

# The Rainbow Line: Sustaining Australia's Only Dedicated National LGBTIQ+ Sexual, Domestic and Family Violence Service

**Responsible Department:** Department of Social Services

**Lead:** Full Stop Australia

**Partner:** LGBTIQ+ Health Australia (LHA)

**Duration:** July 2026 – June 2028 (2 years)

**Investment Sought:** \$767,189

## Executive Summary

The National Plan to End Violence Against Women and Children 2022 - 2032, commits to ending violence for all Australians, yet LGBTIQ+ victim-survivors face significant barriers accessing sexual, domestic and family violence (SDFV) services. Fear of discrimination, lack of cultural safety, and service models built around cisgender, heterosexual assumptions prevent timely help-seeking, exacerbating trauma and risk.

The Rainbow Line is Australia's only national, 24/7 specialist trauma-informed service designed as a culturally safe entry point for LGBTIQ+ people impacted by SDFV. Operating without dedicated funding, the service has seen 20% demand growth in 2024-25, demonstrating significant unmet need.

This proposal seeks \$767,189 over two years to strengthen, stabilise and evaluate The Rainbow Line through:

- **Co-production and service redesign** with LGBTIQ+ communities
- **Specialist workforce capability building** including trauma-informed practice and clinical supervision
- **LGBTIQ+ governance and accountability mechanisms**
- **Enhanced data collection** addressing critical national evidence gaps
- **National promotion** building awareness and trust, particularly in regional, rural and remote areas

This investment delivers a strengthened national entry point for LGBTIQ+ victim-survivors, reduces retraumatisation, improves early intervention, and generates high-quality data to inform policy under the National Plan.

## Context and Key Issue

LGBTIQ+ people experience intimate partner and family violence at rates equal to or higher than the general population. *Private Lives 3* (2021) found 61% experienced intimate partner violence and 49% sexual assault, yet only 25-30% accessed formal support. Survivors cited fear of discrimination, anticipated stigma, and doubts that services would understand diverse relationship dynamics as key barriers.

The Gendered Violence Research Network's 2024 National Survey revealed that 52% of LGBTIQ+ respondents experienced sexual violence in both childhood and adulthood. Rates are particularly high among bisexual+ cisgender women with 67% reporting sexual assault and 80% of those suffering extreme psychological distress. Survivors frequently experience shame, self-blame, and alienation when engaging with mainstream services, discouraging disclosure and delaying access to support.

Current barriers include:

- Geographic isolation from specialist services
- Fear of misgendering and discrimination
- Services designed around cisgender, heterosexual assumptions
- Lack of understanding of LGBTIQ+ relationship dynamics
- Financial barriers to private care

The Rainbow Line addresses these barriers as a free, nationally accessible, trauma-informed service that removes obstacles related to cost, travel and gendered service models.

## The Solution: The Rainbow Line

The Rainbow Line provides 24/7 trauma-specialist telephone and online support, offering:

### **For Survivors:**

- Immediate access to qualified trauma-specialist counsellors
- Continuity of care through team-based support, reducing retraumatisation
- Risk and safety planning
- Therapeutic recovery goals and plans
- Warm transfers and handover to mainstream or specialist services
- Support during service wait times or gaps

### **For Family and Community:**

- Information, education and counselling support
- Guidance for supporting survivors
- Addressing secondary traumatic stress

### **For Professionals:**

- Vicarious trauma support and debriefing
- Complex case consultation
- Supervision and training services

The service's workforce is highly qualified: all counsellors hold minimum four-year degrees in Social Work, Psychology or equivalent, with 3+ years' SDFV experience. Over 50% of clinical staff have been with Full Stop Australia for 5+ years, providing deep institutional expertise. The team includes LGBTIQ+ community members and allies.

## **Why The Rainbow Line is Uniquely Positioned**

### **Complementary to existing services:**

The 2026 Independent Evaluation of 1800RESPECT found that "people from underrepresented cohorts do not consistently experience an appropriate service that meets their needs" due to "inconsistent experiences," "lack of perceived cultural appropriateness," and "historic mistrust among LGBTIQ+ communities."

The Rainbow Line offers choice: a targeted, tailored service alongside mainstream options, particularly critical for:

- People in regional, rural and remote areas lacking local LGBTIQ+ services
- Those with privacy or safety concerns
- People unable to afford private therapeutic support
- Men, trans and non-binary people who often have no other DFSV services available

## **Program Objectives and Delivery**

### **Strategic transformation includes:**

- Service redesign through co-production with LGBTIQ+ communities
- Specialist training and LGBTIQ+ supervision for frontline staff
- LGBTIQ+ governance structures ensuring accountability and lived expertise
- High-level data collection informing national SDFV understanding
- National promotion and community engagement to build awareness, trust and legitimacy

## Partnership model

**Full Stop Australia** provides trauma-specialist knowledge and national service-delivery capability.

**LGBTIQ+ Health Australia** will manage community governance and leverage the specialist skills and expertise held within LHA's member organisations working in this field.

## Policy Alignment

This initiative directly responds to:

- **National Plan to End Violence Against Women and Children (2022-2032):** Emphasises culturally safe, person-centred services accessible regardless of location
- **First Action Plan (2023-2027):** Commits to improving support for LGBTIQ+ victim-survivors through collaboration between specialist organisations
- **National Action Plan for the Health and Wellbeing of LGBTIQ+ People (2025-2035):** Action 9 explicitly commits to improving access to culturally safe trauma-informed SDFV services
- **Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence Commission 2025 Report:** Emphasises closing service gaps through lived experience-led approaches and integrated service design

## Why Government Investment Matters

**Cost Efficiency:** Strengthens existing infrastructure rather than creating new services, ensuring rapid implementation and value for money.

**Systems Improvement:** Fills a critical national gap - no other specialist LGBTIQ+ SDFV helpline exists. Provides choice and agency for survivors.

**Workforce Development:** Specialist training and clinical supervision build workforce capability, with resources extending beyond the project life.

**Data and Evidence:** First national-level data collection on LGBTIQ+ SDFV experiences, informing policy and service planning.

**Reduced System Burden:** Provides clear entry point, reducing need for survivors to "shop around" and decreasing strain on under-resourced providers.

**Risk of Inaction:** LGBTIQ+ Australians (approximately 10% of population) face higher violence rates but lack equitable access to culturally safe care. Delayed investment perpetuates inequities and increases long-term emergency, health and social service costs.

## Data Collection and Evaluation

The Rainbow Line is uniquely positioned to capture data not available elsewhere in SDFV systems. As an LGBTIQA+-specific, anonymous service, it will generate insights into violence tactics, coercive control patterns, help-seeking behaviours, service barriers and emerging trends across diverse communities and locations.

An external research team will design ethical data collection tools protecting caller anonymity, conduct independent evaluation of service implementation and outcomes, and analyse de-identified data to inform policy, service design and prevention efforts. This addresses longstanding evidence gaps while ensuring accountability and continuous improvement.

## Sustainability

This investment creates enduring value by:

- Building on existing infrastructure for cost-efficiency
- Embedding LGBTIQA+ governance and robust workforce training
- Establishing sector-leading clinical supervision continuing beyond funding
- Creating training modules and resources for ongoing use beyond the life of the project
- Generating evidence base for policy advocacy and future funding
- Ensuring continuous service improvement through evaluation framework

The strengthened service will operate effectively beyond the funding period, providing long-term access to culturally safe, trauma-informed support.

## Governance

Group	Responsibilities
<b>Steering Committee</b>	Strategic oversight; senior leadership from FSA & LHA; ensures alignment with policy and sector standards
<b>Full Stop Australia</b>	Contract holder; operational lead; service delivery; quality assurance; clinical expertise
<b>LGBTIQ+ Health Australia</b>	Community expertise; leadership over community governance; input into service redesign; promotions and communications
<b>LGBTIQ+ community controlled organisation</b>	Staff training development and delivery; contribution to systems improvements and community accountability.
<b>Advisory Committee (paid)</b>	Independent guidance on cultural safety and ethics; represents trans, gender diverse, intersex, First Nations, disability and regional communities
<b>External Clinical Supervision</b>	Specialist LGBTIQA+ clinical supervision; supports staff wellbeing and complex case management

## Timeline

Phase	Period	Key Deliverables
<b>1. Program Establishment</b>	Jul-Sep 2026	Governance structures; staff recruitment; stakeholder engagement plan
<b>2. Service Redesign</b>	Oct-Dec 2026	Co-design workshops; updated service model, policies and referral pathways; governance frameworks
<b>3. Training Development</b>	Jan-Jul 2027	Specialist in-person training delivered; online modules developed; clinical supervision implemented
<b>4. Service Promotion &amp; Operations</b>	Jul-Dec 2027	National promotion campaign; ongoing supervision; data collection operational; interim reporting
<b>5. Evaluation</b>	Jan-Jun 2028	Independent evaluation; data analysis; final report; sustainability planning

## Budget Summary

**Total: \$**

Item	Cost Year 1	Cost Year 2	Total cost
Salaries + oncosts (LHA & FSA)	\$191,622	\$197,368	\$388,990
Data collection and evaluation	\$25,000	\$75,000	\$120,000
Training Lead (subcontracted)	\$70,000	NA	\$70,000
Governance and advisory	\$11,000	\$11,000	\$22,000
External Clinical Supervision	\$9,600	\$9,600	\$19,200
Online training module development	\$25,000	NA	\$25,000
Promotions and communications	\$10,000	\$7,000	\$17,000
Management, admin, HR and compliance (LHA & FSA)	\$50,000	\$55,000	\$105,000
<b>Total</b>			<b>\$767,189</b>

## Conclusion

The Rainbow Line addresses a critical equity gap in Australia's SDFV landscape. LGBTIQ+ people experience disproportionately high violence rates but face systemic barriers to accessing culturally safe support. This \$767,189 investment over two years will:

- Strengthen Australia's only national LGBTIQ+ SDFV specialist service
- Build workforce capability
- Generate critical national data on LGBTIQ+ violence experiences
- Improve safety outcomes and reduce retraumatisation
- Ensure equitable access for regional, rural and remote communities
- Deliver measurable outcomes aligned with national policy priorities

By investing in existing infrastructure, this initiative ensures cost-effectiveness, rapid implementation and sustainability. It transforms the Rainbow Line from an under-resourced service into a trusted, evidence-based national resource that ensures LGBTIQ+ Australians can access specialist support when they need it most.

Funding improvements to the Rainbow Line is an investment in equity, safety, and the long-term health of Australia's communities.

## Further Information

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## References

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