Government of **Western Australia**
North Metropolitan Health Service

SARC SEXUAL ASSAULT RESOURCE CENTRE

Sexual assault and LGBTQIA+ people

Sexual assault can be a very traumatic experience. It is a common occurrence in our communities and affects people from all walks of life.

It is common for LGBTQIA+ people to experience a lack of respect and inclusion in sexual health care services.

Trans and gender diverse people are particularly affected by sexual violence, and experience sexual violence or coercion at a rate four times higher than the general population in Australia*.

Important messages for LGBTQIA+ victims of sexual violence

Everyone, regardless of their sexual orientation, gender identity, or body characteristics, has the right to be respected and safe, and to live life free of violence, coercion and harm.

Sexual assault is a crime and you have the right to report it to police if you choose to.

Everyone has the right to access health care without discrimination.

Recovery is possible. There are many things you can do to assist your recovery and there are people available to support you.

What is sexual assault?

Sexual assault happens when there isn't consent from everyone involved in sexual acts. The legal age of sexual consent in WA is **16 years**, or **18 years** if the other person is in a position of power or authority over you.

Sexual assault can involve a range of behaviours including the following.

- Image abuse (eg: sending unwanted sexual images of you)
- Touching genitals or showing genitals (eg: masturbating in front of you)
- Rape involving penetration of mouth, vagina and/or anus
- Removing a barrier (eg: a condom) without the other person's knowledge and consent
- Being filmed having sex without consent
- Being forced to watch porn

You are not legally able to consent if you were tricked, coerced, pressured, forced or threatened into a sexual act; or if you were heavily affected by drugs or alcohol, or if you were under the legal age of sexual consent.

Sex without consent is a crime.

Sex with someone under the legal age is a crime.

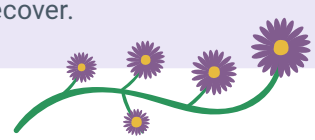
You may be feeling shame as a result of the sexual assault and be questioning your sexual identity. Remember, the act was not your fault. It was something that happened to you. You deserve to have confidence in your sexual identity.

*(The Kirby Institute, 2018).

Common impacts of sexual trauma can include things like:

- headaches
- nightmares
- confusion
- flashbacks
- loss of confidence
- difficulty concentrating
- avoiding people
- easily startled
- withdrawal
- feeling angry
- self-harming
- feeling ashamed
- anxiety
- depression
- feeling worthless
- afraid to form relationships.
- loss of interest in things

It may feel like you will never recover and feel 'normal' again. Many people who have been through a trauma feel this way. We want you to know that you are important and worthwhile, and that you can recover.



Getting help

Sexual violence can be very difficult to talk about. Finding the right people to speak with, who you can trust, and who will not judge you, is important for finding care and support.

It is important to get both your medical needs and your emotional needs met. If you have experienced a recent sexual assault, seek medical help quickly, as there can be medical issues that need immediate attention.

Some services are more LGBTQIA+ inclusive than others. When searching for services, you might want to check the service website to see if they include specific information, or if they have an inclusion policy, for LGBTQIA+ people.

If you don't feel comfortable with a worker or service, it is okay to go somewhere else until you find the right fit for you.

A 'Sensitive Practice Request' form is located on the SARC website. The form allows you to let your health worker know information that will help you to have a more positive experience at appointments (for example, your pronouns, any fears you have).

Reach out to LGBTQIA+ people. Connection with the community helps you to feel strong and to cope with challenges in life.

Stay safe, healthy, supported and connected.

Resources and services in WA

Living Proud: LGBTQIA+ Community Services of WA
Website: www.livingproud.org.au

TransFolk of WA: A peer support service for transgender people and their loved ones in Western Australia.
Website: www.transfolkofwa.org

Freedom Centre: A service offering support to young people, families and whole communities to be healthy, happy and informed about diverse sexuality, gender and sex.
Website: www.freedom.org.au

Sexual Health Quarters: An inclusive agency providing clinical sexual health services and confidential counselling.
Website: www.shq.org.au

M Clinic: A sexual health clinic providing confidential, non-judgmental services to men who have sex with men, trans people and non-binary people.
Website: www.mclinic.org.au

GRAI: A voluntary group supporting quality of life for LGBTQIA+ elders.
Website: www.grai.org.au

QLife: An anonymous, Australia-wide, LGBTQIA+ peer support and referral service for people wanting to talk about a range of issues including sexuality, identity, gender, bodies, feelings or relationships.
Website: www.qlife.org.au

The Sexual Assault Resource Centre (SARC) is a free 24-hour emergency service providing medical and counselling services for people who have experienced a recent (within 14 days) sexual assault. Counselling for any sexual assault/abuse experienced recently or in the past is also available to people of all genders aged 13 years and above. Call SARC on (08) 6458 1828 or Freecall 1800 199 888.

Sexual assault can be reported to police at your **local police station**, or by calling **131 444**, or reporting online through the **Crime Stoppers Safe2Say website** (anonymously if you prefer).

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