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Re: Support the HRAD Bill and ask the Committee to recommend it be passed in this parliamentary term.

Gay and Lesbian Health Victoria (GLHV) is an independent, government-funded gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender and intersex (GLBTI) health and wellbeing policy and resource unit. GLHV sits within the Australian Research Centre in Sex, Health and Society (ARCSHS), La Trobe University. Its mission is 'to enhance and promote the health and wellbeing of GLBTI Victorians and to improve the quality of health care they receive'. GLHV's key tasks include providing training across health, education and community sectors on GLBTI health and wellbeing and appropriate service delivery. It also includes providing advice to Government on the planning, development and implementation of future GLBTI policies, programs and services.

GLHV is aware of the impact of discrimination on the health and wellbeing of GLBTI people and the importance of developing GLBTI-inclusive services. The data are unambiguous in showing that homophobic and transphobic discrimination and abuse are the cause of reduced mental and physical health for this population. Less obvious are the *indirect* effects of such discrimination on GLBTI people's health and in particular their reduced access to and use of health services. Many GLBTI people delay seeking assistance in the expectation that they will be discriminated against or receive ill-informed and less than optimal care. This indirect discrimination leads to GLBTI people presenting later in disease progression with a poorer prognosis and health outcomes.

GLHV, in partnership with Quality Improvement and Services Accreditation (QICSA), has developed a set of national standards (The Rainbow Tick) against which organizations can be formally accredited to demonstrate GLBTI-inclusive practice and service delivery. GLHV also provides a range of training and resources to assist organizations in gaining Rainbow Tick accreditation. This work is vital in addressing the indirect effects of discrimination against GLBTI people, improving their access to and use of mainstream health services, and with that their overall health and wellbeing.

We are aware that some opponents of the HRAD Bill are suggesting that it should not be passed. Passage of the Bill is vital to addressing the causes and effects of the discrimination experienced by GLBTI people, a history of discrimination that continues to lessen the quality of life for GLBTI people and with that the lives of all Australians. 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 GLBTI 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.

Yours sincerely,

William Leonard
Director, Gay and Lesbian Health Victoria