

16th August 2024

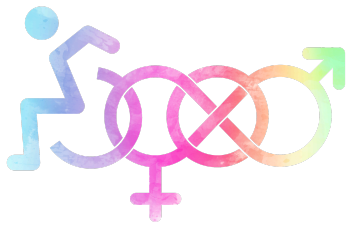
We are ColourFull Abilities, we provide purposeful and intersectional support to LGBTQIA+ (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Intersex, Asexual and more) people living with disabilities on unceded Kurna and Peramangk lands. We have over 60 individuals accessing our services as participants, and over 40 employees providing or managing those services, many of whom have been drawn to working with us through lived experience of being a part of LGBTQIA+ and/or disability communities. Our services include individual support (both in the home and supporting access to community), group programs, arts therapy, and we also provide Inclusivity Training addressing the intersection of LGBTQIA+ and disability identities to disability professionals and members of the general public who want to learn more.

Without yet having an opportunity to reach out to our small ColourFull Abilities community to share information regarding the Commission, we hope to share generalised information and learnings in our submission. Participants and employees of ColourFull Abilities have shared with us experiences of domestic, family and sexual violence, and we feel that we owe it to them to put an intersectional LGBTQIA+ and disability focused lens over at least some of the questions from the Commission's issues paper.

ColourFull Abilities staff are privileged to provide service to and support the participants who engage with us, allowing us to be privy to some of the more vulnerable aspects of their lives. We are able to develop relationships with these participants, create an image of their everyday, true, contented selves, and thus are able to identify behaviour which is out of the ordinary, or how their strong emotions portray themselves. We case note this information, and when an incident occurs in the presence of staff, or if our staff have cause for concern, we may reach out to other informal or formal supports the participant may have (so long as we have prior consent); these supports could be family members, Support Coordinators or other health/mental health professionals. **(answering issues paper question 4)**

Providing we have the capacity for it, having opportunities for further intersectional (non-heteronormative) training for our staff to help better identify instances of abuse and subsequently report them is something we believe is vital to combating domestic, sexual and family violence in our ColourFull Abilities community. It is important that this Commission consider funding the creation of and/or the implementation of culturally specific training available to service providers who work directly with individuals who are or at risk of being victim-survivors and/or perpetrators of domestic, family and sexual violence. LGBTQIA+ specific training in this area is hosted by the Catalyst Foundation, as part of the *Toward A Safe Place* project, supported by the South Australian Government Attorney-General's Department. **(3, 8, 9)**

We believe it is important that most, if not all interventions address the root causes. These could look like comprehensive risk assessments that consider mental health and past trauma, access to support services, and behavioural change programs. Protective orders and safety planning



should be part of the response, but so should community-based support and ongoing monitoring. We believe the focus needs to be on real, long-term solutions. **(6)**

What we understand from our small community, is that fear of retaliation and dependence on the perpetrator can trap victim-survivors in cycles of harm. Social isolation, distrust in authorities, and the stigma of abuse also deter victim-survivors from seeking help. Additionally, the stigma of an individual's disability/neurodivergency may lead them to feel that they wouldn't be heard. These factors create a difficult environment for victim-survivors and perpetrators to access the support they need, especially when their identities intersect with marginalised and/or vulnerable community identities (such as the intersection we directly support). Simplified reporting systems, both for services/mandated reporters and for victim-survivors/the community members who surround them, could alleviate some barriers to folks accessing support. **(7)**

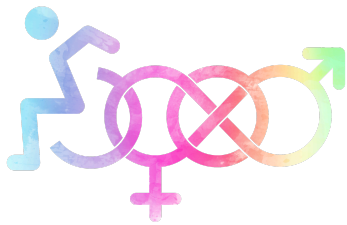
Through our work, we have identified that access to safe alternative accommodation is one of the key ways in which a victim-survivor can feel empowered to break the cycle of abuse and harm. This can be particularly difficult for members of LGBTQIA+ communities as well as, or intersectionally for, people with disabilities.

For the former, oftentimes crisis housing support is primarily set up for and mainly populated by women from heteronormative abuse cycles. These are important services, but they do not cater for genderqueer/gender non-conformant/non-binary individuals, as well as trans men or women; all of who are at risk of being affected by additional stigmas and discrimination, directly or indirectly from service providers (who don't always know how to provide safe spaces for them) and/or from the other service users (who may unintentionally cause harm). Furthermore, victim-survivors from same-sex attracted relationships are at risk of not being fully affirmed in these heteronormative environments.

As for the latter, (people with disabilities), if accessibility needs are not met, there may be ramifications for other service users. For example, many of the participants we work with have autism as or as one of their diagnoses on their NDIS Plan. Some of these folks with higher support needs may also struggle to regulate their emotions, leading to aggressive (perceived or actual) behaviour which could put themselves or others at risk, or strong behaviours/responses to the change in stimuli which could put them at risk of feeling that the only way to soothe is to return to the environment they know (i.e. back to the cycle of abuse). **(13)**

Take a moment to then imagine what crisis options are available to, for instance, a non-binary individual who struggles to regulate their emotions when away from their space and belongings, who knows they need support and to find safe housing, but the only supports available are heteronormative spaces for women victim-survivors, without specialist understandings of how to support an autistic non-binary person.

Other universal key supports for all victim-survivors offer counselling and therapeutic support, as well as providing options and avenues for victim-survivors to seek protection or distance from their perpetrator. **(13)**



We thank you for taking the time to consider our submission, and to consider intersectionality in your approach. It is important to us and to our small ColourFull Abilities community, as well as the wider community that there exists diverse pathways for victim-survivors and perpetrators to find support and community, to address the underlying causes, and that these diverse pathways give options for culturally safe and affirming support. With this, cycles of abuse and harm are more likely to break and stay broken, as all individuals affected will be given spaces to heal and be empowered to grow.

With the support of the Commission, ColourFull Abilities would be available to provide further, in-depth insight, including but not limited to, sharing further opportunities for lived experience voices to be heard.

Warm regards,

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