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Re: Support for the HRAD Bill

Val's Café was established by Gay and Lesbian Health Victoria (GLHV) in 2009 to support those providing services to older lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) people. The Café provides networking opportunities for the 160 member organisations, conducts research, develops resources and provides education to aged care service providers on LGBTI inclusive practice.

The experiences of older LGBTI Victorians accessing aged care services have been documented in the *My People* report (see: www.matrixguildvic.org.au/docs/MyPeople_Exploring-Experiences-2008.pdf). This report highlights the fear that older LGBTI people have of discrimination in aged care services, as well as documenting cases of discrimination. Some cases of discrimination relate directly to the provision of services by religious institutions – where staff understood that negative responses to the sexual orientation or gender identity were consistent with their organization's unwritten policy on homosexuality. These cases of homophobia and transphobia had a devastating impact on the health and wellbeing of the LGBTI clients.

We appreciate that not all religious institutions are homophobic. We are aware of some religious based services that are inclusive of LGBTI clients. However, we believe that it is important the all services receiving government funding are required to deliver LGBTI inclusive services.

We are aware of the HRAD Bill and that some opponents of the Bill are suggesting that it should not be passed. It has been 17 years since the Senate first spoke about including sexual orientation and gender identity protections in federal law. It's important that the Bill not be delayed until the after the next election. Numerous inquiries and all major political parties have expressed support for these protections for LGBTI people. Despite this support, the Bill is at risk of not being passed because of a small number of vocal opponents to some minor elements of the Bill.

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