



# Diversity & Inclusion

FRAMEWORK

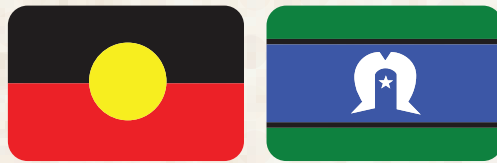
**BERRY  
STREET**

Believing In  
Children,  
Young People,  
Families &  
Their Future.





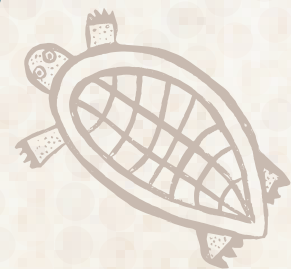
## Acknowledgement of Country



Berry Street is committed to the principles of social justice. Berry Street acknowledges Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the Traditional Custodians of the lands, skies and waterways across Australia. We pay our respects to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elders past and present.

We acknowledge Elders as holders, protectors and educators of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures. We pay respect to the emerging Elders and support the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people in our care to connect to their cultures, countries and communities.

Berry Street recognises that sovereignty was never ceded and acknowledges the continuing impact colonisation has had on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to date. We commit to ensuring all staff understand our true history, as an organisation and country, and recognise the importance of acknowledging the Traditional Custodians of the lands in which we operate.



**“We will strive to provide a service where reconciliation lives in the hearts, minds and actions of all our teams.”**

– Berry Street CEO, Michael Perusco





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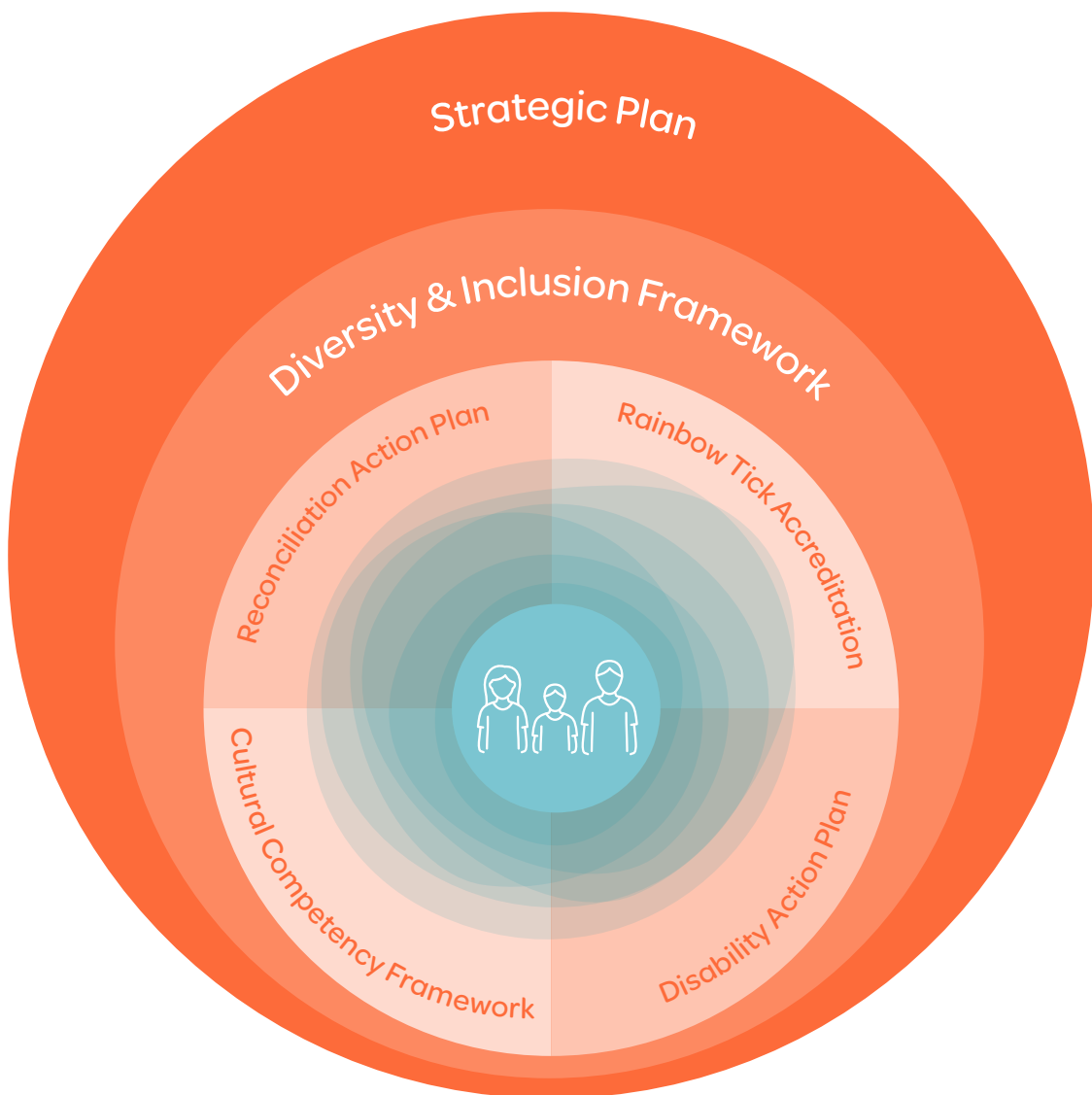
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# Berry Street's Vision

Berry Street works within a human rights framework and with a foundational commitment to social justice for children, young people and families. Berry Street's Strategic Plan 2019-2022 expresses our commitment to create positive and lasting change in people's lives, and to enable this outcome we recognise that cultural safety and embracing diverse communities must be an organisational priority.

*"All children have rights, regardless of race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national, ethnic or social origin, property, disability, birth or other status."*

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) Article 2



● ORGANISATIONAL STRATEGY

● GOVERNING FRAMEWORKS

● STRATEGIES & INITIATIVES  
3 YEAR IMPLEMENTABLE PLAN





“Together we will courageously change lives  
and reimagine service systems”

- Berry Street Strategic Plan

# 1. Purpose

**The purpose of Berry Street's Diversity & Inclusion Framework is to ensure that our commitment to social justice is embedded within our service offerings, operating models and education platforms, and to deliver highly inclusive, responsive and person centred services for children, young people and families from diverse communities.**

There is overwhelming evidence that people from diverse communities face additional challenges in accessing services, education and workforce opportunities, as well as in experiencing culturally safe support from community organisations.

We understand that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, people who identify as LGBTQIA+, people for whom English is not their first language, and people who are neuro and physically diverse, all experience different forms of explicit and implicit discrimination, and are at greater risk of violence and disadvantage. Exclusion and discrimination are compounded further for people when multiple forms of oppression are experienced.

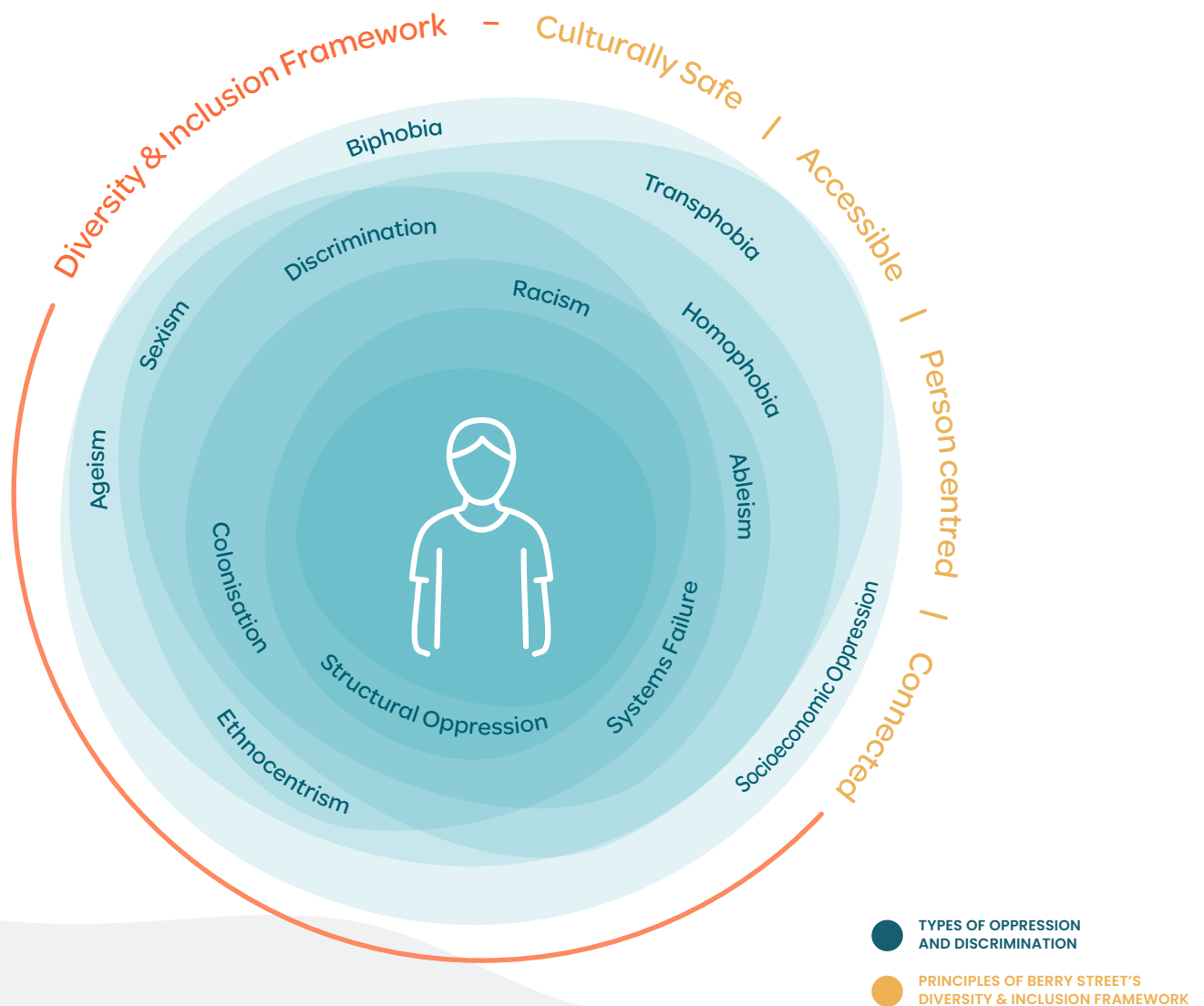
At Berry Street, we are acutely aware of the harmful impacts of white privilege, toxic masculinity and heteronormativity. We are committed to examining, understanding and changing our practices and ways of working that replicate and continue to support the privilege and power of dominant culture that is white, male dominated, and heteronormative. This not only involves calling out outdated ways of being, but also listening to and privileging the voices of those who have been marginalised.

**The Diversity & Inclusion Framework outlines Berry Street's commitment and strategies to address injustices and inequalities caused by:**

- structural oppression
- systems failure
- colonisation
- racism
- ethnocentrism
- homophobia
- transphobia
- biphobia
- ableism
- discrimination.

This framework serves as a guiding document to disrupt and dismantle barriers to service access and cultural safety, and to drive the development and delivery of inclusive services. Inclusive services recognise and celebrate all aspects of a person's identity, and value children, young people and families as active participants in their recovery from trauma.

The intent of this framework is to create the opportunity to eliminate barriers that prevent service accessibility and promote participation, so people can live the life they choose.



## Berry Street's Diversity & Inclusion Framework ensures our services are:

**Culturally safe:** protecting and celebrating people's connection to culture and community to strengthen personal identity, resilience and a sense of belonging. This means we are committed to creating and nurturing a working environment that is spiritually, socially and emotionally safe, as well as physically safe for people - where there is no challenge or denial of their identity, of who they are and what they need.

Cultural safety at Berry Street is about shared respect, shared meaning, shared knowledge and the experience of learning together. Importantly, cultural safety is defined by those who have historically been made to feel unsafe in mainstream spaces.

**Accessible:** design and deliver services that provide the same opportunities to people regardless of disability, demographic background or circumstance. This means that Berry Street will have clear, accessible information and adapt and change practices to ensure that all service users and carers are included and engaged in all aspects of service delivery and development.

**Person centred:** people's multiple and interconnected diversity characteristics are understood, embraced and supported. We understand and respect the experiences of intersectionality and privilege the voices of people who have been marginalised.

**Connected:** build and maintain connections to services with relevant expertise within the community. Berry Street upholds its obligation to seek and support opportunities for inclusion and participation where people from diverse communities can connect with education, allies and each other.



## 2. Background & Context

**Berry Street is committed to establishing and maintaining a culturally safe and inclusive workplace. We will actively work to break down racist systems and oppressive structures that create exclusion for people from diverse backgrounds. We recognise this as a critical component to reconciliation and equity for all.<sup>i</sup>**

Berry Street's historical role within the dominant and oppressive culture that perpetrated devastating injustices to children and families, including the forced removal of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, is acknowledged, shameful and deeply regretted. The [Berry Street Apology to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Communities](#) (originally written in 2006 and revised in 2016) serves as a perpetual reminder and obligation to build inclusive and culturally safe services, and to challenge oppressive systems and policy through our advocacy.

The Victorian Royal Commission into Family Violence (RCFV) has provided the family violence and affiliated sectors with extensive, contemporary analysis and context of systems failure, structural violence and oppression coalesced with patriarchy and misogyny. The RCFV concluded that:

*...some groups are at greater risk of family violence or experience it at increased rates... and other groups face barriers in seeking and obtaining help.*

These groups include Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex and asexual (LGBTQIA+) people, people living with disabilities and culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) people. Our work in child and family services, including out-of-home care, mirror the same barriers and risks.

In response, any notion that we simply “**treat everybody the same**” is not, and never will be, **equitable or inclusive, and will never deliver social justice**. Where a group or community has experienced discrimination, stigma or prejudice, treating everybody in the same way ignores the significant harm that is carried by communities and individuals.

This framework and the strategies outlined within provide Berry Street with greater visibility of this harm, and a shared understanding of our commitment in reducing harm, celebrating diversity, and being fully inclusive.

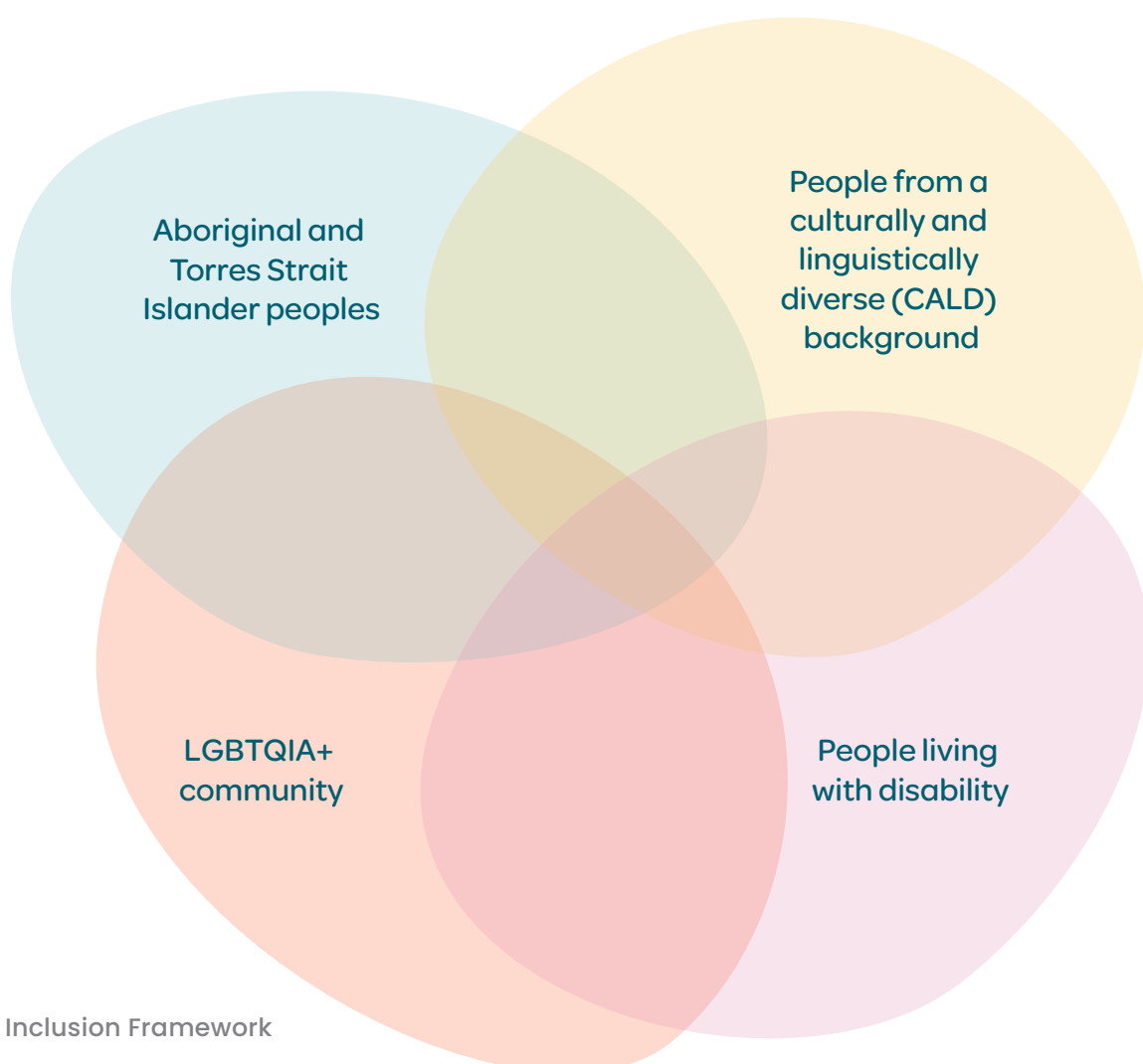




# 3. Our Communities

**Berry Street works alongside children, young people and families who have experienced violence, abuse, neglect and trauma. The over-representation of some groups and communities within our services represent structural issues and inadequacies within public policy and the broader community.**

We have this visibility through the data we collect, program evaluations and practice wisdom. Through listening to the voices of our service users, we also understand the impact of service exclusion on people's ability and willingness to engage in support. The over- and under-representation of different groups within our services (who we work with too frequently or not frequently enough) requires targeted, purposeful and coordinated effort.



## 3.1 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples

For 60,000 years pre-contact, Aboriginal people occupied this nation's land practicing law, lore, music, art, dance and politics. Aboriginal people were free from disease and lived healthy lifestyles. Upon European invasion, Aboriginal land was labelled Terra Nullius. The rights of the traditional custodians were extinguished by British Law. As a result, brutal massacres occurred, European diseases were a scourge, and an assimilation policy was enforced. Aboriginal people were stripped of their cultures, identities, languages, sense of belonging and traditional ways of life.

The impact of this continues to perpetrate injustices to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and cannot be ignored.

Intergenerational trauma is a key contributor to social stress, poor health outcomes and inequality, and the subsequent over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples can be seen in numerous indicators of social exclusion and disadvantage, including:

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in Victoria are 14.5 times more likely to live in out-of-home care than non-Aboriginal Australian children.<sup>ii</sup>
- Aboriginal people represent 3% of the total population, yet represent 29% of Australia's prison population.<sup>iii</sup>
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women are 32 times as likely and men are 23 times as likely to be hospitalised due to family violence than non-Aboriginal Australian women and men, respectively.<sup>iv</sup>

Similarly, structural violence, dispossession and child removal have also created an inter-generational mistrust in services, agencies and

government authorities that act as a barrier for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in seeking support.

*"Our life pattern was created by the government policies and are forever with me, as though an invisible anchor around my neck."*

Confidential submission to the National Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children (Bringing them Home, 1997)

Berry Street is committed to truth-telling and transparency regarding our history in the forced removal of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children. As far back as its establishment, Berry Street was complicit in the '1869 Aboriginies Protection Act' that authorised the removal of Aboriginal children from their families, communities and countries. We deeply regret failing to oppose these policies and recognise our part in this. We apologise for the devastating consequences this has had on multiple generations and are committed to learning from our mistakes.

**Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children under 15 are 3.4 times more likely to be deaf than non-Aboriginal Australian children.**

*"I grew up without being accepted. I had to choose between my identity as deaf or Aboriginal. I went to a deaf school and I didn't have the same opportunities as my brother and sister to celebrate being Aboriginal."*

Taken from the Australian Human Rights Commission's Social Justice and Native Title Report 2015



## 3.1 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples (cont.)

Accountability is a key component of the organisation's **Reflect Reconciliation Action Plan** (RAP). Developing and implementing a RAP provides a clear strategy for Berry Street to drive and transform cultural change within the organisation. Completing a RAP delivers practical steps that turn good will into real action and enables the organisation to measure its progress. By taking this structured approach, Berry Street is accountable to Reconciliation Australia to deliver a culturally safe service that supports and enhances best outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, families and communities.

Our Walking Together Group (WTG) guides the development and implementation of Berry Street's RAP. The WTG is comprised of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff and non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff and has been running for over 10 years. This group provides cultural advice to the Executive Leadership Team on topics that affect Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. The WTG supported Berry Street's **Addressing Racism Strategy**, which was developed in response to the Black Lives Matter, Aboriginal Lives Matter movement in 2020. The strategy delivers targeted educational opportunities, safe spaces to discuss racism, share resources and support staff to challenge racism in both personal and professional contexts. The WTG is co-chaired by the Executive Director of Organisational Effectiveness and the Senior Manager of Aboriginal Service Development.

*"Berry Street has learned that connection to cultures, countries and communities is fundamental to a child's identity, sense of self and wellbeing. We believe that all children and young people should grow up strong, thriving and hopeful. Our strategic vision is to courageously change lives and reimagine service systems."*

Michael Perusco – Chief Executive Officer, Berry Street Reconciliation Action Plan 2021

*"Berry Street values and prioritises relationships with Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations at a local and state level. We support self-determination and acknowledge that Aboriginal and Torres Strait agencies are most equipped to have choice, control, authority and responsibility in determining best outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. We are saddened by the over-representation of Aboriginal children in out-of-home care and apologise for our part in this. We are committed to the transfer of Aboriginal children to Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations and the principles outlined in the Wungurilwil Gaggapduir: Aboriginal Children and Families Agreement."*

*"While we support self-determination, we recognise that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples may choose to seek services from Berry Street and are committed to ensuring our programs are culturally safe for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples."*

Sarah Dawson – Senior Manager, Aboriginal Service Development, Berry Street, 2021

## 3.2 LGBTQIA+ Community

While (most) government policy and law no longer explicitly discriminates against the LGBTQIA+ community, the legacy of past criminalisation and lawful discrimination, homophobia, transphobia, biphobia, prejudice and religious conservatism is deeply entrenched within parts of Australian culture – and within our most powerful institutions.

Fourteen Federal Government politicians abstained or voted “no” during the marriage equality conscience vote in 2017. Among the 14 are the current Prime Minister, a former Prime Minister and a former Deputy Prime Minister. In addition, 38.4% of Australians opposed marriage equality. These facts illustrate the prejudice still confronted by the LGBTQIA+ community in contemporary Australia and are a reminder that full acceptance and inclusion did not accompany marriage equality.

**Intersex people continue to experience discrimination, stigmatisation and human rights violations, including harmful practices in medical settings. The 2017 Darlington Statement sets out the priorities of the intersex human rights movement in Australia. Berry Street will respond to Priority 38 which calls for equitable access to social and welfare services for people with intersex variations. The Darlington Statement notes that meeting the needs of people with intersex variations in home care, state care, and disability services will require further investigation, with full and meaningful participation by intersex-led organisations.**

<https://ihra.org.au/darlington-statement>

The impacts of oppression, homophobia, transphobia and biphobia are profound and are most acutely experienced through increased rates of violence, abuse, family and community rejection, social isolation, psychological distress, mental-ill health, addiction, self-harm and suicide.<sup>v</sup>

The LGBTQIA+ community experiences intimate partner and family violence at higher rates than heterosexual and cisgender people, and they are less likely to report it or receive support. *Private Lives 3* found that:

- More than 4 in 10 (41.7%; n = 2,846) participants reported ever being in an intimate relationship where they felt they were abused in some way by their partner/s. Over one quarter (27.3%; n = 1,864) of participants reported being in one intimate relationship where they felt they were abused in some way by their partner/s, while 14.4% (n = 982) reported being in more than one intimate relationship where they felt they were abused in some way by their partner/s. (p.70)
- Almost 4 in 10 (38.5%; n = 2,629) participants reported ever feeling abused by a family member (family includes both birth and chosen family). One fifth (21.3%; n = 1,454) reported ever feeling abused by one family member, while 17.2% (n = 1,175) participants reported ever feeling abused by more than one family member.<sup>vi</sup>

The Royal Commission into Family Violence (RCFV) highlighted that the prevailing system was not equipped to recognise or support LGBTQIA+ family violence and noted distrust in the police and acceptance within mainstream services as barriers.<sup>vii</sup>

# LGBTQIA+ children and young people

Models of accommodation, refuge and housing models, and program eligibility criteria which only take a binary gendered and heteronormative approach result in barriers to the provision of services to LGBTQIA+ people. Furthermore, a limited heteronormative and binary gender data collection system contributes to direct and indirect forms of discrimination in the delivery of our services. Research interviews have demonstrated that structured exclusion is also commonly exacerbated by negative attitudes of other clients and staff.<sup>viii</sup>

The impact of violence, abuse and family rejection is acutely experienced by LGBTQIA+ young people. They are 5 times more likely to attempt suicide than their similar aged peers and nearly twice as likely to engage in self-injury.<sup>ix</sup> Family rejection and violence is a key reason behind LGBTQIA+ young people being twice as likely to experience homelessness than heterosexual and cis-gendered young people.<sup>x</sup>

A national report into the health and wellbeing of LGBTQIA+ young people in Australia found that of the 6418 participants:

- almost one quarter (23.6%; n = 1,501) of participants had experienced one or more forms of homelessness in their lifetime, including 11.5% (n = 733) who experienced this in the past 12 months (p.98)
- over one quarter (26.0%; n = 388) of participants reported that their experience/s of homelessness in their lifetime were related to being LGBTQIA+ (p.100).

At the time of the survey 1.9% (n = 121) of participants reported currently experiencing homelessness (p.98)<sup>xi</sup>.

There is very little research or validated evidence that provides insight into the experiences of LGBTQIA+ children and young people in the out-of-home care system. While there are some resources that have been developed to better support children or young people who identify as LGBTQIA+ (for example, [CREATEing Equality Do's & Don'ts](#)), these are isolated initiatives that are designed to raise awareness rather than create sustained and supportive environments where young people are able to disclose and feel safe in their gender identity and sexual orientation.

In order to ensure we create safe, welcoming and inclusive services for children and young people who either identify as gender diverse (or who may be questioning their sexuality and/or identity), we must engage in specific and concerted efforts to recruit and educate a workforce that not only supports, but nurtures and celebrates LGBTQIA+ young people. Rainbow Tick accreditation will set in motion the organisational transformation required across workforce planning, service development and service delivery within Berry Street services and education programs.



Illustration: Nina, Aged 12



## LGBTQIA+ children and young people (cont.)

In 2012, Berry Street became one of the first Child and Family Services organisations in Victoria to actively and openly target the LGBTQIA+ community for the recruitment of foster carers.

Berry Street's 2012 campaign was titled *Fostering with pride*, and together with the Benevolent Society (NSW) who had undertaken a similar campaign, we contributed to a joint evaluation of the experiences of community service organisations in recruiting and retaining LGBTQIA+ foster carers.

The experience of the *Fostering with pride* campaign was insightful and several key learnings for Berry Street (and other foster care providers) remain relevant today.

[Read the Fostering with pride campaign strategy and evaluation's key findings.](#)

Berry Street's commitment to the LGBTQIA+ community is being formalised through the attainment of Rainbow Tick Accreditation. The Rainbow Tick standards are owned and developed by Rainbow Health Victoria and are designed to build lasting LGBTQIA+ inclusion.

Berry Street School campuses will continue to actively engage with the Safe Schools program to ensure that the school environment is safe and free from discrimination for LGBTQIA+ students. This includes professional development for teachers and the school community, and the development of targeted proactive strategies to deliver a safe learning environment for LGBTQIA+ students.



*“A number of studies have found that the dominance of heteronormative (and cis-normative) models of family violence make it harder for LGBTQIA+ people to recognise and label intimate partner violence as such, creating silence around this violence.”*

Pride in Prevention (Rainbow Health Victoria)

**4% of trans and gender diverse young people aged 14 to 25 are Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander.**<sup>xii</sup>

*“Research suggests that indigenous transgender Australians experience additional problems of racism within wider Australian communities (including queer communities) and transphobia within traditional communities. These additional problems draw attention to complex matrices of discrimination and “difference” that intersect cultural traditions, personal and social identity, and colonization. As a means of addressing issues of racism and social exclusion, indigenous transgender Australians have coalesced around terms unique to their communities, such as “sistergirl” and “brotherboy.”*

Sistergirls/Brotherboys: The status of indigenous transgender Australians – International Journal of Transgenderism. Author –Stephen Craig Kerry

## 3.3 People living with disability

The barriers and exclusion that people living with disability face in everyday work, study or accessing supports in the community, translates into over-representation with respect to family violence and out-of-home care - **despite widespread under-reporting.**

The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) reports that in 2017-18, 14% of children and young people in out-of-home care (OoHC) live with a disability, which is double the rate of disability for all children and young people aged 0-17. However, this figure is believed to underestimate the actual rate of disability in OoHC, due to:

- inadequate and inconsistent data collection
- the existence and emergence of disabilities pre-diagnosis
- the exclusion within the figures of children and young people residing in disability services, psychiatric treatment and juvenile justice facilities.

Berry Street data reviewed in 2019 revealed that 17% of children and young people in our Residential Care Programs have diagnosed intellectual disabilities, and 10% were diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder. Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) and developmental speech disorders are also commonly experienced and highlight the necessity for Berry Street to **embrace neurodiversity within children and young people**, and to create a model of care that celebrates difference and supports positive self-perception.

It is also understood that parents with disabilities are involved in the OoHC system and family services at a disproportionate level. In a state-based study, families with a parent with an

intellectual disability comprised just 1-2% of all families with children aged 0-17, however account for approximately 9% of all child protection cases before the Family Court. Nearly all of our Berry Street School students qualify for disability funding and require appropriate housing and support to enable learning success.

Women with disabilities are 40% more likely to be the victims of family violence than women without disabilities, and more than 70% of women with disabilities have been victims of violent sexual encounters at some time in their lives.<sup>xiii</sup>

**Not only do women with disabilities experience family violence at a higher rate, the experience is more frequent, for longer, more varied and involves more perpetrators.**

Evidence also confirms that women with disabilities experiencing family violence also have fewer pathways to safety and are less likely to report or speak about it.

*"I suffered abuse from my real parents and adopted parents ... [My] foster family took advantage of me, sexually abused me and my baby ... Men take advantage of me because of my disability."*

Submission to the RCFV 2016

Berry Street's **Disability Action Plan** will formalise an ongoing commitment to neurodiverse children and young people, and build our capacity to identify, engage and support people with disability experiencing family violence.

### 3.3 People living with disability (cont.)

People with disability experience difficulties accessing services and education due to physical barriers (for example inaccessible buildings) inaccessible information and discrimination by doctors, health professionals and carers.

Children with disabilities experience violence and abuse at higher rates than children without disabilities and people with cognitive impairment are more vulnerable to assault and abuse because they depend on others for assistance with daily life.

The care and protection of children with disabilities in out-of-home care has been described as not working due to minimal opportunities for foster care of high-needs children with disabilities, abuse in care, shortcomings of the NDIS and the lack of supports available to families to equip and resource families to keep their children at home. Recently, Berry Street's CEO and the CEO of the Centre for Excellence in Child and Family Welfare advocated that the current situation regarding the NDIS is causing extreme harm to children with disability and their families, as these young people enter out-of-home care.

***LGBTQIA+ people with disability have difficulty connecting with LGBTQIA+ communities and with disability communities, and LGBTQIA+ people with disability have twice the rates of anxiety and psychological distress than LGBTQIA+ people without disability.***

The everyday experiences of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) people living with disability, La Trobe University

**Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are 1.8 times more likely to live with disability than non-Aboriginal Australians.<sup>xiv</sup>**

***“Disability may also overlap with other forms of identity to place women at even greater risk of experiencing family violence, or of not being able to access appropriate services.”***

Royal Commission into Family Violence –  
Report and Recommendations Vol 5, p.173



## 3.4 People from a culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) background

People from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds, particularly those with experiences as refugees or migrants, can experience a range of difficulties in accessing services and receiving culturally safe support.

**These include, but are not limited to:**

- social isolation
- lack of understanding of the legal and service systems
- different cultural norms, beliefs and expectations regarding family relationships, mental health and community engagement
- English as an additional language
- availability, effectiveness or fear of interpreters
- stresses related to residency or visa status
- negative past experiences with services, particularly government services
- lack of culturally appropriate or responsive services.

The prevalence of family violence within CALD communities is difficult to quantify, and research suggests that under-reporting, rather than over-representation is the problem. Under-reporting is understood to be influenced by factors such as a “higher subjective threshold”, misunderstandings of what constitutes family violence, a lack of information regarding legal and human rights, social isolation, financial dependency on the perpetrator, and fear of engaging with authorities.<sup>xv</sup> Our partnerships with culturally specific and migrant services are critical in understanding and effectively engaging CALD women.

The full scope of issues related to CALD children, young people and families in contact

with the out-of-home care system is not yet supported by empirical evidence; however, we know that the ability to provide person centred care requires us to understand what makes each individual different, and one of the key differences between people is culture. An understanding of different cultures is essential, and we commit to increasing our ability to match CALD children within culturally appropriate placements by growing the number and diversity of CALD kinship and foster carers.

Within Berry Street School campuses, we remain committed to understanding student demographics, developing cultural support plans for CALD students and using education as a platform for social inclusion. We will connect CALD students with a mentor wherever possible and build a supportive learning environment that is led by our teachers and sustained by the broader school community.

When accessing support or education from mainstream services, people from CALD communities must overcome the absence of translated materials, the need for interpreter services, cultural assumptions and a lack of understanding of cultural beliefs and practices. These factors prevent or limit critical rapport building – the foundation of all our work. Berry Street acknowledges that these barriers can be difficult to address at an individual or service level – they require organisational effort and dedicated resourcing.

Berry Street’s **Cultural Competence Framework** will drive resourcing and improve cultural competence and training within our staff, carers, programs and the organisation, with a focus on those CALD communities that feature most commonly within discrete Berry Street regions, and within the Berry Street School.

## 3.4 People from a culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) background (cont.)

To assess access barriers and determine what strategies, programs and services may be required to better reach and support people from a range of cultural backgrounds, Berry Street will consult and listen to current service users, young people in our school and out-of-home care programs, and multicultural community and health services. This consultation will not only support quality improvement initiatives but will also inform business planning and program development, in both the Berry Street School, and geographically dispersed programs. People living in different parts of Victoria will experience difference service access barriers – this will be considered alongside emerging community needs.

In addition to this work Berry Street will develop a **Cultural Competency Framework** that will outline our expectations, and support capacity building in both our service delivery and our support staff groups.

28.6% of LGBTQIA+ young people aged 16 to 27 identify with a racial or ethnic background other than Anglo-Celtic.<sup>xvi</sup>

*“There is a tension for some same sex attracted and gender queer (SSAGQ) young people between religious and CALD-specific beliefs and their same sex attraction and/or gender identity. The (Writing Themselves in 3) study surveyed over 3,100 young people aged 14 to 21 years, of which about a fifth came from a CALD background. Respondents who mentioned religion were more likely to feel bad about their sexual attraction or gender identity and more likely to report thoughts of self-harm and suicide. They were also less likely to receive support from their parents, teachers and student welfare coordinators.”*

Writing Themselves In 3. The third national study on the sexual health and wellbeing of same sex attracted and gender questioning young people. Australian Research Centre in Sex, Health and Society, La Trobe University

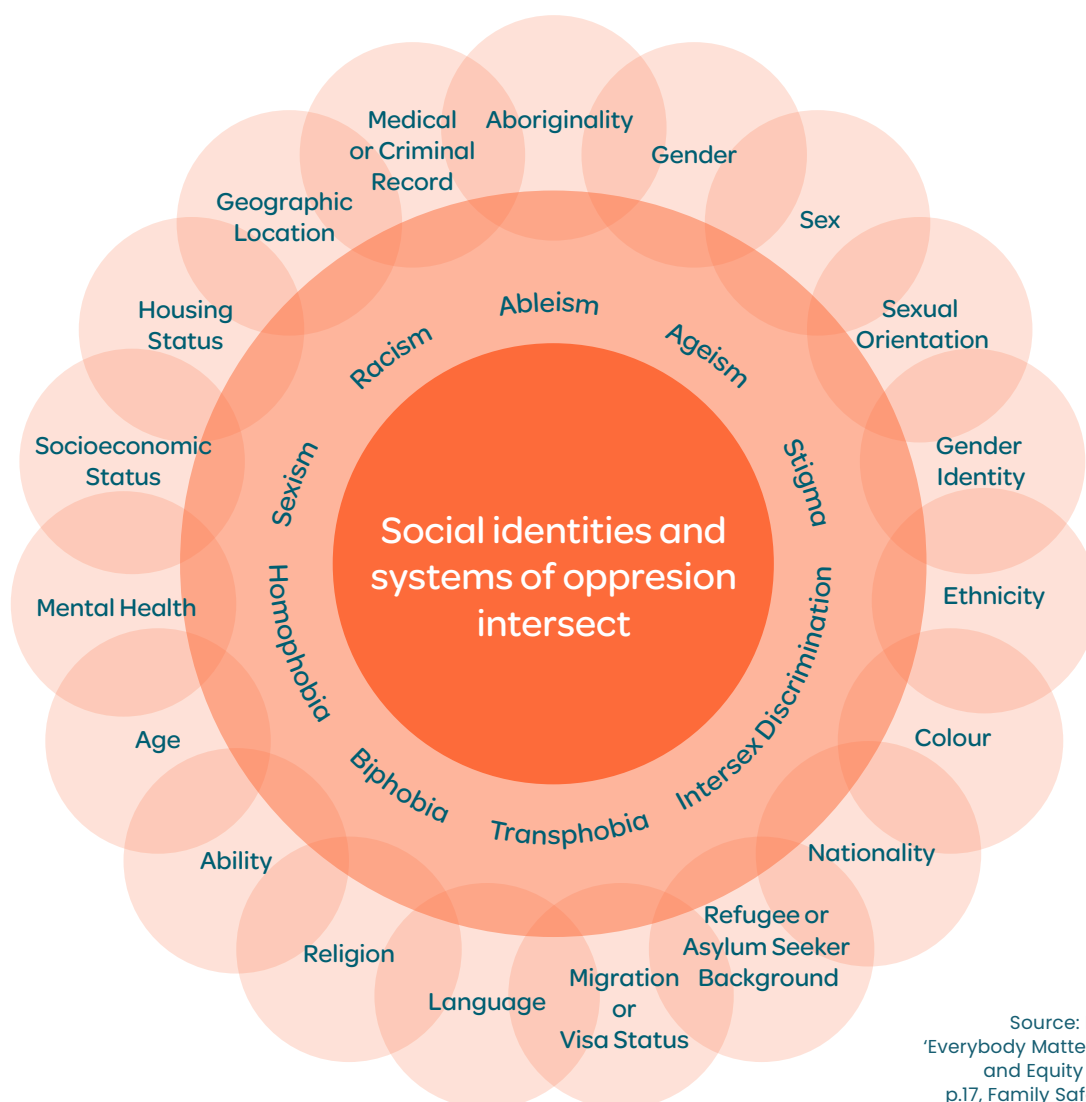




# 4. Intersectionality

While these four priority communities require discrete strategies and effort, we also know that co-occurrence and interplay between multiple forms of discrimination and exclusion compounds people's experience.

Everything is connected, and it's essential that we have sight of and can address the impact of multiple forms of exclusion. To this end, Berry Street will commit to understanding and embedding intersectional approaches to all areas of our work, in face to face services, and in the development of our people.



Source: Image from 'Everybody Matters: Inclusion and Equity Statement', p.17, Family Safety Victoria, Victorian Government

The Victorian Government has produced a clear roadmap for equity and inclusion through reform in the ***Everybody Matters: Inclusion and Equity Statement 2019–2029 (Everybody Matters)***, published in 2018. In this, intersectionality is defined as:

*‘an approach that understands the interconnected nature of social categorisations – such as gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity, language, religion, class, socioeconomic status, gender identity, ability or age – which create overlapping and interdependent systems of discrimination or disadvantage for either an individual or group’.*

In 2021 Berry Street will participate in a pilot conducted by Family Safety Victoria, to support how agencies embed inclusion and equity in policies, practice and culture. This pilot is a priority of Victoria’s ***Everybody Matters***, the Victorian Government’s 10-year commitment to building a more inclusive, safe, responsive and accountable family violence system for all Victorians.

Intersectionality is a term first used by American academic Kimberlé Crenshaw 30 years ago, to describe that “both women and people of colour are marginalised by discourses that are shaped to respond to one [identity] or the other, rather than both.” The term intersectionality affirms reality, in that we all experience life at “the intersections of overlapping systems of privilege and oppression.”<sup>xvii</sup> An intersectional approach ensures we respond to the entirety of a person’s experience rather than respond singularly to the most obvious (or visible) experience of exclusion or oppression.

Berry Street will ensure that the population specific strategies outlined within this framework are reflective of an intersectional and collaborative approach, and seek to better understand and overcome the compounding experiences of multiple, overlapping forms of exclusion within our programs.



# 5. Where do we start?

**Berry Street has committed to standing up to and disrupting racism, gendered violence, sexism, homophobia, transphobia, biphobia, ethnocentrism and structural oppression.**

This advocacy and action require us to act collectively, thoughtfully and with strength and humility. We will continue to commit resources and energy to the identified strategies and responses. However, the effectiveness of our response is dependent on more than simply recognising the problem and acting collectively – we must also address unconscious bias. Meaningful and sustainable inclusion will require all of us, as individuals and as citizens, to consider diversity by first recognising and reflecting on our own privilege, whether it be:

- white privilege
- cultural privilege
- male privilege
- heterosexual privilege
- cisgender privilege
- able bodied privilege
- neurotypical privilege
- socioeconomic privilege
- educational privilege.

Many of us will simultaneously recognise a combination of privilege and dis-privilege within our own life experience, and subsequently bring insights and perspective to Berry Street's commitment to diversity and inclusion. For those of us who are highly privileged, we must listen, defer to those with lived experiences and commit ourselves to being strong allies for the excluded communities we serve. We must be comfortable not being the experts, and we must all find ways to champion change by elevating the voices of those who are.

Awareness of privilege and of unconscious bias establishes the strong foundation necessary to address exclusion and oppression at all levels of the organisation. It will enable Berry Street to build diversity, inclusion and intersectionality *by design*, within the full scope of organisational architecture. This will ensure our commitment is coordinated and genuinely supported, and that we are held accountable in our change.



# How will we do this?

## Nothing about us without us

Key to this is to ensure all our planning and programming is done in authentic collaboration. Berry Street understands that a “nothing about us without us” approach requires that we are engaged in authentic relationships with these diverse groups. The implementation of this **Diversity & Inclusion Framework** cannot be achieved unless we work alongside our clients and other representatives from these diverse populations, taking the time to listen and being prepared to be changed by these conversations. The implementation of this framework must be underpinned by genuine partnerships and collaboration and we must be prepared to step aside to allow for diverse perspectives, voices and knowledge to change the way we operate and think.

Partnerships, engagement and collaboration will drive effective implementation of the Diversity & Inclusion Framework

### Berry Street's Diversity & Inclusion Framework Approach

**Carer engagement:** Create specific strategies to attract and retain carers from diverse communities.

**Infrastructure:** Ensure all spaces where clients and staff meet and work are inclusive, safe and accessible.

**Policy and practice:** Listen to the needs of service users to deepen our understanding, improve our practice, and develop and embed inclusive policies that promote diversity.

**Procurement:** Recognise and plan for inclusive procurement.

**Recruitment:** Embed deliberate strategies to engage a diverse workforce.

**Sector advocacy:** Nurture and enhance our partnerships and look for opportunities to collaborate.

**Service planning, design and delivery:** Regular and meaningful engagement and collaboration to ensure services are responsive to the needs of all clients and partners.

**Strategic decision making and annual planning:** Planning and decision making will be guided and influenced by a collaborative, inclusive approach.



# 6. Measuring Success

**Diversity and inclusion are highly complementary goals – the terms are also frequently used together and at times, interchangeably. However, they are not the same thing, and measurement requires separate analyses.**

To measure and improve the organisation's performance with respect to **diversity**, we can track representation of excluded groups within our own data. With targeted information management and data collection, diversity can be reflected and measured numerically. For this purpose, Berry Street has an ongoing commitment to improve the understanding of our own data and the multiple communities it represents. The Berry Street Data Strategy has been designed with this goal in mind, and will support improvements in how we collect, record, protect and analyse client data within our services and planning.

However, **inclusion** speaks to people having a sense of belonging. It is a subjective and qualitative measure not readily represented through data collection on service delivery. We may be providing services to more

children, young people and families from diverse communities, however this provides little evidence of cultural safety, or other intrapersonal shifts needed to build and sustain inclusion, such as feeling more hopeful, more confident or more connected to the broader community.

Service user satisfaction surveys and independent program evaluations are two useful mechanisms that can be deployed to monitor inclusion; however, being "snapshots", they must be repeated regularly to monitor organisational improvement. While surveys and evaluations can provide insights into service user experiences, Berry Street's long-term goal is to build an outcomes framework that is integrated within daily information management and data collection, and will measure inclusion in a purposeful, permanent and sustainable way.

# Closing statement

Berry Street's goal is to disrupt and dismantle oppressive systems and ways of thinking, and to build genuine inclusion within our services and within the community. Individually and collectively we will become better informed, we seek the truth and we will advocate alongside diverse communities. When enough individuals and organisations commit to truth-telling, active listening and inclusive practice, systemic change can occur. Berry Street's Diversity & Inclusion Framework puts forward our commitment to this change, and will serve as our roadmap to organisational growth and change.

*This framework will be reviewed and updated every three years.*



# Definitions

## ableism

Ableism is discrimination based on people's perceived or actual ability.

## accessibility

The extent to which something is able to be accessed by people with disabilities, such as offices, worksites and public areas.

## cisgender

The term "cisgender" (pronounced "sis-gender") refers to people whose gender identity and expression matches the biological sex they were assigned when they were born.

<https://theconversation.com/explainer-what-does-it-mean-to-be-cisgender-103159>

## co-design

Co-design is a movement, set of methods and mindsets. It is about challenging the imbalance of power often held within select groups of individuals, who make important decisions about others' lives, livelihoods and bodies. Often, with little to no involvement of the people who will be most impacted by those decisions. Co-design seeks to change that through building new relationships, capability and capacity for boundless curiosity. It uses inclusive convening to share knowledge and power.

## deep disadvantage and socioeconomic disadvantage (we use these interchangeably)

Disadvantage was traditionally understood as poverty, but low income does not necessarily establish disadvantage. Recognising the need for a better way of describing disadvantage that is linked more closely to living standards and quality of life, a number of broader concepts have emerged:

- » **deprivation**  
what people do not have because they cannot afford it
- » **capability**  
what people are effectively able to do and to be (their capabilities and functioning)
- » **social exclusion**  
the extent to which people are unable to participate adequately in economic, social and cultural life.

## diversity

Understanding that each individual is unique and recognising our individual differences, such as race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, age, physical abilities, religious beliefs, political beliefs, etc.

## equality, equity and inequality

- » **Equality** is the right of different groups of people to have a similar social position and receive the same treatment.
- » **Equity** is often used interchangeably with equality, but they have distinctly different meanings. While equality demands everyone should be treated the same regardless of differences, equity is giving everyone what they need to succeed.
- » **Inequality** means the unequal distribution within society of income, wealth and goods.

## gender conformity

Refers to the extent in which people experience pressure to conform to traditional gender norms (e.g. girls wear dresses and boys wear pants).

## gender non-conforming

A person or identity that doesn't conform to conventional gendered behaviour, expression, or gender roles.

## heteronormativity

Heteronormativity [...] is a system that works to normalize behaviors and societal expectations that are tied to the presumption of heterosexuality and an adherence to a strict gender binary.

<https://everydayfeminism.com/2015/07/what-is-heteronormativity/>

## intersectionality

Intersectionality is a lens through which we can see where power collides, where it interlocks and intersects. It's not simply that there's a race problem here, a gender problem here, and a class or LGBTQIA+ problem there. Looking at these things separately often erases what happens to people who are dealing with these things all at once.

## LGBTQIA+

- » **Lesbian** – used to describe a person who identifies as a female who is attracted to someone of the same identified gender.
- » **Gay** – most commonly used to describe someone who is attracted to someone of the same identified gender.
- » **Bisexual** – described as an attraction to someone of the same gender and other genders. Everyone's experience is a little different, and bi doesn't necessarily mean being attracted to only two genders.

## Definitions (cont.)

- » **Transgender** – sometimes gender diverse people feel that their gender doesn't match the sex they were assigned at birth, i.e. – someone born with a penis might identify as a girl – this is referred to as being transgender. Sometimes trans people change their name, their clothes, or even make change to their bodies. Sometimes they don't.
- » **Queer** – a common umbrella term used to mean anyone who is same gender attracted or gender diverse.
- » **Questioning/Unsure** – most people will question their sexual or gender identity at some point throughout their life. It can be confusing stuff, but it's also pretty normal.
- » **Intersex** – people are born with different kinds of bodies. People who are intersex are born with natural variations in their body that differ from what we might expect to be 'typically' male/female. This can include (but is not limited to) variations in hormones, chromosomes, and sexual organs. A lot of us are taught that when you have high testosterone that you're male, but if you're a male that is born with low testosterone you may describe yourself as intersex. There are heaps of ways that you can be intersex.
- » **Asexual / Ace** – someone who has little or no sexual attraction to other people.
- » **+** – used to describe communities outside heteronormative and cisgender identities that fall under the queer umbrella.

### neurodiversity

Neurodiversity consists of normal and natural variations of brain function and behavioural traits. Neurodiversity avoids looking at neurological differences as disabilities. Someone who is neurodiverse does not have incapacities, they just function in different ways to those who are neurotypical.

### racism

Racism takes many forms and can happen in many places. It includes prejudice, discrimination or hatred directed at someone because of their skin colour, ethnicity or national origin. People often associate racism with acts of abuse or harassment. However, it doesn't need to involve violent or intimidating behaviour – it can also mean racial name-calling and jokes. Or consider situations when people may be excluded from groups or activities because of where they come from.

### toxic masculinity

Toxic masculinity is the constellation of socially regressive male traits that serve to foster domination, the devaluation of women, homophobia, and wanton violence. JOURNAL OF CLINICAL PSYCHOLOGY, Vol. 61(6), 713–724 (2005) Toxic Masculinity as a Barrier to Mental Health Treatment in Prison Dr. Terry A. Kupers

### white privilege

White privilege is an institutional (rather than personal) set of benefits granted to those of us who, by race, resemble the people who dominate the powerful positions in our institutions. One of the primary privileges is that of having greater access to power and resources than people of color do; in other words, purely on the basis of our skin color doors are open to us that are not open to other people.

Francis E. Kendall, Ph.D., © 2002 (p.11)

<https://www.cpt.org/files/Undoing%20Racism%20-%20Understanding%20White%20Privilege%20-%20Kendall.pdf>

### white supremacy

The idea (ideology) that the ideas, thoughts, beliefs, and actions of white people are superior to people of colour and their ideas, thoughts, beliefs, and actions.

White supremacy also refers to a political or socioeconomic system where white people enjoy structural advantage and rights that other racial and ethnic groups do not, both at a collective and an individual level.

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Berry Street is committed to the principles of social justice. We respectfully acknowledge the traditional custodians of the lands, skies and waterways of Australia.

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