

Pride in Southern

Every person in our community should have easy access to health care that is welcoming, respectful, and safe — care that meets their unique needs and improves their physical and mental wellbeing.

Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex and queer people don't always experience this.

Many LGBTIQ+ people in New South Wales tell stories of negative experiences when they seek care — stories of being unwelcome, disrespected, excluded, or fearful of being themselves. Others talk of being treated by someone that didn't have the right understanding of their health needs. This means many will delay or avoid seeking care. Some LGBTIQ+ people are completely unable to reach life-altering advice or services.

Together, these problems mean that **our LGBTIQ+ family, friends and neighbours tend to be in poorer health than most others.**

This can be changed — Southern can grow to provide care that is safe, tailored, and within reach for all LGBTIQ+ people in our community.

We can create environments that are welcoming, respectful, and free from presumptions. We can support our staff to learn about the things that are important to LGBTIQ+ people. We can earn trust with stronger privacy and data collection systems. We can be more proactive in providing care that goes beyond immediate health needs, and we can clear a path for anyone struggling to find the right help.

Southern's purpose is to *'improve the health and wellbeing of the community we serve'*. Acknowledging and removing the barriers faced by lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex and queer people will allow us to fulfil this purpose.



Supporting our LGBTIQ+ consumers.

Background

Rainbow communities are widely known for their vibrance, authenticity, diversity, and acceptance. LGBTIQ+ people have also been at the forefront of progressive change for generations, advocating for a more diverse and inclusive society.

Statistical information is critically limited, but early research suggests that between 3-4% of the population identifies as gay, lesbian, or bisexual, approximately 1% of people identify as transgender, and an estimated 1.7% of live births are people with an intersex variation. Data suggests that fewer LGBTIQ+ people live in rural and regional areas than in inner cities and suburbs.

Considering Southern's population of over 200,000 people, we can expect to provide services to approximately 12,000 LGBTIQ+ people spread across several hundred kilometers.

LGBTIQ+ people have many of the same needs and expectations of the health system as the broader population, accessing a range of treatment and preventative services across the lifespan. LGBTIQ+ people also have unique and distinct health needs, and the available data points to clear disparities and poorer health outcomes for LGBTIQ+ people compared to the general population.

In addition, LGBTIQ+ people in NSW self-report lower levels of health and wellbeing, are at higher risk of mental and emotional distress, are more vulnerable to violence, abuse and neglect, and at greater risk of harmful use of alcohol and other drugs.

Importantly, LGBTIQ+ people are not a homogenous group. Each group represented in the acronym has health needs that are unique from the general population, and from other LGBTIQ+ people.

57%

of LGBTIQ+ people nationally experience high or very high levels of psychological distress, compared to 13% of the general population.

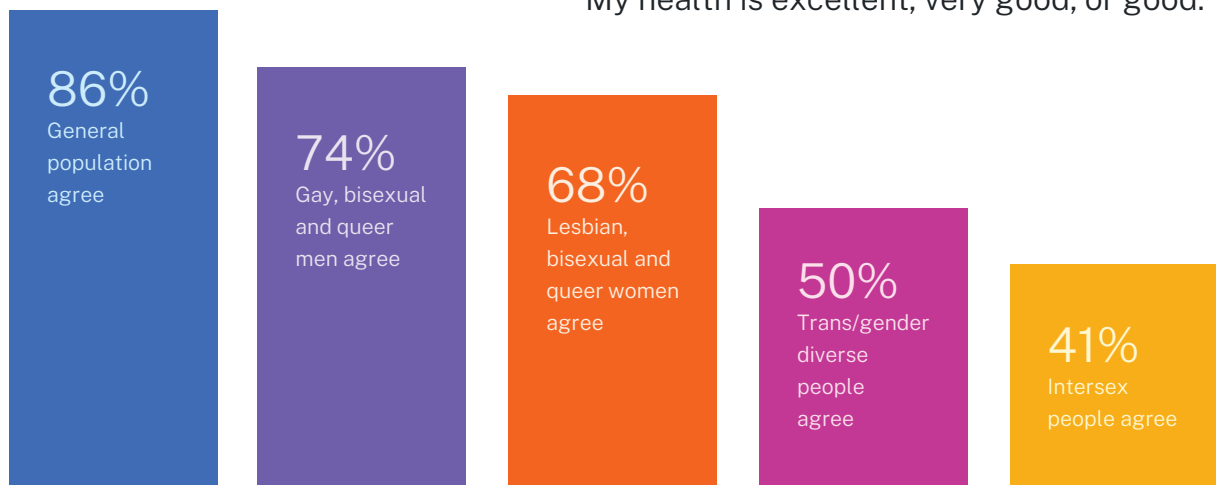
30%

of lesbians and bisexual people, and 20% of gay men have ever attempted suicide, compared to 3% of the general population.

38%

of LGBTQ people report ever feeling abused by a family member.

“My health is excellent, very good, or good.”



Health System Barriers for LGBTIQ+ People

Southern NSW Local Health District acknowledges the disparities in health outcomes between LGBTIQ+ people in NSW and the general population. We are committed to improving the health LGBTIQ+ people by addressing the health system barriers, systemic issues, and underlying causes that manifest as poor health outcomes.

Southern identifies several health system barriers that can be understood in three broad concepts:

1 LGBTIQ+ people don't always feel safe seeking health care.

2 LGBTIQ+ people don't always get the right help.

3 LGBTIQ+ people can't always access the services they need.

LGBTIQ+ people don't always feel safe seeking health care.

This stems from negative experiences, or fear of negative experiences, when interacting with health services. LGBTIQ+ people may have experienced discrimination, abuse, harassment, have been refused help, or have been stigmatised. Some people may have had information about their gender or sexuality shared without their knowledge or consent, outing them to their family or others.

LGBTIQ+ people may delay or defer care if they don't feel safe, included, and welcome. They look for signs that a service is explicitly welcoming, where they are not just accepted or tolerated.

To address this barrier, Southern must develop a strong track record of positive, safe experiences and earn the trust of LGBTIQ+ people in our community.

75%

of LGBTIQ+ people are more likely to use a health service if it has been accredited as LGBTIQ-inclusive.

LGBTIQ+ people don't always get the right help.

Care that presumes a person is straight and cisgender, or environments where an individual is not safe to disclose their gender, sexuality or intersex status, can result in interventions that fail to meet the unique experiences and needs of LGBTIQ+ individuals. This can have a negative impact on health and wellbeing. Some people, such as those with intersex variations, have been left worse-off by the health system. There is a need for Southern staff to have a greater knowledge and awareness of the health needs and social determinants of health of LGBTIQ+ people.

Hetero-normative systems also fail to support LGBTIQ+ people beyond their immediate care needs. They are vulnerable to poorer health outcomes, and our systems, policies and pathways fail to recognise these vulnerabilities and connect LGBTIQ+ people with support beyond their immediate and obvious needs.

Responsive healthcare may involve referring LGBTIQ+ people to additional services and supports when required, including physical and mental health services, and social services. It is important that the healthcare needs of each individual are considered over the entirety of their lifespan, not purely in terms of their current symptoms and treatment or life stage.

Southern must identify and address these missed opportunities with proactive and preventative care that meets the broader health and wellbeing needs of LGBTIQ+ people.

80%

of people with an intersex variation have had to educate their health service provider to have their needs met.

LGBTIQ+ people can't always access the services they need.

There are limited pathways and services for anyone wishing to access gender-affirming care in NSW. Trans, gender-diverse and intersex people seeking care are hampered by a health system that does not understand, prioritise or support their needs. Care is often physically and financially out of reach. This barrier is felt more acutely in rural and regional areas like Southern, where the only options for care are often several hundred kilometres away.

62%

of transgender people do not feel accepted when accessing a health service or support service.

Work is needed to map local services and develop pathways for people that wish to take steps to affirm their gender.

Additional Barriers

In addition to the health system barriers, there are several other factors that impact the health outcomes of LGBTIQ+ people. These barriers are beyond the control of the health system to address, but must be considered when planning and delivering care.

Population Density

Delivering health services to a small, spread-out population is a challenge for Southern. Long distances between facilities and limited public transport options make it difficult to access urgent care quickly, and can make regular appointments burdensome. Rural and regional areas also tend to have limited access to specialist health services.

Southern's LGBTIQ+ population is exceptionally low density, increasing access challenges.

Additionally, local community groups and support services that are common in metropolitan areas, such as social groups and safe spaces, are limited in Southern, resulting in a reduced social safety net for LGBTIQ+ people.

Southern's population blooms significantly during the winter snow season and summer holiday season. It is critical that LGBTIQ+ visitors from metropolitan areas experience the same safe and positive experiences of care as they would in metro health services.

Social Attitudes

Using the AEC's map of Marriage Law Postal Survey results, general support for LGBTIQ+ equality is indicated in Southern's three Federal Election Divisions of Gilmore, Hume, and Eden-Monaro. Between 58.6-64.9% of voters supported the marriage equality plebiscite with a "yes" vote.

However, rural and regional areas have traditionally been culturally unsafe for minorities. LGBTIQ+ people from regional, rural and remote areas report lower feelings of acceptance in many family and social settings compared to their metro counterparts.

LGBTIQ+ people living in Southern may not feel comfortable to be their true selves and may feel unsafe seeking care or disclosing their gender or sexual identity, resulting in isolation and increased vulnerability.

70%

of LGBTIQ+ people in regional cities and towns report they do not feel accepted at local social/community events.

Intersectionality

Intersectionality recognises that an individual's health is shaped by multi-dimensional and overlapping factors. These include gender, sexuality, intersex variation, as well as other social determinants such as race, culture, language, religion, age, disability, education, income, geographic location, housing status, immigration status, and disease status.

LGBTIQ+ people at the intersection of other priority populations often experience compounding stigma and discrimination. This may impact their mental wellbeing, and may influence their choice to disclose their gender/sexual identity or access certain services (such as HIV screening and sexual health services).

LGBTIQ+ people at the intersection of other minority groups are more vulnerable to poor health outcomes. Service providers must understand the impact of intersectionality to provide safe, effective and appropriate care.

54%

of LGBTIQ+ people from a multicultural background do not feel accepted by family members.

33%

of lesbian, gay and transgender people have experienced homelessness, compared to 13% of heterosexual people.

In Summary

These barriers are significant determinants of poor health outcomes for LGBTIQ+ people. A clear understanding of the problem highlights the opportunities for improvements and the need for Southern's commitment to improve the way we care for LGBTIQ+ people in our community.

Supporting our LGBTIQ+ workforce.

Workplace Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Belonging.

All Southern staff should feel safe, included and comfortable to bring their whole self to work.

64%
of lesbians

Efforts to improve health outcomes for LGBTIQ+ people in our community requires that LGBTIQ+ diversity, equity, inclusion and belonging are a workforce priority.

70%
of gay people

Diversity

Celebrating the richness of differences among individuals, such as race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, abilities, and more.

Equity

A commitment to ensuring fairness and justice in the processes, practices, and distribution of resources in the workplace.

54%
of bisexual people

49%
of transgender people

Inclusion

Creating an environment where everyone feels welcomed, respected, and supported, and enabled to contribute fully to our mission.

Belonging

Speaks to the feeling of acceptance and connection, where every individual can bring their authentic selves to work without fear of discrimination or exclusion.

43%
of non-binary people

... feel accepted at work.

Despite strides toward equality, LGBTIQ+ people can still face workplace challenges.

Discrimination, microaggressions, lack of inclusive policies, and unconscious bias pose hurdles for LGBTIQ+ individuals. Fear of being authentic at work due to potential stigma or career repercussions can lead people to 'self-edit' and hide their true self, impacting mental health and overall job satisfaction.

These challenges impede productivity, hinder talent retention, and limit the diverse perspectives crucial for innovation and excellence.

Southern strives to be a workplace where diversity is celebrated, equity is non-negotiable, inclusion is embedded in our culture, and belonging is assured. We envision a culture that fosters an environment of mutual respect, understanding, and support for all individuals, irrespective of sexual orientation, intersex status, gender identity, or expression — regardless of whether a person publicly identifies as LGBTIQ+ or not.

Ultimately, this contributes to safe, effective care.

Southern's People Strategy 2024-2026 identifies four strategic workforce objectives and provides detail about the District's diversity, equity, inclusion and belonging efforts. Pride in Southern is a critical initiative to deliver these outcomes for LGBTIQ+ staff.

Our Pride in Southern Promise

To our consumers

Care that is safe, tailored and within reach for all LGBTIQ+ people in our community.

To our staff

A workplace where LGBTIQ+ staff are safe, included, and comfortable to bring their whole self.

Our promise to our LGBTIQ+ consumers

Care that is safe.

Southern will develop a strong track record of positive, safe experiences of care to earn the trust of LGBTIQ+ people in our community by:

Creating inclusive and explicitly welcoming environments.

Ensure that LGBTIQ+ people can easily and confidently access Southern's services because our physical and virtual environments, including information, structures, resources, and processes, are explicitly welcoming and inclusive.

Improving staff cultural competence.

Set the expectation and support our staff with systems, resources and education to identify, minimise, and mitigate risks to cultural safety for LGBTIQ+ people.

Guaranteeing safe disclosure.

Ensure that LGBTIQ+ people feel safe to volunteer personal information, including sexual orientation, gender identity, and/or intersex status, because they know their information will be treated respectfully and systems are in place to ensure their privacy.

Care that is tailored.

Southern will eliminate assumptions and grow to better understand the unique health needs of LGBTIQ+ people, addressing missed opportunities for proactive and preventative support by:

Providing comprehensive education.

Support staff to understand their responsibilities to LGBTIQ+ service users and provide education to enable LGBTIQ-inclusive service delivery.

Improving data collection systems.

Prioritise data capture on sexuality, gender, and intersex variations to measure how needs vary across the District and ensure accurate LGBTIQ+ representation in service access, planning and messaging.

Integrating proactive health and wellbeing supports.

Create integrated care pathways and facilitate referrals, proactively addressing missed opportunities to meet the broader health and wellbeing needs of the LGBTIQ+ community.

Care that is within reach.

Southern will clear the way and put gender affirming care within reach for gender-diverse people by:

Mapping services and developing pathways.

Taking action to address the lack of pathways and services for gender-affirming care in NSW by mapping local services and developing accessible pathways to overcome the physical and financial barriers that hinder gender-diverse individuals from seeking the care they need.

Our promise to our LGBTIQ+ staff

Staff are safe.

Southern will ensure the cultural and psychosocial safety of LGBTIQ+ staff by:

Develop LGBTIQ+ education and training.

Our mandatory education pathways will deliver learning outcomes that improve staff cultural competency.

Addressing LGBTIQ+ psychosocial risks.

Upholding our workplace health and safety responsibilities by recognising that LGBTIQ+ staff are at risk of adverse psychosocial outcomes.

Formalising governance processes.

Creating a staff Pride network and developing reporting structures ensures LGBTIQ+ staff have a voice and are recognised as subject matter experts.

Staff are included.

Southern will create a workplace where all staff are represented and included by:

Improving visible representation.

Southern's diverse workforce is more accurately represented in all communications, assuring consumers and staff that Southern is committed to inclusion.

Implementing inclusive language.

Using correct terminology and inclusive language in policies and materials promotes diversity, equity, and a sense of belonging among all individuals, fostering a more respectful and welcoming culture.

Staff can bring their whole self.

Southern will create a workplace environment where all staff are supported with the tools and resources to comfortably bring their full expression of self to work by:

Enabling voluntary self-identification.

Adjusting systems to allow LGBTIQ+ staff to voluntarily self-identify, increasing visibility and enabling mapping and delivery of supports.

Developing wellbeing tools and resources.

Acknowledging the unique experiences and needs of LGBTIQ+ staff by providing the tools for everyone to be their very best at work.

Creating systems for feedback and escalation.

Avenues to request support and report inappropriate workplace behaviours drives cultural change and supports staff to give people confidence to bring their full self to work.

Principles of Pride

Transformational change to better meet the needs of LGBTIQ+ people in Southern cannot be achieved in isolation. Southern will achieve its commitments by relying on:

Strategic planning and capability improvement.

Embedding LGBTIQ-inclusive practice across all systems and continuously seeking opportunities for improvements.

Trusted partnerships with local LGBTIQ+ community organisations and groups.

Identifying and developing professional partnerships with local groups will foster collaboration and amplify the voices of LGBTIQ+ staff and consumers.

Consumer participation.

LGBTIQ+ service users will be consulted about, and participate in the planning, development, and review of services. Focus will be given to consumers at the intersection of other minority groups and priority populations, such as LGBTIQ+ people who are Aboriginal, who have a disability, and older persons.

Visibility and celebration.

Supportive messaging endorsed by Southern's leadership will foster a sense of acceptance, challenge stigma, and empower staff and consumers to authentically express their identities, contributing to a more inclusive and supportive service.

Rainbow Tick Accreditation

Rainbow Tick is a quality framework that helps health services show that they are safe, inclusive and affirming services and employers for the LGBTIQ community. The six Rainbow Tick standards are designed to build lasting LGBTIQ inclusion.

Southern endeavours to achieve Rainbow Tick across all sites and services in the District.

The outcomes identified in this document have been developed to align with and include the requirements of the six Rainbow Tick accreditation standards. Fulfilment of the Pride in Southern Promise is synonymous with achieving Rainbow Tick accreditation.

More information about Rainbow Tick can be found on the [Rainbow Health Australia website](#).



Alignment and Accountabilities

Southern is accountable to several strategies, principles and values that together form the vision and direction set by NSW Health. Southern also has its own mission, operational plans and cultural priorities. The outcomes identified in this document are aligned with to the broader work in the District and the state.

NSW Health strategic accountabilities

Future Health Strategy 2022-2032

NSW Regional Health Strategic Plan 2022-2032

NSW LGBTIQ+ Health Strategy 2022-2027

Southern strategic accountabilities

Strategy 2026

People Strategy 2024-2026

Rainbow Tick

Culture and values accountabilities

NSW Health CORE Values

Elevating the Human Experience

Elevate

Care and Kindness Charter

Promise to consumers

NSW Health Strategic Accountabilities

		Pride in Southern — promise to consumers							
		Safe			Tailored			Within Reach	
		Create inclusive and explicitly welcoming environments	Improve staff cultural competence	Guarantee safe disclosure	Provide comprehensive education	Improve data collection systems	Integrate proactive health and wellbeing supports	Map services and develop pathways	
NSW Health Strategic Accountabilities	Future Health Strategy	Patients and carers have positive experiences and outcomes that matter	•		•			•	•
		Safe care is delivered across all settings	•	•	•	•			
		People are healthy and well				•		•	•
		Our staff are engaged and well supported		•		•			
		Research and innovation, and digital advances inform service delivery					•		
		The health system is managed sustainably		•		•			
	NSW Regional Health Strategic Plan	Priority 1: strengthen the regional health workforce		•	•	•			
		Priority 2: enable better access to safe, high quality and timely health services						•	•
		Priority 3: keep people healthy and well through prevention, early intervention and education			•	•		•	
		Priority 4: keep communities informed, build engagement, and seek feedback	•	•	•		•		•
		Priority 5: expand integration of primary, community and hospital care					•	•	•
		Priority 6: harness and evaluate innovation to support a sustainable health system				•	•		
	NSW LGBTIQ+ Health Strategy	Strategy 1: deliver high quality, safe, inclusive and responsive healthcare	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
		Strategy 2: respond to the health needs of transgender and gender-diverse people in NSW	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
		Strategy 3: respond to the health needs of intersex people in NSW	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
		Strategy 4: capture data on sexuality, gender and intersex variations at the point of care and population level					•		



Promise to consumers

SNSWLHD Strategic Accountabilities

		Pride in Southern						
		Safe			Tailored			Within Reach
		Create inclusive and explicitly welcoming environments	Improve staff cultural competence	Guarantee safe disclosure	Provide comprehensive education	Improve data collection systems	Integrate proactive health and wellbeing supports	Map services and develop pathways
SNSWLHD Strategic Accountabilities	Strategy 2026	Strategic priority 1: elevating the human experience	•	•	•	•	•	
		Strategic priority 2: keeping people healthy and well				•	•	•
		Strategic priority 3: delivering safe care in all settings	•	•	•	•		•
		Strategic priority 4: supporting our people	•	•		•		
	Rainbow Tick	Standard 1: organisational capability	•	•	•	•		•
		Standard 2: workforce development		•		•		
		Standard 3: consumer participation	•	•	•	•	•	•
		Standard 4: a welcoming and accessible organisation	•	•	•			
		Standard 5: Disclosure and documentation			•	•	•	
		Standard 6: culturally safe and acceptable services	•	•	•	•	•	

Promise to consumers

Culture and Values Accountabilities

		Pride in Southern							
		Safe			Tailored			Within Reach	
		Create inclusive and explicitly welcoming environments	Improve staff cultural competence	Guarantee safe disclosure	Provide comprehensive education	Improve data collection systems	Integrate proactive health and wellbeing supports	Map services and develop pathways	
Culture and Values Accountabilities	CORE Values	Collaboration		•		•	•	•	•
		Openness	•	•	•		•		•
		Respect	•	•	•		•		
		Empowerment		•	•	•	•	•	•
	Elevate	Principle 1: commit to excellence	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
		Principle 2: measure the important things					•		•
		Principle 3: build a culture around service	•	•				•	•
		Principle 4: create and develop great leaders		•		•			
		Principle 5: focus on employee engagement	•	•					
		Principle 6: build individual accountability		•	•	•			
		Principle 7: align behaviours with goals and values	•	•	•		•	•	
		Principle 8: communicate at all levels	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
		Principle 9: recognise and reward success							
	Elevating the Human Experience	Leadership, accountability and governance		•	•				
		Culture and staff experience	•	•	•				
		Collaborative partnerships				•		•	•
		Innovation and technology				•	•		
		Information and communication				•	•		
		Measurement, feedback and response					•		
		Environment and hospitality	•	•	•				
	Care and Kindness	Consistently providing person-centred care	•	•	•	•			
		Showing kindness and respect every day	•	•	•				
		Advocating for our patients			•			•	•
		Demonstrating accountability and integrity		•	•	•	•		

Promise to staff

SNSWLHD Strategic Accountabilities

		Pride in Southern								
		Safe			Included		Whole self			
		Develop LGBTIQ+ education and training	Address LGBTIQ+ psychosocial risks	Formalise governance processes	Improve visible representation	Implement inclusive language	Enable voluntary self-identification	Develop wellbeing tools and resources	Create systems for feedback and escalation	
People Strategy 2024-2026	Objective 1: attract great talent and improve recruitment and onboarding				•	•	•			
	Objective 2: optimise how we work and communicate		•	•	•	•		•		•
	Objective 3: grow a learning culture	•								
	Objective 4: foster an environment where people can be at their best	•	•	•			•	•		•

Promise to staff

Culture and Values Accountabilities

		Pride in Southern								
		Safe			Included		Whole self			
		Develop LGBTIQ+ education and training	Address LGBTIQ+ psychosocial risks	Formalise governance processes	Improve visible representation	Implement inclusive language	Enable voluntary self-identification	Develop wellbeing tools and resources	Create systems for feedback and escalation	
Culture and Values Accountabilities	CORE Values	Collaboration	•		•		•		•	•
		Openness		•		•		•	•	•
		Respect	•	•			•	•	•	•
		Empowerment	•		•			•		•
	Elevate	Principle 1: commit to excellence	•	•	•		•			•
		Principle 2: measure the important things		•				•		
		Principle 3: build a culture around service		•						•
		Principle 4: create and develop great leaders	•							
		Principle 5: focus on employee engagement	•	•		•		•	•	•
		Principle 6: build individual accountability		•	•					•
		Principle 7: align behaviours with goals and values	•	•	•	•	•			•
		Principle 8: communicate at all levels			•	•	•			
		Principle 9: recognise and reward success				•				

Terminology

Language and terminology are important to LGBTIQ+ people, supporting recognition, trust and safety. Terminology to describe bodies, gender and sexualities also changes over time.

Readers of this strategy should first familiarise themselves with terms and definitions presented in the [NSW LGBTIQ+ Health Strategy 2022-2027](#), which has been adopted for the purposes of this strategy and are subject to updates as good practice evolves.

It is important that all NSW Health organisations and staff ensure language and terminology is correctly used in documentation and health service delivery. If unsure, please seek expert advice and guidance.

Recommended Reading

The Pride in Southern Promise synthesises research data from several sources, and is informed by NSW Health's strategic priorities. Further reading is recommended to support a robust understanding of this document.

[NSW LGBTIQ+ Health Strategy 2022-2027](#)

Provides direction to all NSW Health organisations and staff, so that collectively we can deliver the best care to LGBTIQ+ people and work with them to achieve optimal health and wellbeing. This includes the health, wellbeing and safety of our health staff who are LGBTIQ+.



[NSW LGBTIQ+ Health Strategy 2022-2027 Summary of Evidence](#)

This Summary of Evidence complements the Strategy and presents insights about the health needs, service access requirements and experiences of LGBTIQ+ people when engaging with healthcare in NSW.



[Private Lives 3](#)

Australia's largest national survey of the health and wellbeing of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex and queer (LGBTIQ) people to date, providing vital information to better understand and support the health and wellbeing of LGBTIQ people in Australia.



Endorsement

When focus is given to marginalised and vulnerable groups, everyone reaps the benefits. By addressing the barriers faced by LGBTIQ+ people, we are able to create lasting change to our systems and services. This improves care for everyone in our community, and creates a safe and inclusive environment for all our staff.

We have a vision to be a recognised leader in rural healthcare. Pride in Southern is one of the many ways we achieve this vision. Our journey of cultural change will be long and challenging, but our shared commitment to excellence in care will guide us.

It is a privilege and delight to endorse this Pride in Southern Promise.



Margaret Bennett

Margaret Bennett
Chief Executive

Elizabeth Hoskins

Elizabeth Hoskins
Board Chair



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