

Position Statement: Delivering appropriate care to young LGBTIQ+ people affected by cancer

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The Victorian and Tasmanian Youth Cancer Action Board (YCAB) recognises the discrimination experienced against members of many minority groups within Australian society. Individuals who identify as members of the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex and Queer (LGBTIQ+) communities often experience prejudice and discrimination within their homes, schools, workplaces and health care environments. Each year in Australia over 1100 young people aged 15 to 25 years are diagnosed with cancer^{1,2}. While a diagnosis of cancer can be confronting at any age, young people are particularly challenged as the timing of ill health coincides with critical changes related to social, emotional and neurocognitive development³. For young people experiencing cancer during this time in life, disruption to the normal developmental trajectory can have significant impacts on physical growth, fertility and body image; identity, self-esteem, mental health and distress; family, peer and partner relationships; school and career plans; life perspectives and future prospects for adulthood⁴⁻¹⁰.

For young people who identify as LGBTIQ+ there are additional challenges, barriers and stigma experienced in the health environment which can result in poorer service engagement and health outcomes, including an avoidance of medical services¹¹. These include exposure to unwelcoming physical environments, gaps in staff knowledge and understandings and culturally unsafe systems including inadequate management of disclosure and confidentiality¹²⁻¹⁶.

The Victorian and Tasmanian Youth Cancer Action Board's (YCAB) Position:

Established in 2010, YCAB comprises a diverse group of young people, who have each had an experience of cancer between the ages of 15 and 25 years. As a Board, our mission is to ensure that every young person affected by cancer has access to youth-friendly, equitable, quality cancer care, including those who identify as LGBTIQ+ treated in Victorian and Tasmanian cancer services.

As a Board, we support:

- Inclusive, equitable, welcoming and responsive care of young LGBTIQ+ people with cancer, ensuring they receive support that is free from all forms of discrimination
- Recognition that the LGBTIQ+ population are not a homogenous group and as such, require different approaches to meet the varying and unique needs of each individual and their family

Accordingly, as a Board we advocate for:

- Cancer services for young people which actively consider and address sexual orientation and gender identity issues in service planning, policy development and delivery
- The employment of staff who are sensitive to the needs of LGBTIQ+ young people with cancer and competent in delivering appropriate care
- Evidence informed service improvements and initiatives to deliver better understanding and visibility of the experiences and care needs of LGBTIQ+ young people with cancer

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