

**Submission
No 12**

**A FRAMEWORK FOR PERFORMANCE REPORTING AND DRIVING
WELLBEING OUTCOMES IN NSW**

Organisation: Sydney Bi plus Network

Date Received: 25 July 2024

Sydney Bi+ Network

Inquiry into a framework for performance reporting and driving wellbeing outcomes in NSW

Sydney Bi+ Network acknowledges that we organise and connect on stolen lands. We pay our respect to Elders past and present, and especially want to acknowledge First Nations LGBTQIA+ people, Brotherboys, and Sistergirls, who continue to lead the way in making change. Always was, always will be Aboriginal land.

About Sydney Bi+ Network

Sydney Bi+ Network (SBN) is a volunteer-run, grassroots organisation dedicated to improving the wellbeing of bi+ people through community building, education, and advocacy. While our activities are primarily based across Gadigal, Wangal, Cammeraygal, Bidjigal, Dharug, and Dharawal lands, bi+ folks across the state engage with our activities, ideas, and actions.

Our work spans three primary areas:

- **Community Building:** Building community for bi+ people is crucial to improving wellbeing. We create bi+ specific spaces, where people have an opportunity to strengthen connections with one another and share stories about lived experiences. Much of what we do in this space includes peer support.
- **Education:** Bi+ issues are unique and distinct from broader LGBTQIA+ experiences. Bi-erasure and biphobia commonly influence experiences that bi+ people have. Sydney Bi+ Network seeks to provide education that breaks down stigmas, myths, and misconceptions surrounding the bi+ community.
- **Advocacy:** Common perceptions and knowledge about LGBTQIA+ communities stems from information about lesbian and gay experiences. We seek to increase understanding of bi+ specific experiences and use this information to improve bi+ inclusion in services, programming, and policies

What Does Bi+ Mean?

We use bi+ as an umbrella term to describe people who are attracted to more than one gender, in any way, to any degree. Bi+ can include (but is not limited to) bisexual, pansexual, omnisexual, polysexual, biromantic, panromantic, queer, fluid, gay, lesbian, and questioning.

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Executive Summary

Sydney Bi+ Network welcomes the opportunity to provide a submission regarding an effective framework for performance reporting on NSW Government services and driving wellbeing outcomes in NSW.

Research continues to demonstrate that bi+ people experience worse health outcomes compared to lesbian, gay, and straight counterparts. With bi+ people named as a priority group in the 2022-2027 NSW LGBTIQ+ Health Strategy, now is the time for NSW to critically examine how bi+ health and wellbeing is measured, supported, and evaluated.

This submission begins with an overview of key data related to bi+ wellbeing in NSW as a way to contextualise bi+ people's experiences. Following this, the submission explores the extent to which the current Budget process supports the Government to observe evidence of program effectiveness, outcomes and service levels and transparency of performance.

The submission also discusses opportunities to improve:

- data collection and reporting to inform government decision making; and
- measurements of quality of life and wellbeing in New South Wales.

This submission was prepared by members of Sydney Bi+ Network on a voluntary basis.

Review of Bi+ Wellbeing Data

To understand the context within which bi+ people live and work, it is imperative to review contemporary research and data that highlights outcomes for bi+ communities. Existing research has found that, compared to our gay, lesbian, and straight counterparts, bi+ people have significant health disparities across a range of health areas. For example data relating to mental health and suicidality show that:

- 88.4.% pansexual participants reported having ever seriously considered attempting suicide.¹
- 79.7% bisexual participants reported having ever seriously considered attempting suicide.²
- Trans and gender diverse bisexual people are more likely to report high rates of psychological distress compared with cisgender bisexual people.³

¹ Hill, A. O., Bourne, A., McNair, R., Carman, M., Lyons, A. (2020) Private Lives 3: The health and wellbeing of LGBTIQ people in Australia. ARCSHS Monograph Series No. 122. Melbourne, Australia: Australian Research Centre in Sex, Health and Society, La Trobe University. Retrieved from https://www.latrobe.edu.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0009/1185885/Private-Lives-3.pdf

² Ibid

³ Taylor, J., Power, J., Smith, E., Rathbone, M. (2020). Bisexual mental health and gender diversity: Findings from the 'Who I Am' study. *Australian Journal of General Practice*, 49(7), <https://www1.racgp.org.au/getattachment/5ccc0c4b-7007-454a-ba3b-34ba87ecf185/Bisexual-mental-health-and-gender-diversity.aspx>

- 77.6% of bisexual people aged 18 and over reported having thoughts of suicide in their lifetime.
- 88.1% of pansexual people aged 14 to 21 reported experiencing high or very high levels of psychological distress
- 67.4% of pansexual people aged 14 to 21 reported having experienced suicidal ideation in the past 12 months.

Review of current Budget process

We propose that the Public Accounts Committee review how the current Budget process supports the Government to review program effectiveness and delivery of LGBTIQ+ and bi+-specific services. Whilst Sydney Bi+ Network does not play a role in the Budget process, we have reviewed the NSW Government's proposed consultation paper on the NSW Performance and Wellbeing Framework that was presented with the 2024/25 Budget.

We are supportive of the proposal for a NSW Performance and Wellbeing Framework. Sydney Bi+ Network proposes that any such Framework should include distinct and separate metrics and measures (indicators) for priority populations such as bi+ communities (as identified in the NSW LGBTIQ+ Health Strategy 2022-27).⁴ These indicators, and data from reporting on them, should inform future Budget processes.

Improvement to data collection and reporting

Population-level data for LGBTQIA+ communities remains limited. Sydney Bi+ Network recommends the review of NSW health and wellbeing data collection to ensure that variables on sex, gender, sexual orientation, and variations of sex characteristics are adequately and accurately being captured to better understand health needs and monitor the performance and responsiveness of service provision.

Improvement in data collection across NSW to better understand population needs and trends can also assist in better NSW Government decision-making and reporting. This is by ensuring that government decisions are informed through comprehensive data on the health and wellbeing outcomes for bi+ and the wider LGBTQIA+ communities. Improved data collection for LGBTQIA+ communities will also be crucial to assessing the effectiveness of a proposed NSW Performance and Wellbeing Framework.

Improvement to measurements of quality of life and wellbeing

Specific and targeted measurements of quality of life and wellbeing is imperative for the bi+ and wider LGBTQIA+ communities. Sydney Bi+ Network proposes that such measurements must be developed in consultation with community organisations and the wider community. This will allow for lived experience to inform these measurements and ensure that they are representative of a majority of our community.

⁴ NSW Minister of Health. (2022). NSW LGBTIQ+ health strategy 2022-2027: For people of diverse sexualities and genders, and intersex people, to achieve health outcomes that matter to them. <https://www.health.nsw.gov.au/lgbtiq-health/Publications/lgbtiq-health-strategy.pdf>

As an example, key measurements that Sydney Bi+ Network proposes for the bi+ community include:⁵

- **Community Connections** - Ability for bi+ people to seek out meaningful connections (including the need for bi+ specific spaces)
- **Health & Wellbeing** - Access to safe and responsive mental health and health services that are responsive to the needs of bi+ communities
- **Abundance** - Access to safe and affordable housing and meaningful work and opportunities for our community to thrive
- **Sustainability** - Ensuring that our environment and resources can support future generations through decisive and firm action on climate change
- **Inclusion** - All the spaces that bi+ people live and work in are inclusive and represent the diversity of our community.

These measurements can be reported on as indicators in the proposed NSW Performance and Wellbeing Framework and inform future Budget processes.

This is particularly important, considering that resourcing to support sustainable, bi+ community-led programming is limited. Bi+ people are routinely excluded from mainstream and LGBTIQ+ communities, policies, and at times, services.

Further, Australian Healthcare and Mental Healthcare providers are generally not adequately equipped or trained to effectively support LGBTIQ+ communities, including Bi+ communities. This was identified in a survey of NSW Health Staff where only one in three respondents (33%) had received formal training in LGBTIQ+ health.⁶ It is important to note that a primary reason for this is the availability of comprehensive research and data on LGBTIQ+ populations in health services and in general.⁷ In Sydney Bi+ Network's 2020 NSW Bi+ Community Needs survey, only 12% of respondents reported they were 'satisfied' or 'extremely satisfied' with the availability of Bi+ inclusive medical care in their local area, and the majority of respondents did not feel included in LGBTIQ+ communities.

Reporting on the above measurements that are specific to bi+ people will allow for a better review of the performance of services provided to the bi+ community. This will also ensure accountability back to the bi+ community through robust monitoring and evaluation mechanisms. This will lead to better funding allocation, and resourcing and education for bi+ specific services, as well as for LGBTIQ+ and general Government services that can better support bi+ communities.

⁵ These measures have been informed by community consultations and workshops that Sydney Bi+ Network have run. We are currently synthesising and reporting outcomes and themes from recent workshops and interviews conducted on Bi+ mental health and wellbeing. We have also used the Australian Government's Measuring What Matters Framework and the Wellbeing Framework developed by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD).

⁶ NSW Minister of Health. (2022). NSW LGBTIQ+ health strategy 2022-2027: Summary of Evidence. <https://www.health.nsw.gov.au/lgbtiq-health/Publications/lgbtiq-health-summary.pdf>, p 19

⁷ NSW Minister of Health. (2022). NSW LGBTIQ+ health strategy 2022-2027: For people of diverse sexualities and genders, and intersex people, to achieve health outcomes that matter to them. <https://www.health.nsw.gov.au/lgbtiq-health/Publications/lgbtiq-health-strategy.pdf>, p 12