

# STATEMENT



19 September 2016

## CARERSACT RESPONSE TO MARRIAGE PLEBISCITE ANNOUNCEMENT

Following the Turnbull Government's announcement of their marriage plebiscite bill in Parliament, Carers ACT is concerned about the harmful impact a public debate and plebiscite on same-sex marriage will have on the LGBTI Carers and loved ones of our community.

CarersACT defends the rights of all to live a life free of discrimination and harassment and this plebiscite which has been created and promoted by declared anti marriage equality politicians is not in the best interests of some of the most vulnerable and marginalized members of our community. Most importantly the plebiscite is not supported by the majority of LGBTI people and the broader Australian community, therefore, CarersACT cannot, in line with our values, support the plebiscite.

As the peak body for Carers across the ACT, Carers ACT would like to extend to all Carers of LGBTI people and LGBTI Carers themselves, our support during this time. We are aware that the public discussions and commentary around the issue of a same-sex marriage plebiscite has already created division and distress for members of the LGBTI community and their families.

This is a grave concern to us when the rate of suicide among LGBTI people is already significantly higher than the national average (1). CarersACT encourages anyone affected by these recent events to reach out to the appropriate services within Canberra.

- Lifeline: **13 11 14**
- Beyond Blue: **<https://www.beyondblue.org.au/get-support/get-immediate-support>**
- AIDS Action Council:  
**<http://aidsaction.org.au/aids-action-council-services/lgbti-community-development.html>**
- Qwire web chat: **[www.qlife.org.au](http://www.qlife.org.au)**
- YWCA A-Z support group (for gender diverse youth):  
**<https://ywca-canberra.org.au/blog/2016/01/a-z-inclusivity-in-practice/>**
- If you have experienced assault or violence call your local Police station and ask to speak to the Gay Liaison Officer. For emergency assistance - **000**
- If you are concerned about the suicide risk of yourself or that of someone else, please call the Crisis and Assessment Team: **(02) 6205 1065 or 1800 629 354**

If you are an LGBTI Carer or you support a LGBTI person who has a disability, chronic or mental illness, age related disability, drug or alcohol problem, greater emotional distress can impact your caring relationship. You can call our Carer Advisory Line on **1800 242 636** for support.

(1) [http://lgbtihealth.org.au/sites/default/files/Biefing\\_Paper\\_FINAL\\_19\\_Aug\\_2-11.pdf](http://lgbtihealth.org.au/sites/default/files/Biefing_Paper_FINAL_19_Aug_2-11.pdf)

CarersACT respects diversity of all kinds and in order to help facilitate respectful communication CarersACT would like to provide the following definitions of the acronym LGBTI, while recognizing the acronym's innate limitations in describing the diversity of the human experience. We acknowledge the significance of terminology and that the use of inappropriate terminology can be disempowering. We also acknowledge that terminology is contested. CarersACT understands that LGBTI people form a diverse group and sexuality or sex or gender identity is only one aspect of a person's total identity

- 'L' stands for Lesbian and describes a female same sex sexual attraction
- 'G' stands for Gay and describes a male same sex sexual attraction. Although it can be used for any sex (e.g. gay man, gay woman, gay person), "lesbian" is sometimes the preferred term for women who are attracted to women
- 'B' stands for bi-sexual and describes a person's sexual attraction to people of their own gender and another gender
  
- 'T' stands for Transgender and has many definitions. It is frequently used as an umbrella term to refer to all people who do not identify with their assigned gender at birth or the binary gender system. It is about a person's experience of gender identity rather than a sexual orientation or biological characteristic. Gender identity is how people think of themselves and identify in terms of gender (masculine, feminine, man, woman, boy, girl). Gender identity is a psychological quality; and refers to a person's inner sense of 'who they are'
  
- 'I' stands for Intersex. Intersex is a naturally occurring difference in biological sex characteristics including chromosomes, reproductive organs, genitals and/or hormone production or receptors. Being intersex is not an illness or a 'disorder', disability, pathology or 'condition' of any sort. Intersex is just one of the many naturally occurring biological variations. It exists in humans as well as other species. Intersex is a biological difference in the same way height, weight, and hair colour are biological differences. Only a very few ways of being intersex require medical management

\*CarersACT understands that while the proposed change in the marriage laws will make provision for same sex unions it will not enable most trans and intersex people to marry their loved one without first undergoing major gender affirmation surgery in order to change their birth certificate so that they can marry as their identified gender. This surgery is cost prohibitive for the majority of people as well as generally being unavailable in Australia and has been described by the Human Rights Commission and the United Nations as a human rights violation.