

11.08.20

Talofa lava Stats NZ,

Re: Sex and gender identity statistical standards consultation

Thank you for the opportunity to submit. I was one of the panel members of the 2018 Government Inquiry into Mental Health and Addiction. During this work we were blessed to have shared with us precious taonga, stories, and things created by advocates from the rainbow communities of Aotearoa. We heard a number of elements that will be useful to consider in this context, and I also encourage you to please read a submission pulled together to submit to us, "Outloud"¹ After completing our work we presented to the Government He Ara Oranga – Pathways to wellbeing² which as something accepted across Government is something your department must be aware of. On page 43 of our report we reflect on what we heard - we say:

"2.5.2 Discrimination remains a barrier

Numerous submissions described the impact of discrimination on the basis of mental health status – how it added to their mental distress and sense of alienation. Discrimination was reported to still be common in New Zealand society and within the mental health system. We also heard about the harmful effects of discrimination on the basis of ethnicity, culture, disability and gender identity. Rainbow youth and other marginalised groups reported not feeling safe accessing mainstream services and suffering harm from discrimination.

Sexual orientation, gender identity or expression and intersex status are not the cause of the elevated risk of mental health problems, addiction and suicidality among the rainbow population. Rather, the increased risk is due to stigma, discrimination, prejudice and exclusion. (Providers supporting Rainbow communities)" (page 43)

In our report we detail in a number of areas ways forward to support the rainbow communities of Aotearoa including:

¹ <https://ry.org.nz/who-we-are/news/report-shows-current-mental-health-and-addiction-system-is-vastly-under-serving-aotearoa-new-zealands-rainbow-communities>

² <https://mentalhealth.inquiry.govt.nz/inquiry-report/he-ara-oranga/>

- Culturally competence and cultural workforces that enable rainbow communities to be supported in the ways they deserve to be, and want to be. **(page 60)** This includes Stats NZ's workforce.
- We state that despite investment in mental health and addiction supports specific populations are not reaching the outcomes they deserve – rainbow communities being one. **(page 70)** We need Stats NZ support to have more detailed data to inform this work.
- We state that “Rainbow communities are estimated to account for 6% to 15% of the total New Zealand population.” **(page 72)** This vagueness about an essential part of our communities is not good enough, and adds complexity to us being able to offer the supports we ought to.
- In our vision for Pacific wellbeing we say that “To achieve equity for Pacific peoples, barriers of stigma, discrimination, institutional racism and unconscious bias must be eliminated and access to services improved. All people, including Pacific Rainbow communities, will be embraced for who they are.” **(page 88)** Making these changes will add significantly to this cause, by capturing information which highlights that in the Pacific rainbow communities have always existed, and were embraced by aiga. Broadening this embrace, fighting stigma that exists and being able to elevate the stories of our rainbow aiga by having data captured that more accurately can speak to the breadth of what it means to be pacific will help our Pacific communities significantly
- We specifically say that “New Zealand’s unique population and characteristics mean we cannot solely rely on research conducted in other countries to meet our needs. Many submitters considered that mental health and addiction research is lacking, mainly due to under-funding. Areas where more research was seen to be needed included...rainbow communities.” **(page 126)**

Stats NZ is a significant part of the solution to the problems raised above by Rainbow whānau from across Aotearoa. I encourage you to listen deeply, take the opportunity to collect and to share this data which is being called for as it will support Rainbow whānau across our country being embraced.

Ia manuia,

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