



FORCIBLY DISPLACED PEOPLE NETWORK

**Submission to the Department of Home Affairs
in response to
the Multicultural Framework Review**

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Forcibly Displaced People Network

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About Forcibly Displaced People Network

The Forcibly Displaced People Network (FDPN) is an Australian organisation dedicated to advocating for LGBTIQ+¹ individuals who have been forcibly displaced from their homes due to persecution based on their gender identity, sexual orientation or variations in sex characteristics. FDPN proudly stands as the first registered organisation led by LGBTIQ+ people who have experienced forced displacement.

FDPN is at the forefront of efforts to raise awareness about unique challenges faced by LGBTIQ+ refugees, people seeking asylum, and migrants. We advocate for intersectional policies and services for LGBTIQ+ individuals in forced displacement. Through our national and international work, we are amplifying voices, paving an inclusive path towards fulfilling potential and shaping a future where every individual not only survives but thrives. With an unwavering commitment, we persistently work towards a future that upholds, celebrates, and safeguards the rights and dignity of forcibly displaced LGBTIQ+ people.

We welcome an opportunity to make a submission to the Multicultural Framework Review. In this submission we respond to the following terms of reference to bring the issues that LGBTIQ+ asylum seekers, refugees and migrants experience to the attention of the Committee:

- the effectiveness of existing federal:
 - strategies to promote multiculturalism, social cohesion and inclusion, and
 - services designed to support multicultural Australia
- roles and functions of government and non-government organisations respectively
- identifying areas for reform to address any systemic barriers that prevent people from multicultural communities from fully participating in Australian society, including those barriers that exist due to racism and discrimination

Summary of Recommendations

1. Ensure Recognition of LGBTIQ+ people in the Multicultural Framework
2. Ensure Specific Inclusion of LGBTIQ+ Issues in Migration and Multicultural Policy
3. Provide Funding for LGBTIQ+ Refugee-Led Organisations
4. Mandate Training on LGBTIQ+ for Settlement Services through funding contracts.

Notes of terminology

At the Forcibly Displaced People Network (FDPN), we have adopted the term "LGBTIQ+ forcibly displaced people" to encompass individuals seeking asylum, refugees, and migrants from non-Western countries who identify within the LGBTIQ+ community. It is essential to recognise that these individuals originate from countries where approximately 70 nations persecute consensual same-sex relationships, while many others lack adequate protections

¹ LGBTIQ+ stands for lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans and gender diverse, intersex, and queer as an inclusive umbrella abbreviation to encompass a range of diverse sexualities, genders and intersex status.

for transgender individuals. As a result, they often find themselves fleeing their home countries in pursuit of safety, inclusion, and the freedom to live in Australia.

Challenges Faced by LGBTIQ+ forcibly displaced people

The experiences of LGBTIQ+ forcibly displaced people are multifaceted, often marked by ongoing challenges in settlement. These challenges include but are not limited to violence, discrimination, and social exclusion. In many cases, LGBTIQ+ forcibly displaced people find themselves excluded from both their ethnic communities and LGBTIQ+ communities, and encounter significant barriers when attempting to access essential support services. It is crucial to acknowledge that factors such as sexuality, gender identity, and variations in sex characteristics are inseparable from one's race and can significantly impact their interactions with both systems and communities.

In this submission we illustrate these challenges to make an argument for the inclusion of LGBTIQ+ forcibly displaced people in the Multicultural Framework and all efforts to achieve social cohesion.

In 2022, undertook a comprehensive survey to measure and record the settlement experiences of LGBTIQ+ refugees and migrants². Three key areas of concern emerged from this survey that are relevant to the discussion about advancing a cohesive multicultural society:

Highly Prevalent Experiences of Discrimination

Participants reported instances of discrimination across various facets of public and private life, including employment, support services, and healthcare. It is noteworthy that discrimination often occurred based on multiple intersecting factors, including race, LGBTIQ+ status, migration status, and disability. When disaggregated by the types of discrimination, most of respondents had intersectional experiences reporting multiple co-occurring factors. However, when we isolate each of those, a new picture emerges:

- Racism, despite reported across the board, was reported as more prevalent in services and employment.
- LGBTIQ+ discrimination was reported as more prevalent in housing.
- Migration status, when used as an eligibility criterion for service access, was perceived as discrimination. It was also a barrier in employment.
- Ableism was relatively equally prevalent with more instances in education.

56% of participants stated that ongoing experiences of discrimination had an ongoing negative impact on their physical and mental health.

² Cochrane, B., Dixon, T., Dixon, R. (2023). "Inhabiting Two Worlds At Once": Survey on the experiences of LGBTIQ+ settlement in Australia. Canberra, Australia: Forcibly Displaced People Network

Table 1. Discrimination and complaints by an area

	Reported discrimination (percent from # of responses)	% of lodged complaints
Social services	67%	12%
Education	52.8%	8.5%
Employment	69%	17%
Housing	50.8%	12%
Healthcare	41.5%	6%

Participants reported experiences of racism, homophobia and transphobia in almost half of all responses provided about experiences of discrimination. These harmful experiences were inflicted by both service clients, service workers and others with decision making power. Consider the following examples:

"I was living in share accommodation with other people for my country. The day I moved in I didn't know how people will react and one of the guys took a knife and said we don't allow gays here. I was scared, I cried, I called the police but they couldn't help. I applied for government housing [...] but never get anything."

"Many LGBT+ services didn't meet my needs as they were not inclusive of CALD people. CALD organisations were not trans inclusive. Most of the times I felt isolated when reaching out for support and eventually stopped."

Experiences of Violence

57% of participants experienced violence after their arrival in Australia. The rates of violence reported were notably higher than the national average, which was 4.4% in 2020 to 2021.³ The experiences of family violence for LGBTIQ+ forcibly displaced people were higher than for LGBTIQ+ people⁴ or refugee women⁵.

The most common types of violence experienced in Australia were:

- Emotional and verbal abuse⁶
- Sexual harassment

³ Australian Bureau of Statistics (2022) Estimating Homelessness: Census

⁴ Hill, A. O., Bourne, A., McNair, R., Carman, M. & Lyons, A. (2020). Private Lives 3: The health and wellbeing of LGBTIQ people in Australia. ARCSHS Monograph Series No. 122. Melbourne, Australia: Australian Research Centre in Sex, Health and Society, La Trobe University.

⁵ Segrave, M. Wickes, R, and Keel, C. (2021) Migrant and Refugee Women in Australia: The Safety and Security Survey. Monash University.

⁶ This correlates with the high prevalence of racism and homo/transphobia.

- Physical violence
- LGBTIQ+ related abuse, and
- Sexual violence.

Despite highly prevalent violence only about 20% sought support from services. Others did not fearing disbelief and further discrimination.

Belonging Across Diverse Communities

Respondents indicated varying degrees of belonging within different communities, including the LGBTIQ+, ethnic, and refugee communities. Factors like the disclosure of LGBTIQ+ status or refugee status influenced their sense of belonging. For example, while 91% stated that they felt a feeling of belonging to LGBTIQ+ communities, 15% indicated that they belonged to the LGBTIQ+ community only if they did not disclose their migration status. Only about a half (56%) felt part of an ethnic community. 38% said they did not disclose their LGBTIQ+ status to other refugees out of fear of exclusion.

"It's hard to inhabit the two worlds at once: migrant and lesbian. Usually the ethnic communities are too conservative and the anglo world does welcome me as a queer woman but doesn't want to know about my migrant side unless is about holidays and fun stuff."

Current Access to Services

Our research has brought to light the fact that existing settlement services often do not adequately meet the specific needs of LGBTIQ+ displaced individuals. It is imperative to take action in this regard. The levels of discrimination reported by survey respondents was the highest when it occurred in services. Mandated training, tailored approaches, and careful consideration of housing arrangements are all essential steps toward providing equitable support. It is clear that the settlement outcomes for the LGBTIQ+ displaced people are worse than for those who their non-LGBTIQ+ peers. These issues have been extensively recorded in the Australian context.⁷

Recommendations

In light of our findings, we propose the following comprehensive recommendations to the review committee:

- a. **Recognition of LGBTIQ+ people in the Multicultural Framework:** We strongly urge the inclusion of explicit recognition of LGBTIQ+ forcibly displaced people within

⁷ Migration Council of Australia and FDPN. (2020). Gender Responsive Settlement. Broader Learnings from LGBTIQ+ Refugees. Canberra. <https://fdpn964079271.files.wordpress.com/2021/07/lgbtiq-refugees-report-v2-mob.pdf> ; MYAN. (2023) Counting us in. MYAN report on the settlement experiences of LGBTIQ+ refugee and asylum seeker young adults. Melbourne. https://myan.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/myan_lgbtqi_report.pdf ; Noto, O., Leonard, W, Mitchell, A. (2014). "Nothing for them": understanding the support needs of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) young people from refugee and newly arrived backgrounds. Retrieved from Australian Research Centre in sex, health and society; Mejia-Canales, D., & Leonard, W. (2016). Something for them: Meeting the support needs of same sex attracted, sex and gender diverse (SSASGD) young people who are recently arrived, refugees or asylum seekers. Retrieved from Australian Research Centre in sex, health and society.

the Multicultural Framework to address their unique needs comprehensively. This also aligns to the commitments towards achieving a cohesive multicultural society.

- b. Specific Inclusion of LGBTIQ+ Issues in Migration and Multicultural Policy:** It is vital to ensure that LGBTIQ+ issues are explicitly integrated into migration and multicultural policies, emphasising their intersectional experiences.
- c. Funding for LGBTIQ+ Refugee-Led Organisations:** We recommend allocating funding to support and empower LGBTIQ+ refugee-led organisations. These organisations play a pivotal role in providing culturally sensitive and relevant assistance. At present most of the existing LGBTIQ+ refugee-led organisations are not funded yet they fill the gaps left by the lack of formal settlement support.
- d. Mandated Training on LGBTIQQ for Settlement Services:** We propose the implementation of mandatory training on LGBTIQQ issues for all settlement service providers through the government funding contracts. Such training will enhance their cultural competence and inclusivity. LGBTIQ+ refugee-led organisations are best positioned to offer this training.

Conclusion

We firmly believe that implementing these recommendations will help address systemic barriers and promote the full inclusion of LGBTIQ+ forcibly displaced people in Australian society. By recognising the unique challenges they face and taking proactive steps to address them, we can work together to create a more inclusive, diverse, and equitable Australia.

We express our gratitude for considering our comprehensive submission and eagerly await the government's commitment to fostering a more inclusive and diverse Australia.

Sincerely,

Renee Dixson

Chair

Forcibly Displaced People Network