train-the-Trainer Facilitator Guide

## Under Pressure: LGBTI-inclusive emergency services

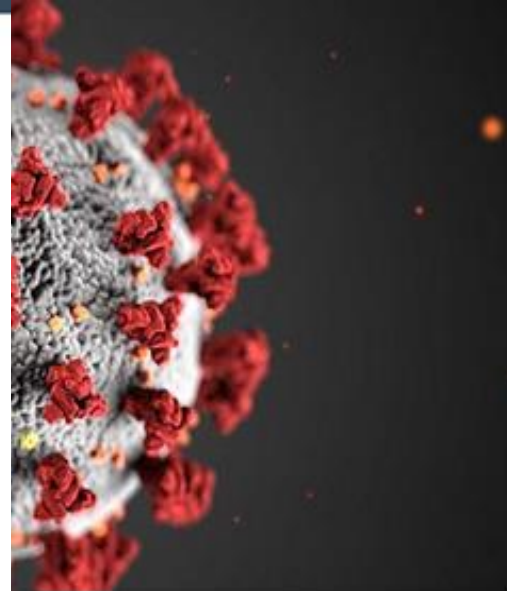
FACILITATOR GUIDE



## ONLINE LESSONS IN DISASTER

**WHAT:** This online training package contains four x 90 minute sessions on 'Lessons in Disaster'. This training combines the original 'Family Violence After Disasters' and 'Men After Disasters' in three sessions and the fourth is an adaptation of 'Under Pressure: LGBTI-Inclusive services in emergencies'.

**WHY:** The Online 'Lessons in Disaster' training package aims to strengthen the capacity of health, community and emergency sectors to challenge gender stereotypes and inequalities, and understand the relevance of family violence to disaster. 'Disaster' includes pandemics



MAY  
28

**Gender, Pandemics, Disasters:  
Lessons for Primary Prevention  
Practitioners**

by Respect Victoria [Following](#)

Free

# Aims – Lessons In Disaster series

## **Session1 – Gender and Emergency – The Evidence**

- Ensure the safety needs of women, men and children are met during response, recovery and preparation for disasters
- Ensure organisations understand family violence in disaster

## **Session 2 – The Impact of Gendered Expectations – individual, community , organisation**

- Understand how gender expectations affect preparation, response, and recovery from disaster.
- Strengthen the capacity of the emergency management sector to challenge gender stereotypes

## **Session 3 - The disaster made me do it - *The social reconstruction of sex, gender and sexuality under bushfire and pandemic situations***

- Increase awareness of the value of building a gender-responsive and disaster-aware organisation.

## **Session 4 – Working Towards Change – individual, community, organisation**



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**The disaster made me do it**  
*The social reconstruction of sex, gender and  
sexuality under bushfire and pandemic situations*

Liam and Steve



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# OUTLINE

## Introduction

### **Section 1** – Introducing sex, *gender* and sexuality

- Working definitions: Sex, gender, sexuality
- The Wedding Cake model

### **Section 2** – Gender under pressure

- The pressure to conform
- Un/conforming women
- Gender conforming men, heroic masculinity & COVID-19

### **Section 3** – An unholy trinity: Sex, gender and *sexuality*

- Rethinking the relationship of sex, gender and sexuality
- Implications and possibilities

## Wrap Up





# AIMS and OUTCOMES

- Encourage participants to question their understandings of sex, gender and sexuality
- Consider how sex, gender and sexuality *and* the relationship between all three are socially constructed
- Look at some of the problems associated with the celebration of 'heroic masculinity' under disaster and emergency conditions, including COVID-19
- *Reconsider* the role sexuality plays in the construction of polarised gender stereotypes



**YouTube Video**  
***Force Majeure***

**<https://youtu.be/saNvY4tD3wA>**




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- Disentangle masculinity from fire-fighting.
- Stop expecting men to protect the home and women to protect children.
- Let men be vulnerable.
- Ensure women and children's right to live free from violence is unconditional – even after disasters.


National Gender & Emergency X +  
← → ↻ 🏠 <https://knowledge.aidr.org.au/resources/national-gender-and-emergency-management-guidelines/> 📄 ⋮ 📌 ☆ 🗄 📄 ☰

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## Gender and Emergency Management Guidelines

Gender issues are known to compound the damaging effects of disaster on survivors. Increasing understanding of the relationship between gender and disaster will improve the health and wellbeing of both women and men affected by disaster across Australia.

### GEM Guidelines

- [Full guidelines \(PDF 110MB\)](#)
- [GEM Guidelines checklist \(PDF 299KB\)](#)
- [Literature review \(PDF 868KB\)](#)
- [Peer evaluation report \(All on Board: Evaluation Report; PDF 163MB\)](#)

The Gender and Emergency Management (GEM) Guidelines were developed collaboratively as part of

2:02 PM  
22/03/2019

## GEM Checklist examples:

Have you identified and engaged **domestic violence workers** in recovery efforts and committees?

Have you **provided domestic violence training** and education to employees and volunteers?

Have you **identified and engaged domestic violence specialists** to speak at community meetings?

Have you included **information about domestic violence** in information about emergencies? (For example: flyers, pamphlets, advertising)

Have you informed **evacuation centre managers of existing restraining/ intervention order protocols** in evacuation centres?





(c) Ona Henderson and Syd Turm

# GENDER JUSTICE in DISASTER

inspiring action



2021 Virtual International Conference, May 2021  
**GENDER JUSTICE in DISASTER:**  
inspiring action

[Register Here](#)



# Liam Leonard

Liam has over 20 years experience as an LGBTIQ+ advocate and is the former Director Rainbow Health Victoria, La Trobe University. He has worked on LGBTIQ+ legislative reform, led the development of the world's first LGBTI-inclusive service accreditation program, the Rainbow Tick, and lectured and published widely on sexuality, gender studies and social policy.

More recently, Liam has worked with the GAD Pod researching and developing training on LGBTI people's experiences of disaster and the impacts of COVID-19 on Victoria's family violence primary prevention workforce and LGBTI people's intimate and familial relationships.

# The research

*Identifying the experiences and needs of LGBTI communities before, during and after emergencies in Victoria*

- LGBTI people's emergency experiences (n=12)
- Emergency personnel's attitudes toward, and knowledge of, LGBTI people's emergency needs (n=157)

Parkinson, D., Duncan, A., Leonard, W. and Archer, F. (on-line March 2021) 'Lesbian and Bisexual Women's Experience of Emergency Management', *Gender Issues*

- Interviews with lesbian emergency services staff/volunteers and clients (n=4)





# What's that got to do with it?

## *Nothing special*

*The sooner you lot drop it and stop trying to make yourselves out as victims or different the sooner your perceived problems will disappear. FFS, we don't care if you are queer and stop telling us. Get over it.*

*The organisation is too busy dealing with real problems to discriminate against LGBTI individuals.*



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# What's that got to do with it?

## *We treat everybody the same*

*There are no specific policies or procedures, nor should there be. When a person is on fire or trapped in a crumpled car their preferred gender/sexuality is as irrelevant as their skin colour or religion.*

*Jokes and banter involving LGBTI slurs do not constitute Homo/Transphobia as there is no intention to hurt or oppress. Gay jokes should be treated **no differently** to short jokes, fat jokes, jokes about age. People need to be less precious [emphasis added].*



# God's judgement

*People were targeting groups of gay people in the town as our 'behaviour' had brought this upon the community...\**

*God's word says for a man and a woman to be together...they've legalised same sex marriage...Look how rapid, these bushfires, these droughts, all these things have come, in a short period of time...God is speaking to you guys, Australia, you need to repent...^*

\*Gorman-Murray, Morris et al. (2016) 'Problems and possibilities on the margins: LGBT experiences in the 2011 Queensland Floods'  
^Israel Folau quoted in Australian Associated Press 18 November 2019



# The Prime Minister's offence

*Folau is a free citizen, he can say whatever he likes, but that doesn't mean he can't have regard to the grievous offence this would have caused to people whose homes have been burnt down...*

Scott Morrison



# Client survey

## *LGBTI people's emergency experiences*

- Past experiences of discrimination or anticipation of discrimination
- Attitudes of staff, volunteers and clients
- Fear of being outed
- Loss of safe spaces and LGBTI community supports
- Faith-based service delivery



- Past experiences of discrimination/anticipation of discrimination

*I would be reluctant to invite local services – CFA – or support agencies after an event because, after a lifetime of discrimination, I would feel it made me more vulnerable. You don't want the local 'heroes' knowing there are a couple of lesbians living on a remote farm...*



- Attitudes of staff, volunteers and clients

*In the post Katrina aftermath, a woman was arrested for using the 'wrong' bathroom; similarly in Japan, a woman was called a 'cross-dressing deviant fag' by a volunteer worker...\**

*[The emergency service] will be there to engage the community and ask people, 'Have you made a bushfire plan' ... and then they would say something along the lines of 'What about your husband, where is he going to be when this stuff is happening? Have you thought about him?' ....I've got a partner who's a female...Sometimes it's easier to just go 'my husband' just so that I keep getting a smooth service from them without having to stop and have a whole disclosure of sexuality in the middle of a conversation about a bushfire plan (Jane)*

\*Gorman-Murray, Morris et al. (2016)



- Fear of being outed

*I never told them about my orientation [SES workers]... I would face discrimination. No way to risk in the middle of a fire.*

*[W]hen you are frightened you don't want to invite more danger as it accelerates the feeling of vulnerability...Also they don't recognise you as a couple or 'family'.*

- Loss of safe spaces and LGBTI community supports

*I stayed with my cousins, who were quite conservative...I had to shut off some part of my identity for a little while*

*My idea of a recovery centre is that there's all these families and they're all trying to find a spot to put their head down at the end of the day with their family and that would be a harder space for queer families to be in. (Jane)*





- Faith-based service delivery

One third of LGBTI respondents in our client survey reported contact with emergency services delivered by faith-based organisations. They reported varying levels of satisfaction.

*I will not approach church organisations at all. They do not care about my civil rights. Rather discriminate me. I rather avoid them.*



# Industry survey

## *Emergency staff/volunteers*

- 90% of emergency service respondents believed that LGBTI people have ‘the same needs’ as everyone else **during** an emergency
- Nearly a quarter of respondents believed that LGBTI people have particular issues that need to be addressed in the **delivery** of emergency services
- Over a third of respondents believed LGBTI people were at greater risk of harassment than others **after** an emergency
- Over half that they were at greater risk **during** an emergency



## Key issues identified

*GLBTIQ people may have fractured relationships before the disaster, which can make recovery harder; GLBTIQ community members are statistically more likely to have experienced trauma in their lives, so a disaster could impact them deeper; GLBTIQ have to 'come out' to every single emergency services' person they tell their story to.*

- Barriers to service access
- Family and relationships
- Help seeking behaviour
- Trust
- Trans and gender diverse people



- Barriers to service access
  - 31% agreed that LGBTI people face more barriers to accessing support and resources *during* an emergency than other people
  - 27% that they face more barriers than others *after* an emergency
- Family and relationships
  - Nearly a third of respondents did not agree that the needs of LGBTI couples are considered equally to those of other couples
  - One in five agreed that it is more difficult for LGBTI people to care for their families during an emergency.
- Help seeking behaviour
  - Over a quarter of respondents agreed that LGBTI people tend to look after themselves rather than seek or accept professional help during and after an emergency



- Trust
  - A major issue identified by emergency personnel, LGBTI people and in the international literature

*Often people who identify as LGBTI have been mistreated or betrayed by individuals or the community in general. Strategies to build trust need to be identified so that the LGBTI community feel it is safe to either seek assistance or information as part of their preparation for or response to an emergency*



- Trans and gender diverse people
  - Only 16% of respondents agreed that there is recognition of the needs of trans people, including the needs of those who may be undergoing gender affirmation.

# Interviews

## *Lesbian EM staff/volunteers*

*You've just got to shut up and take it ... That's what you have to do if you want to stay in an organisation like that [fire brigade] ... when you love something that much and you get treated like that for being a woman and for being gay then it's really horrible. It made me suicidal... (Jesse)*

*Another officer was 'Virkonning' - the stuff that we do if we have a blood spill...there'd been no blood spill...it was just in a gay [venue] where men are having sex. So he bagged and tagged his gear to take it for decontamination and he said to his crew he was worried about them 'catching gays' (Gabriel)*



*If you're gay you're somehow not manly and the thing of fireman being the archetype of masculinity, like the men who have gone, 'I put on a fire helmet so that makes me a man'. Then if they see a gay man wearing the helmet it's like 'well what does that make me?'* (Gabriel)

*I didn't have anything **during** the fires. Got on a fire truck and did what I had to do. I felt safe with the people I was with, them knowing I was gay. **After** was probably when it all hit the fan. [B]ecause everybody was together - community dining, CFA - the whole community, they all knew by then. There was a lot of bullying* (Jesse)



# Consequences

## **LGBTIQA+ clients**

- Reduced use of, and access to, essential services
- Heightened anxiety, self-censorship, and fear
- Lack of access to effective and appropriate services (including referral to LGBTIQA+ affirmative services, community organisations, and professionals)

## **LGBTIQA+ emergency service personnel**

- Denial of authentic self at work
- Committed individuals (staff, volunteers) leaving or not joining emergency services
- Maintenance of heterosexist, masculinist work cultures and professional practices





# LGBTIQA+ people under increased pressure *COVID-19\**

*[T]he marginalisation of LGBT people is heightened during disaster, as existing inequalities are magnified.\*\**

*...LGBTI people may be particularly vulnerable during the COVID-19 crisis^*



\*McCann, B., Poyner, E., Leonard, W., Wilson, C. and Garay, A. (December 2020) COVID-19 LGBTIQ+ family violence prevention project: Prevention in the pandemic. Melbourne, Victoria: *Centre for Family Research and Evaluation* Respect Victoria, Melbourne.

\*\*Gorman-Murray, Morris et al. (2016)

^Bachelet, M., United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, quoted in Reid-Smith, T. (22 April 2020) UN orders countries not to use pandemic to attack LGBT+ rights *Gay Star News*



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## **Human rights' abuses**

- Passage of discriminatory legislation
- Cancelling or defunding LGBTIQ+ programs

## **Trauma and the weight of history**

- Response to HIV/AIDS – quarantine, daily infection and death rates, discrimination and fear
- Relationship to police and public policing
- Public surveillance, apps and testing
- 5 years of public scrutiny and trauma

## **Disproportionate impacts of social distancing**

- Heterosexist definitions of family, partner, dependents
- LGBTIQ+ networks vital to many LGBTIQ+ people's sense of self-worth and affirmation
- Gay men's complex socio-sexual networks



## **Safety**

- Returning to hostile environments
- Visibility and public harassment

## **Lateral violence**

- On-line and social media shaming from within LGBTIQ+ communities, outing those who:
  - Refuse to download tracing app or to get tested
  - Continue to see regular casual partners
  - Continue to see clients

## **LGBTIQ+ sector capacity**

- Withdrawal of funds from community organisations
- LGBTIQ+ community and support organisations
  - Receive little government funding
  - Rely on intermittent funds
  - Are often staffed by part-timers and volunteers



# Recovery

*In addition to needs in the relief phase, discrimination experienced by LGBTIQ+ people in families, communities, workplaces and other contexts will provide additional challenges for re-establishing livelihoods and managing stress during recovery phases*

Edge

Effect\*

\*Edge Effect is an organisation that 'assists humanitarian and development organisations to work in genuine partnerships with sexual and gender minorities (aka people with diverse sexual orientation, gender identity/expression, and sexual characteristics (SOGIESC), or LGBTIQ+ people)', @ <https://www.edgeeffect.org/>



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# Structural

- Policies
  - Model diverse inclusion within relief and recovery policies
  - Expert LGBTIQ+ advisory group
  - LGBTIQ+ people and communities named, considered and their needs catered for in all national, state and territory policies
  - Include LGBTIQ+ people and communities in the GEM Guidelines
- Financial support (Capacity building)
  - Consider the impact of financial relief measures on minority and disadvantaged groups
  - Government support for LGBTIQ+ community & support organisations
  - Government funding NOT directed away from LGBTIQ+ groups
  - Government funding NOT directed towards relief and recovery agencies that do not have diverse and LGBTIQ+ inclusive policies
  - Support LGBTIQ+ organisations and networks to undertake emergency, community-based response, through assistance for needs assessments, relief activities, and livelihoods recovery for LGBTIQ+ people
- Ongoing monitoring and evaluation



# Organisational

- Policies

- Disaster planning – Before, during and after (E.g. GEM Guidelines, Rainbow Tick service accreditation\*)
- LGBTIQ+ community advisory group
- Privacy in relief and early recovery services
- Client data (E.g. range of sex and gender options, place for same sex couples)

- Training

- Staff contracts, hiring and induction
- Ongoing professional development

- LGBTIQ+ affirming relief and recovery services

- Residential and emergency accommodation for vulnerable groups within LGBTIQ+ communities (E.g. young people, trans and gender diverse people)
- LGBTIQ+ affirmative facilities (E.g. Safe spaces; toilets, bathrooms & rest areas)
- Support personnel (E.g. in relief centres)
- Signage etc. (when everything else is in place)



\*<https://www.qip.com.au/standards/rainbow-tick-standards/>



## Referral and supports

- Referral to LGBTIQ+ inclusive support services where appropriate (E.g. mental health including psychosocial support and early recovery; emergency accommodation; financial support)
- Referral to:
  - **Local** LGBTIQ+ community and support organisations (if they exist); or
  - Appropriate **state-wide** agencies (E.g. in Victoria LGBTIQ+ affirmative counseling and support such as Drummond Street Services, Thorne Harbour Health, Victorian Trans and Gender Diverse Community Health Services\*)

\*The Victorian Government has funded an initiative to increase health services across Victoria for trans, gender diverse and non-binary people aged 18 and over. This state-wide service is operated by Your Community Health, Ballarat Community Health and Austin Health  
@<https://www.yourcommunityhealth.org.au/service-access/trans-and-gender-diverse-health/>



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# Q & A

Don't forget to enter you questions into the Q&A box.



→ [aidr.org.au/recoveryforum](https://aidr.org.au/recoveryforum)

# National Recovery Forum

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FRIDAY 20 AUGUST 2021

International Convention Centre, Sydney NSW



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# Event concludes



Thank you for attending today's webinar.

## **Mental health support**

Lifeline: 13 11 14

Beyond Blue: 1300 224 636

[www.beyondblue.org.au](http://www.beyondblue.org.au)

**Further resources:**  
[knowledge.aidr.org.au/recovery](http://knowledge.aidr.org.au/recovery)

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