



QUEER Affirmative Agency Policy

Background

Drummond Street Relationship Centre has maintained a long-standing commitment to the Queer Community. These efforts which began several decades ago have positioned DSRC as an integral service provider and advocate for the recognition, rights and needs of the Queer community and their families.

As a mainstream service provider committed to “building better relationships”, we use a broad definition of family and community which represent the diversity of modern Australian life and social connections. Over 20% of DSRC’s clients are from the GLBTIQ community. This includes queer adults or families engaging with our Clinical programs regarding a range of issues including relationships, parenting, and the impact of issues such as mental illness. Our Family Promotions Unit provides community education and groups on a range of topics in relation to issues impact on parents, families, parenting counselling and groups. QueerNet is our innovative youth participation network for Queer young people. This program assertively engages and increases the number of queer youth accessing support. This includes a range of queer youth led programs including peer support, link them with their GLBTIQ community for support and mentorship, offer access to counselling and where possible promote family reconnection. In addition to direct services delivery to meet Queer Community needs, DSRC has undertaken three strategic areas of work critical to identifying and responding to the needs of the Queer community. The three areas of work therefore are:

1. **Direct Service Delivery**
2. **Queer Affirmative Agency Plan**
3. **Community Development, Outreach and Building Community Alliance**

Use of the term “Queer”:

To some people this may appear an unusual term to use. After many years of using terms such as gay and lesbian and GLBTIQ, the term *Queer* has been reclaimed by the community. In a survey of the community at Queer events this term was chosen by most as preferred term to describe the community we service. Since this time, the term has been incorporated into the organisation language, including our diversity and equity policies and program development.

Our Agency Vision:

Every person who attends our service or takes part in any of our programs will be encouraged to enjoy positive connections with their peers, their family and the wider community.

For Our Queer Community this means DSRC has clear objectives of ensuring:

1. **Harnessing the power and strengths of the Queer community to stay connected as a community and to participate and enjoy positive relationships in all areas of their lives and beyond their community.**
2. **Visibility of the Queer community and their families.**

3. Support for Queer community initiatives and voice.
4. Access to programs and services which support their family and community connections

Our Values:

Our Queer clients can be assured of receiving services that are:

- **Client Centred** DSRC's services and practice are developed and delivered on the basis of our clients' needs and aspirations.
- **Grounded in Social Justice** DSRC will provide services for the most vulnerable and resource deprived in our community. This includes families who are experiencing complex issues such as sexual abuse, mental illness, drug and alcohol abuse, and gambling and are alienated or excluded from services.
- **Committed to Diversity** DSRC's services and practice are appropriate and responsive to the diverse, complex needs and backgrounds of all families in our community.
- **Inclusive** DSRC delivers equitable services promoting evenly the needs of all family members.
- **Taking Place Within a Safe and Secure Environment** DSRC provides a physically and emotionally safe, secure and supportive environment, ensuring the privacy of all who use our services.
- **Professional** DSRC maintains professional standards of service delivery. We employ highly committed, professionally trained and qualified staff.
- **Transparent and of High Quality** DSRC ensures it delivers the highest quality of services and practice. Our work is founded on research, practice wisdom and the voices and needs of our clients.

1. Direct Service Delivery

Our Approach: Specific Services or Integrated Services?:

DSRC understands that sometimes people want to hone in on issues particular to how they identify and other times they want to tackle issues within mainstream services. Queer people can choose to access any of our generalist services such as couples counselling and groups and will feel comfortable and included at our seminars such as Parenting Teenagers. They may also choose to access specific services geared to Queer issues like the Young People's Queer counselling Program, the QueerNet Peer Support Group, The Gay Dad's Parenting Program or Lesbian Parenting Program. To have these choices is paramount.

All our clients are asked about how they identify in relation to their sexuality during the initial intake process. This is done with sensitivity and to ensure that the Queer community is not an invisible one and that Rainbow families are acknowledged and celebrated and people can be matched with the

counsellors or programs that suit their needs. It also assists us to garner data in relation to the numbers accessing the service and their presenting issues and profiles. This data has been very useful in advocating with funders including government the needs of the community along with appropriate and sensitive service responses.

The Broad aims of our direct services include:

- Provide opportunities and resources for improving their relationships in creative ways
- Increase holistic supports (parenting programs, peer support, counselling, mentoring etc)
- Increase positive connections among the Queer community and encourage them to mentor young people where possible
- Increase the profile and participation of this group in the community
- Highlight their strengths and encourage political voice
- Provide learnings to other services to better meet the needs of the Queer community

At DSRC we take a public health approach which provides support right across the spectrum of interventions beginning with:

Prevention : (eg: increasing community awareness and a commitment to inclusion in schools, community groups etc)

Early intervention: (eg: working with parents who can support their children in adolescence if these young people are concerned about their sexual identity, working with Rainbow Families to support their family stages and transitions which may be challenging)

Intervention: (eg: Working with separating Queer couples through our Family Dispute Resolution program and counselling)

Postvention/ Recovery: (eg: encouraging people who may have experienced mental health or substance abuse issues to move forward and keep an eye out for ways to prevent relapse and seek help early in the future)

Our Family Intake Program and Program and Service reviews continually examines our responses and ensures that we are providing targeted interventions across this spectrum.

2. Queer Affirmative Agency Plan

DSRC developed a Queer Affirmative Action Plan to ensure that every aspect of the agency mirrored Queer Affirmative Practice. The QAAP cover four key recommendation areas which the agency has worked towards implementing over the past 18 months. These recommendation areas included:

1. Visibility Campaign
2. Agency Governance and Mission and Operational Policies and Procedures
3. Workforce Development
4. Programs and Services

(see 1.16 Queer Affirmative Agency Plan – Programs Policy and Procedures)



3. Community Development, Outreach and Building Community Alliance

DSRC utilises a range of strategies to achieve our Queer Community objectives. The following table highlights each objective and specific strategies employed by DSRC.

The strategies are not an exhaustive list and are review both within the agency and by key stakeholders in terms of achievement and the identification of other strategies. This occurs on an annual basis.

Community Development, Outreach and Building Community Alliance

Objectives	Strategies
<p>Harnessing the power and strengths of the Queer community to stay connected as a community and to participate and enjoy positive relationships in all areas of their lives and beyond their community.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Make connections within QUEER communities to help create opportunities to break down stereotypes, and to provide and/or receive accurate community based 'culturally specific' information which will contribute significantly to building service capacity amongst status quo providers within mainstream agencies ▪ Form a strong community link to provide extended networks of knowledge and support, and convey to the QUEER community the commitment to serving and meeting the needs of QUEER person's, whilst further heightening the agency's public profile as an inclusive, diverse, and welcoming service ▪ Developing opportunities for the Queer community to mentor and support queer youth and connect with others with similar issues or interests.
<p>Visibility of the Queer community and their families.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Form a strong community link to provide extended networks of knowledge and support, and convey to the QUEER community the commitment to serving and meeting the needs of QUEER person's, whilst further heightening the agency's public profile as an inclusive, diverse, and welcoming service ▪ Develop a media response which highlights and raises the profile of the Queer Community and families
<p>Support for Queer community initiatives and voice.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Support Community Initiatives such as Pride march, Midsummer and provide information, resources and support ▪ Undertake consultation with the Queer community re: issues and needs ▪ Collect and disseminate client data identifying the and profile the Queer community accessing the programs and services and advocating with funders ▪ Provide submissions and raise issues in relation to Queer community issues and rights
<p>Access to programs and services which support their family and community connections</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Agency will take an active role in connecting with, and building strong community alliance/s with QUEER specific services within both, urban and rural, settings ▪ Connect with organisations such as PFLAG, Queer community centres, Department of Human Services, local AIDS committees, women's based agencies, Queer youth groups, Queer academics/researchers, etc. to be up to date and well informed of what is happening locally, state and nation-wide, with regard to Queer specific training, education, resources, and research. ▪ Build community service relationships to discuss current service gaps where QUEER community based needs are most critical to health and well-being, but where unmet and silenced within mainstream social services ▪ Actively promote programs and services via Queer media and participate in discussion forums such as Joy Radio ▪ Use the website to ensure the Queer community can access resources, information and others services

