



National Women's
Equality Alliance

POLICY POSITION: SUPPORT GENDER- AFFIRMING HEALTHCARE AND LGBTIQA+ RIGHTS

Proudly led by YWCA Canberra, the Working with Women Alliance (WwWA) is one of the five National Women's Alliances that play a key role in ensuring women's voices are central in the policy development process by providing evidence-based, intersectional gender equality advice and civil society expertise to government on areas of most impact and influence to Working for Women: A Strategy for Gender Equality.

The National Women's Equality Alliance is a portfolio under the WwWA that champions the vision of a society where every woman has the opportunity to thrive, unencumbered by systemic barriers.

POLICY STATEMENT: SUPPORT GENDER-AFFIRMING HEALTHCARE AND LGBTIQ+ RIGHTS

Executive Summary

Gender inequality has far-reaching and lifelong consequences, shaping the economic security, safety, and well-being of people across Australia.

One in three Australians hold a negative bias about women's ability to participate fully economically, politically or in education. These biases shape how women move through the world and mean that many are at serious risk of violence, housing insecurity and poverty.

This policy position statement highlights the urgent need for policies that prioritise women's economic equality. By ensuring access to secure employment, fair wages, financial independence, and adequate care services, Australia can create pathways to long-term safety, stability, and equality for all.

Key Recommendations

Support gender-affirming healthcare and LGBTIQ+ rights:

1. Fund comprehensive gender-affirming healthcare, including training for medical professionals.
2. Improve data collection and reporting on gender-based violence affecting LGBTIQ+ communities.

Transgender people deserve equal rights

Globally, transgender and gender-diverse people are experiencing discrimination and hatred. This hatred is enabled by systemic bias and a lack of access to supportive, affirming healthcare. The number of transgender and gender-diverse people seeking gender affirming care is rising.[i] Yet, restrictive policies and inadequate training create obstacles to timely, affirming and appropriate treatment.

Despite strong evidence supporting gender affirming care as safe and effective, medical professionals in Australia often lack the training and social understanding necessary to provide such care.[ii] For example, three in four endocrinologists lack confidence in initiating gender affirming hormone therapy, and almost none have received formal training in transgender medicine during medical school.[iii]

With only a select few competent and able to prescribe the necessary care, those seeking face long waitlists, with some clinics closed to new patients due to overwhelming demand. [iv] Barriers such as high cost,[v] lack of Medicare coverage,[vi] and limited access in rural and remote areas[vii] mean that some people are without timely or accessible care. In response, some transgender and gender-diverse people resort to risky self-prescribed hormone treatments.[viii]

Lack of access to essential healthcare and support contributes to experiences of mental and social distress.[ix] Experiencing prior stigma or discrimination in healthcare settings, along with being treated disrespectfully by healthcare staff, can discourage transgender and gender-diverse people from seeking healthcare of any kind.[x]

Timely access to gender affirming treatment, supported by trained healthcare providers and inclusive policies, is critical for improving quality of life and ensuring dignity for transgender and gender-diverse Australians. The Australian Government must provide leadership and guidance to ensure that transgender and gender-diverse people are supported to thrive in Australia.

Fund comprehensive gender-affirming healthcare, including training for medical professionals.

The Australian Government should support medical schools and existing medical practices or specialists to provide affirming, evidence-based care. Gender affirming hormones and

related healthcare should be subsidised under Medicare to remove financial barriers, particularly for young people, people on low-incomes, and those living in rural and remote areas. Programs like AusPATH need to be expanded to increase the number of trained GPs and specialists who can prescribe gender affirming hormones to reduce wait times, as well as implementing telehealth options to improve access in underserved areas.[xi]

Recognising the need for a review of the current guidelines surrounding gender affirming care, we support the National Health and Medical Research Council's comprehensive review of the Australian Standards of Care and Treatment Guidelines for Trans and Gender-Diverse Children and Adolescents. It is our hope that the subsequent development of new national guidelines, informed by lived experience, public consultation, and best practices, are protective of transgender and gender-diverse people's rights and wellbeing. Reactionary and restrictive policies are harmful, as is seen in current domestic and global trends concerning access to puberty blockers and gender-affirming care.[xii] The lack of national guidelines has led to inconsistencies across states, with some requiring surgery to change gender markers on birth certificates while others do not.[xiii]

Improve data collection and reporting on gender-based violence affecting LGBTIQ+ communities

Transgender and gender-diverse people experience particularly high rates of domestic, family and sexual violence.[xiv] Despite consensus for improving the national evidence base to better prevent and respond to gender-based violence, there is still an absence of funded research about the experiences of LGBTIQ+ people, reflecting the low priority given to keeping them safe. The Australian Government must commit to regular collection and publication of data on gender-based violence affecting LGBTIQ+ people to inform policy and program development.

The Australian Government must also provide guidance for researchers on accurately and meaningfully capturing demographic data to include transgender and gender-diverse people in health research. Programs such as [Trans Health Research](#) should be supported to develop such guidelines.[xv]

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