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# **Supporting Same-Sex Attracted and Gender Diverse Young People of Multicultural and Multifaith Backgrounds**

## ***Executive Summary and Full Research Report***

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My deep thanx to long-time inspirations and pioneers embodied in Commissioner Ro Allen, Carmel Guerra and Soo-Lin Quek. My deep thanx to Maria Katsonis and Matt Dixon: getting to know you and your persistent and passionate insights and work has been a beautiful gift. I thoroughly appreciate working with the 5 of you: the mentoring, the faith in my work, the shared laughter and the shared sadness as we discussed the evolving report, go beyond the term “Advisory”.

Like too many insightful words spoken by participants which ended up on the cutting room floor, the following phrases speak volumes, literally and symbolically:

“We need more Carmel Guerras in this world”.

“Just even watching what having the Gender and Sexuality Commissioner has done, it's hard to see how having people in designated positions for multicultural, queer representation would be a negative thing at all”.

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### 1. INTRODUCTION

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Deakin University and the Australian GLBTIQ Multicultural Council Inc. (AGMC) are pleased to provide this research report to the Victorian Commissioner for Gender and Sexuality, Ro Allen, and the Advisory Group: Carmel Guerra, CEO of the Centre for Multicultural Youth; Soo-Lin Quek, Knowledge & Advocacy Manager of the Centre for Multicultural Youth; and Matt Dixon, Director of the Equality Branch of the Department of Premier and Cabinet. The research project involved conducting a case study analysis of the needs of SSAGD (same-sex attracted and gender diverse) young people of multicultural and multifaith (MCMF) backgrounds, and how these needs can be addressed by government, and by their cultural and religious communities.

### 2. RESEARCH AIMS

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The purposes of the research were to:

- **Develop an understanding of the perspectives and needs of SSAGD young people of MCMF backgrounds;**
- **Develop an understanding of the perspectives and needs of cultural and religious community leaders/service providers in supporting SSAGD young people;**
- **Formulate future directions in policies, resourcing and strategies from within MCMF communities which would improve the health and wellbeing of SSAGD young people;**
- **Identify potential synergies with other sectors, such as education and health;**
- **Identify strategies to coordinate across Victoria, and across sectors including state government, local government, non-government organisations, academia and commercial/corporate; and**
- **Recommend a prioritized suite of strategies for the Victorian state government to invest in, and which align with the objectives of the Equality Branch and the Commissioner for Gender and Sexuality**

### 3. METHODOLOGY

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#### a) *Participants and Recruitment Strategies*

Through AGMC, Rainbow Network, Centre for Multicultural Youth (CMY), the Multicultural Centre for Women's Health (MCWH), the Victorian Multicultural Commission (VMC), Ethnic Communities Council of Victoria (ECCV) and other organisations, potential research participants were invited by the researcher using direct contact to be involved in the study. Participants were thus recruited via purposive sampling (Palys, 2008). Snowball sampling was also employed to increase participation (Morgan, 2008). This method of sampling occurs when one participant suggests another potential participant who could be approached to take part in the research.

Two categories of participants were recruited:

- CATEGORY 1:- 10 SSAGD MCMF young people (YP) 16-24 years of age
- CATEGORY 2:- 10 MCMF diverse community and religious leaders and representatives from a range of programs/initiatives, locations and organisations (CL)

Two tables of the research participant demographics are provided in Appendix A. As discussed later in the Report, it proved difficult to find a young person of Italian or Greek background by the time it was necessary to write up the research, resulting in 9 YP.

It is also important to understand that the categories of YP and CL are not dichotomous. Some young people were community leaders engaged in running programs in various organisations; and some community leaders spoke from their professional and faith positions as well as from a personal experiential position of having a SSAGD MCMF identity. This overlapping of categories added to the richness and insightfulness of the data.

## ***b) Research Methods***

The qualitative research was conducted via semi-structured, in-depth interviews. Participants were interviewed for approximately 45-60 minutes, all face-to-face except one emailed written response. With the participants' consent, the interviews were recorded. The role of the researcher in the interviews was that of an active listener. The participants were asked the same set of questions but were given freedom to deviate from the questions. Qualitative data generated from the interviews was transcribed verbatim and then thematically coded to analyse the views of participants (Flick 2002).

Decolonising research design and practices (Moreton-Robinson, 2013; Tuhiwai-Smith, 2012) were fundamental to this research:

- sensitive to the safety and anonymity of participants,
- empowering the participants to voice their perspectives and continue their important work,
- participant-driven whereby any areas not raised within the research guidelines but of significance to the interviewee could be raised and discussed,
- interested in 'people's perceptions, views, intentions and logic of thinking, using those people's words' (Axford et al. 2004:8), although the quotations were edited to (i) avoid discomfort to participants with English as a Second Language, and (ii) focus on the participants' major points,
- audiotapes and transcripts of the interviews were returned to participants to edit, add to, veto, and keep for their own future purposes and projects.

## ***c) Research Questions/Interview Guidelines***

The following research questions were adapted and modified according to whether interviewing a MCMF community leader or SSAGD young person:

- What needs do MCMF SSAGD young people have?
- What desires and requirements do SSAGD young people have regarding involvement in social and support programs? Are these desires and requirements being met? Why or why not?

- What are the strengths and weaknesses of the various MCMF programs and resources already in place?
- What are the opportunities and risks associated with undertaking these and future programs?
- What are the gaps or obstructions to supporting MCMF SSAGD young people?
- What are the opportunities for efficiencies and effectiveness in supporting MCMF SSAGD young people?
- What factors contribute to supporting MCMF SSAGD young people?
- How do we know whether programs are succeeding or failing? How is this measured?
- What aspects of the programs are conflicting or complementary?
- Which programs cover education? How is the role of schools, both secular and religious, envisaged?
- What are examples of best practice in programs (state, national and international)? Why are these programs successful?
- What are the opportunities for greater collaboration and networking between SSAGD young people, key programs and stakeholders?
- What are the similarities and differences between the approaches of sectors such as local government, state government, community organisations and non-government agencies?
- What are the similarities and differences between metropolitan, regional and rural programs?
- What training is provided to community leaders? How are the training needs determined? How effective are the training opportunities?
- How many community leaders are currently actively involved in formal programs versus informal activities?
- What funding mechanisms support the work? How much does each program/initiative cost? What opportunities exist for cost savings within and between programs and initiatives?
- What resources are required for programs and initiatives to succeed? What opportunities exist for organisations/programs/initiatives to share resources?
- What are the key requirements for successful and long-term initiatives?
- What opportunities exist to improve efficiencies, collaboration and coordination across sectors?

- Who is silenced in discussing the needs of SSAGD young people? Who are the gatekeepers and how would/could we access alternative voices? What discussions are required and with whom?
- How do we engage ethnic and religious media to provide access to debates and texts and examples of a *range* of lived realities of gender and sexuality within their own cultures in Australia and in countries of origin?

## 4. SUMMARY OF RESEARCH FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

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The findings will be organized according to the following headings, which are a combination of the original research questions and specific themes introduced to the interviews by the participants. Sections C-J are presented according to their prevalence in the interviews.

### A. The Needs of MCMF SSAGD young people

#### Recommendations

- **Research, policy and program development need to be more inclusive by engaging with a greater understanding of and engagement with the intersections of ethnicity, religion, class, disabilities, spiritualities, age, sexualities and genders. This is particularly pertinent to third generation SSAGD MCMF who embody multiple, mixed and emerging identity formations and labels.**
- **The adoption of more inclusive terms such as Multicultural Multifaith (MCMF) to replace Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) allows for greater understanding of and engagement with diversity in research, policy development, and program design.**
- **Government and community organisations to invest in projects and events which acknowledge, explore and showcase SSAGD MCMF cultural heritages, such as a drop-in centre with a library; an exhibition at the Immigration Museum or Pride Centre, with artwork and artists from across the globe.**
- **Government and other funding bodies such as universities to support research projects that explore and uncover SSAGD narratives and historical cultural constructs in MCMF communities.**
- **In conjunction with SSAGD young people, government and community organisations to develop whole of community strategies to support young people and their families in the face of potential negative and/or violent ramifications of their disclosure and/or discovery by members of their MCMF communities and/or the broader Australian community. Responses must include stakeholders from policy makers to policing to social welfare and community sectors.**

- The development of familial, community and statewide responses and strategies to address any potential “homophobic” repercussions to increasing visibility and vocality of SSAGD MCMF young people’s experiences, needs and affirmations in both cultural communities and the broader Australian community.
- The provision of practical resourcing for safety such as:
  - ✚ Crisis accommodation and safe meeting spaces
  - ✚ Mediation services that are relevant and appropriate for MCMF communities to strengthen intergenerational and intra-familial relationships
  - ✚ Community conversations to foster physical, psychological and spiritual safety for young people

**B. The Strengths and Weaknesses of Existing MCMF SSAGD Programs and Resources**

**Recommendations**

- Service providers must engage and collaborate with SSAGD MCMF young people and their organisations to ensure program design and implementation, and resource development, are appropriate and relevant to their needs.
- Programming and resourcing strategies must address the complex needs of MCMF communities when developing specific SSAGD programs eg unemployment, financial hardships, discrimination.
- Resources and program development must identify and utilise existing research and resources to avoid replication and duplication.
- Good practice models to be promoted and shared; sufficient funds and in-kind resourcing allocated for the dissemination and promotion of completed resources and programs that are benchmarked as good practice.
- Training of bilingual/bi-cultural health educators to facilitate SSAGD MCMF programs.
- Culturally and religiously specific social groups for SSAGD to be established, within which to develop and provide resources and conduct programs.
- School-based SSAGD MCMF groups to be established that are resourced and supported to conduct youth-led projects.

- Faith and community leaders, as well as community service providers, to establish culturally and religiously specific support groups for parents of SSAGD MCMF young people.

### **C. The Need to Engage and Educate Religious Leaders**

#### **Recommendations**

- Faith leaders to encourage visible signs of welcome, programs and resources in religious places of worship which promote SSAGD inclusion, participation and leadership.
- Faith leaders to be engaged and educated through inter-faith and intra-faith forums, roundtable discussions and other events, in consultation with and/or with the presence of SSAGD MCMF young people.
- In consultation and collaboration with faith leaders, government bodies, community organisations and cultural community leaders will clarify rights and responsibilities, develop policies and statements, resources and programs pertaining to spiritual leadership, social leadership, and the pastoral care of community members in settings such as hospitals, schools and the courts.
- Genuine engagement of religious leaders in inter and intra faith discussions on gender diversity and same sex attraction to be supported.

### **D. The Need to Engage Cultural Community Leaders**

#### **Recommendations**

- Government and service providers to identify and engage community leaders who are respected and willing to come together, formulate a position, and articulate it publicly.
- Government and service providers to identify, support and engage “unofficial” or hidden community leaders to come forward, participate and safely represent their communities’ perspectives.
- Government and service providers to utilize strategies of anonymity and confidentiality to maintain safety for community leaders and/or individual community members in supporting SSAGD young people in MCMF contexts.

- The collaborations of leaders from a range of communities to develop intercultural and interfaith service provision for SSAGD young people must be supported.
- Community leaders must be supported in raising awareness on issues affecting SSAGD young people for all parents and families in a culturally appropriate manner.
- SSAGD young people to be engaged to meet, dialogue and work with MCMF community leaders in the development and planning of policy, programs, resources and publicity.
- Community leaders need to recognise and address the links between homophobia and the radicalization of some SSAGD young people who are indoctrinated to believe that acts of violence in the name of their faith will purge them from eternal punishment for their same sex attractions.

#### **E. The Need for Funding and Other Forms of Resourcing**

##### **Recommendations**

- Government and service providers to deliver community training workshops in preparing grant applications
- The following are to be prioritized in government funding:
  - ✚ paid positions in volunteer organisations and groups;
  - ✚ existing MCMF organisations with a track record of previous commitments and work for SSAGD MCMF;
  - ✚ new MCMF organisations partnering with existing ones in respectful ways that extend previous work rather than replicate it;
  - ✚ projects created by SSAGD MCMF young people for themselves (auspiced by credible organisations who have demonstrated long-standing successful projects and project management).
- Accountability to and participation of SSAGD MCMF communities to be demonstrated in all grant aims and outcomes/evaluations, not just grants specifically catering to these communities.

## **F. The Role of Government and Policy**

### **Recommendations**

- **Stronger community collaborations and consultations in the development and implementation of policy to avoid a top-down approach, and to successfully navigate between general policy statements and implementation specificities.**
- **More effective use of local councils as bridges between state government and local MCMF communities.**
- **Remove religious exemptions in schools which negatively impact on the health and wellbeing of MCMF SSAGD students, staff and families.**
- **Marriage equality policies require an understanding of and frameworks about the multiple positions of MCMF SSAGD in relation to culture, privilege and other social health needs.**
- **Workplace policies such as anti-discrimination policies to address the ongoing discrimination of MCMF SSAGD employees.**

## **G. The Role of the Wider LGBTIQ Community**

### **Recommendations**

- **Recognise, name and address racism, religious bigotry and other discriminations that prevent MCMF SSAGD individuals from joining and staying engaged within LGBTIQ community structures and organisations.**
- **Recognise and address barriers to MCMF SSAGD individuals taking positions of leadership within LGBTIQ organizations.**
- **The forthcoming Pride Centre to be a space of diversity, inclusion and specificity.**

## **H. The Need for MCMF SSAGD Role Models, Mentors and Youth Leaders**

### **Recommendations**

- **Service providers and community organizations to support MCMF SSAGD role models, mentors and leaders, particularly young people whilst at the same time ensuring there is a good mix of all ages.**
- **Service providers and community organizations to establish and fund buddy programs to support young MCMF SSAGD role models, peer leaders and spokespersons.**

- **Service providers and community organizations to provide SSAGD MCMF young people with formal and informal access to older role models and mentors who can provide appropriate support and encouragement**

### **I. The Role of Education and Health Sectors**

#### **Recommendations**

- **Government educational bodies to build on existing educational policies, programs and resources which address the needs of SSAGD MCMF young people in schools.**
- **Any state or national educational policy, initiative, program or resource such as the Safe Schools Coalition must be undertaken with thorough and ongoing consultation and collaboration with MCMF communities to ensure cultural relevancy and to prevent negative and fear-inducing mis-information from gaining authority in these communities.**
- **Universities and other tertiary education sectors to develop stronger policies, programs and resources in order to support the inclusion and social and civic participation of MCMF SSAGD young people, particularly international students.**
- **Counsellors and counselling services to build on existing research, resource-development and education in order to encourage access by SSAGD MCMF young people.**
- **Health researchers to undertake research with SSAGD MCMF young people and their families in regard to appropriate and effective mental health service provision.**

### **J. The Role of The Media**

#### **Recommendations**

- **Research media consumption and/or media creation, especially online media, of SSAGD MCMF young people and their families and communities.**
- **Media training to be provided across the range of ethnic and mainstream and online and traditional mediums to enable accurate representations of SSAGD MCMF young people and their families.**
- **Mainstream media to be trained regarding how they can work more respectfully with SSAGD MCMF young people, their families and communities.**
- **Ethnic media to be engaged in discussions, funding and developing policies and plans for increased and accurate SSAGD MCMF representations.**

- **Develop and fund social media strategies for SSAGD MCMF young people, their youth groups, families and communities**

## 5. CONCLUSION AND SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

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When reconsidering the initial research aims and questions, and subsequent recommendations based on the findings, the following overall needs become apparent:

- **There is a need for a more in depth understanding of the intersections between issues of race, culture, religion, class, disabilities, spiritualities, ages, sexualities and genders in SSAGD MCMF young people. And this understanding needs to frame all policy, program, resourcing and implementation strategies.**
- **A relationship of trust has to be established between government bodies, SSAGD and MCMF service providers, SSAGD MCMF young people and MCMF communities, particularly their religious and community leaders. A major strategy in achieving this is consultation and collaboration with SSAGD MCMF young people and their MCMF communities from the initial stages of planning potential research, policy and resourcing directions, through to the final stages of implementing, disseminating and publicising policies, programs and resources.**
- **Predominantly Anglo-SSAGD communities and organisations have a very significant role to play in becoming more culturally and religiously inclusive, and providing safe spaces. The forthcoming Pride Centre would be a welcomed demonstration of “inclusion with specificity” in action.**
- **Government bodies, particularly in relation to health and education sectors, need to discuss potential directions in regards to**
  - ✚ **complete or partial removal of religious exemptions,**
  - ✚ **compulsory inclusion of SSAGD MCMF aims and evaluations in grant applications, and**
  - ✚ **the training and support of SSAGD MCMF community leaders, mentors and role models.**

## FULL REPORT

### 1. INTRODUCTION

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Deakin University and the Australian GLBTIQ Multicultural Council Inc. (AGMC) are pleased to provide this research report to the Victorian Commissioner for Gender and Sexuality, Ro Allen, and the Advisory Group: Carmel Guerra, Director of the Centre for Multicultural Youth; Soo-Lin Quek, Knowledge & Advocacy Manager of the Centre for Multicultural Youth; and Matt Dixon, Director of the Equality Branch of the Department of Premier and Cabinet. The research project involved conducting a case study analysis of the needs of SSAGD (same-sex attracted and gender diverse) young people of multicultural and multifaith (MCMF) backgrounds, and how these needs can be addressed by government, and their cultural and religious communities.

### 2. BACKGROUND

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Ethnic identity is a person's sense of belonging to a particular ethnic group. This involves participating in and negotiating that group's cultural, religious and other traditions, beliefs and values. Being a same-sex attracted and trans\* young person raised within an ethnic group requires the negotiation and interweaving of varying and multiple regulations, expectations and social codes in relation to gender, sexuality, faith and ethnicity. These regulations, expectations and codes are coming from the young person's ethno-religious families and communities; predominantly white GLBTIQ communities; and a wider predominantly white heteronormative and gendernormative society. SSAGD young people from diverse ethnic and religious backgrounds require various policies, practices and other strategies to be implemented in education systems, queer community and ethno-religious community health services, and in the wider society's health services (Pallotta-Chiarolli, 1995; 2005a).

Savin-Williams (1998) presents three main developmental tasks of SSAGD young people from MCMF backgrounds that are not necessarily experienced by SSAGD young people from dominant Anglo-white backgrounds. First, the young person needs to cultivate a sexual/gender identity and an ethnic/religious identity. Second, the young person must

resolve any conflicts that may arise in claiming allegiance to an ethnic/religious reference group and to a queer community; and third, the young person needs to negotiate any stigmas and discrimination encountered because of the interconnections of homophobia, transphobia, racism and sexism.

Many SSAGD young people from MCMF backgrounds want to belong to and feel they have a place in their families and ethnic communities. Their ethnic community and family can nurture a cultural identification, offer a deep sense of ethnic heritage and values, and provide a sense of self within the context of a family that shares a youth's struggles and oppressions such as racism and classism (Beckett et al, 2014; Low & Pallotta-Chiarolli, 2015).

Some ethnic families, such as those from diverse Asian and African countries, see homosexuality as a manifestation of secularisation imposed by a "morally decadent", urbanised Western white culture (Jaspal & Cinnirella, 2010; Shannahan, 2010; Beckett et al, 2014). Linked to ethnicity and family expectations is religion, both within the ethnic community and framed by the wider society's homophobic churches. For example, the breaking of religious regulations for SSAGD young people from diverse Islamic backgrounds may lead to guilt, intimidation and excommunication from the family and community. This is framed by mainstream Christian condemnation in society that may perpetuate and reinforce the fundamentalist non-Christian views of some ethno-religious community gatekeepers.

Previous research has shown that SSAGD young people from MCMF backgrounds identify seven significant factors in the successful negotiation of their various identities and communities. First, strong support networks and friendships with other SSAGD people of same and/or similar cultural and religious backgrounds are considered of great significance (Jackson & Sullivan, 1999). Likewise, having access to and participation in both GLBTIQ and ethnic communities while transcending both to live with a code of their own is important (Pallotta-Chiarolli, 1998). Third, young people want control over how, when and if to "come out" to their ethnic families as well as receiving acceptance and support for those decisions from their GLBTIQ friends, MCMF friends and school friends (Greene, 1997; Hammoud-Beckett, 2007). Fourth, media coverage of SSAGD MCMF individuals and role models, and historical facts about sexual diversity within their own "home" cultures need to be made available in both ethnic community and mainstream news, ethnic and mainstream television, film, music and online media (Sears & Williams, 1997; Savin-Williams, 1998; Drucker, 2000; Shanahan, 2010). Similarly, schools and other educational systems can address racism, sexism and homophobia equally, consistently and in interconnected ways via curriculum

(such as the provision of texts, lessons, research projects, community involvement); student welfare policies (such as anti-harassment and equal opportunity policies); and behaviour management (such as homophobic behaviour being dealt with alongside other behavioural issues) (Pallotta-Chiarolli, 2005a). Universities and other post-secondary education centres can also make provisions and policies in relation to health centres, student services, and student clubs and organisations such as ethnic and GLBTIQ clubs, that actively promote and implement anti-racist and anti-homophobic policies, as well as catering for the specific concerns of SSAGD MCMF young people (Jackson & Sullivan, 1999). Finally, MCMF SSAGD young people want GLBTIQ community organisations and services, venues, and media to promote and implement policies and practices that cater for their diverse MCMF backgrounds (Pallotta-Chiarolli, 1998).

Schools, GLBTIQ community services, ethnic community services and mainstream health services need to undertake research into their multicultural, multisexual populations (Fish, 2008; Yip, 2008); make available more personal accounts of growing up “multiculturally queer” as are available in anthologies and autobiographies (e.g. Manji, 2003; Siraf, 2006; Katsonis, 2015); and incorporate multisexuality into multicultural school and community events (Sears & Williams, 1997).

In 2016 in Victoria, there still exists the silencing and exclusion of sexual and gender diversities in heterosexist multicultural multifaith policies, discourses, community spaces and services. Multiculturalism as policy and practice cannot sit comfortably and confidently with global citizenship and ethical engagement with diversity if it does not include SSAGD histories, heritages and contemporary realities (eg Murray & Roscoe, 1997; Tamale, 2011). There are ongoing dilemmas, concerns and strategies in placing “multisexuality” and “multigender” on the “multicultural” agenda, particularly in relation to policy development and research. Past Victorian-specific research which has been undertaken include:

- ✚ a community consultation research project on SSAGD young people from MCMF communities hosted by the Centre for Multicultural Youth and Victoria University and the resulting report, *Teaching Diversities: Same-sex attracted young people, CALD communities and arts-based community engagement* (Harris 2011);
- ✚ *Nothing For Them: Understanding the support needs of LGBT young people from refugee and newly arrived backgrounds* (Noto et al, 2014) followed by *Something for them: Meeting the support needs of same-sex attracted and sex and gender diverse young people who are recently arrived, refugees or asylum seekers* (Mejia-Canales & Leonard, 2016);

- ✚ the Multicultural Centre for Women’s Health report, *Coming out, coming home or inviting people in? Supporting same-sex attracted women from immigrant and refugee communities* (Poljski, 2011); and
- ✚ a recent Social Cohesion Policy Brief from the Ethnic Communities Council of Victoria (ECCV) which reports on a consultation with ‘less visible’ faith leaders, *I can make a change: A rose by any other name* (Gopalkrishnan, 2016).

The establishment of the AGMC Inc (Australian GLBTIQ Multicultural Council Inc; agmc.org.au) in Victoria in 2004 and the many multicultural and multifaith GLBTIQ state and interstate social and support groups are a testimony to the need to engage with people’s lived experiences of negotiating and interweaving multiple identities, multiple group allegiances, multiple community belongings and the subsequent borderdwelling. In Victoria alone there are now at least 20 SSAGD MCMF groups representing over 34 cultures. These groups provide an important ongoing support and developmental role within the GLBTIQ community. The Inaugural National Multicultural GLBTIQ Conference, ‘Living and Loving in Diversity’, the very first conference of its kind held anywhere in Australia, was achieved in October 2004 (Pallotta-Chiarolli, 2008). Over 200 people per day attended the Conference. The participants represented a mix of government and not for profit organisations and individuals.

In 2008, the AGMC developed and disseminated a Recommendations document (Chang & Apostle, 2008). Some of the Recommendations, which this current research will be addressing, include:

- **There is a need for a more in depth understanding of identities within the GLBTIQ community. In particular, to understand the intersections between issues of race, culture, religion, class, disabilities, spirituality, age, and sexualities and genders.**
- **There is a need to challenge the association of particular cultures and religions with inherent homophobia.**
- **A relationship of trust has to be established between government bodies, service providers and the multicultural community.**
- **Ethnographic research on the relationship between migration and sexuality needs to be commissioned. Academic and Research Networks need to make such research accessible to communities and engage the Multicultural GLBTIQ communities through the entire process.**

### 3. RESEARCH AIMS

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The purposes of the research were to:

- **Develop an understanding of the perspectives and needs of SSAGD young people of MCMF backgrounds;**
- **Develop an understanding of the perspectives and needs of cultural and religious community leaders/service providers in supporting SSAGD young people;**
- **Formulate future directions in policies, resourcing and strategies from within MCMF communities which would improve the health and wellbeing of SSAGD young people;**
- **Identify potential synergies with other sectors, such as education and health;**
- **Identify strategies to coordinate across Victoria, and across sectors including state government, local government, non-government organisations, academia and commercial/corporate; and**
- **Recommend a prioritized suite of strategies for the Victorian state government to invest in, and which align with the objectives of the Equality Branch and the Commissioner for Gender and Sexuality.**

## 4. METHODOLOGY

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### a) Participants and Recruitment Strategies

Through AGMC, Rainbow Network, Centre for Multicultural Youth (CMY), the Multicultural Centre for Women's Health (MCWH), the Victorian Multicultural Commission (VMC), Ethnic Communities Council of Victoria (ECCV) and other organisations, potential research participants were invited by the researcher using direct contact to be involved in the study. Participants were thus recruited via purposive sampling (Palys, 2008). Snowball sampling was also employed to increase participation (Morgan, 2008). This method of sampling occurs when one participant suggests another potential participant who could be approached to take part in the research.

Two categories of participants were recruited:

- CATEGORY 1:- 10 SSAGD MCMF young people (YP) 16-24 years of age
- CATEGORY 2:- 10 MCMF diverse community and religious leaders and representatives from a range of programs/initiatives, locations and organisations (CL)

Two tables of the research participant demographics are provided in Appendix A. It proved difficult to find a young person of Italian or Greek background by the time it was necessary to write up the research, resulting in 9 YP.

It is also important to understand that the categories of YP and CL are not dichotomous. Some young people were community leaders engaged in running programs in various organisations; and some community leaders spoke from their professional and faith positions as well as from a personal experiential position of having a SSAGD MCMF identity. This overlapping of categories added to the richness and insightfulness of the data.

When quoting from the participants, YP and CL will be used to denote Young Person or Community Leader respectively. Age, gender, sexuality, faith and ethnicity will also be provided as specified by the interviewees.

An analysis of the demographic tables led to the following observations and questions:

1. The ever-shifting language among MCMF SSAGD young people in describing/defining their sexualities and genders, such as “demisexual”.
2. The cultural and faith intermixtures within young people’s backgrounds (eg, Muslim and Catholic, Turkish and Filipino) pointed to a generation living multiculturalism and multiplicity of identity as everydayness in their families.
3. The prevalence of heterosexual community leaders and representatives with only a few lesbian and gay leaders among younger leaders.
4. While the Project brief asked for general or officially recognised MCMF community leaders, would MCMF SSAGD young people recognise these formal community leaders as their own leaders? Is there a level of informal community leaders that future research and implementation needs to contact and include? These questions will be further discussed in the findings and recommendations.
5. Attempts were made to contact Buddhist, Catholic and Greek Orthodox religious leaders but were unsuccessful.
6. Attempts were made to reach an Italian and/or Greek SSAGD young person but were unsuccessful. This leads to reflecting upon if and why these issues seem to be more pertinent to newly arrived and first generation MCMF SSAGD as contrasted to third generation who may have more successfully integrated their cultures and sexualities within their various communities. Is this why they seemed less interested or emphatic about wanting to speak about these issues? Is length of time in Australia a pertinent factor to the decline of marginalization among SSAGD MCMF young people? These questions will be further discussed in the findings and recommendations.
8. There was some reluctance from some MCMF community members to participate. This manifested itself in emails and phone calls not being answered, or final dates not being arrived at. It was agreed the researcher would cease trying to contact

community leaders who were not responding as her actions may have been construed as harassment.

## b) Research Methods

The qualitative research was conducted via semi-structured, in-depth interviews. Participants were interviewed for approximately 45-60 minutes, all face-to-face except one emailed written response. With the participants' consent, the interviews were recorded. The role of the researcher in the interviews was that of an active listener. The participants were asked the same set of questions but were given freedom to deviate from the questions. Qualitative data generated from the interviews was transcribed verbatim and then thematically coded to analyse the views of participants (Flick 2002).

Decolonising research design and practices (Moreton-Robinson, 2013; Tuhiwai-Smith, 2012) were fundamental to this research:

- sensitive to the safety and anonymity of participants,
- empowering the participants to voice their perspectives and continue their important work,
- participant-driven whereby any areas not raised within the research guidelines but of significance to the interviewee could be raised and discussed,
- interested in 'people's perceptions, views, intentions and logic of thinking, using those people's words' (Axford et al. 2004:8), although the quotations were edited to (i) avoid discomfort to participants with English as a Second Language, and (ii) focus on the participants' major points,
- audiotapes and transcripts of the interviews were returned to participants to edit, add to, veto, and keep for their own future purposes and projects.

Indeed, several participants commented on how this was the first time or one of the few times they had felt comfortable to speak so honestly about their sexualities, genders and families to anyone:

I've had an entire lifetime of thinking about this stuff. This is probably one of the first times I've ever talked about it to somebody that I essentially don't know until today...Even with friends and family I've never been able to talk about it at this level because they just wouldn't understand.

(CL, 26, F, lesbian, Catholic, Filipina)

Many of the young participants also commented on how they had never undertaken research wherein they were allowed to read and edit their transcripts, and the audiotape of their interviews and transcripts were theirs to own and use in their own future endeavours. Due to their study, work, social and activist commitments, it was difficult to get transcripts returned. Likewise, most of the community leaders cited work, family and community responsibilities making it difficult to find time to read the transcripts. In both situations, while it may have meant that further data was missed after time for reflection, this was also an example of trusting the researcher and the Advisory Group to represent their perspectives and experiences respectfully, anonymously and accurately:

I think that it's really good when there is projects like these where people are allowed to take part without having to necessarily come out and be named and then being forced into a leader position or a spokesperson position when that's not what they want but still being able to voice their opinions and give feedback. I think that makes it really hard for a large group of people to be able to engage with the mainstream LGBTIQ community because they can't remain anonymous and have to come out.

(CL, 27, MCWH Project worker)

All participants, particularly the young people, also appreciated the respect and gratitude for their time by the purchasing of food and refreshments, which created a feeling of relaxed conviviality. Likewise, the researcher met them wherever it was convenient, comfortable and safe for them: cafes, offices, university libraries, community centres. These are all examples of the effectiveness and ethics of using decolonising research practices.

### c) **Research Questions/Interview Guidelines**

The following research questions were adapted and modified according to whether interviewing a MCMF community leader or SSAGD young person:

- What needs do MCMF SSAGD young people have?
- What desires and requirements do SSAGD young people have regarding involvement in social and support programs? Are these desires and requirements being met? Why or why not?

- What are the strengths and weaknesses of the various MCMF programs and resources already in place?
- What are the opportunities and risks associated with undertaking these and future programs?
- What are the gaps or obstructions to supporting MCMF SSAGD young people?
- What are the opportunities for efficiencies and effectiveness in supporting MCMF SSAGD young people?
- What factors contribute to supporting MCMF SSAGD young people?
- How do we know whether programs are succeeding or failing? How is this measured?
- What aspects of the programs are conflicting or complementary?
- Which programs cover education? How is the role of schools, both secular and religious, envisaged?
- What are examples of best practice in programs (state, national and international)? Why are these programs successful?
- What are the opportunities for greater collaboration and networking between SSAGD young people, key programs and stakeholders?
- What are the similarities and differences between the approaches of sectors such as local government, state government, community organisations and non-government agencies?
- What are the similarities and differences between metropolitan, regional and rural programs?
- What training is provided to community leaders? How are the training needs determined? How effective are the training opportunities?
- How many community leaders are currently actively involved in formal programs versus informal activities?
- What funding mechanisms support the work? How much does each program/initiative cost? What opportunities exist for cost savings within and between programs and initiatives?
- What resources are required for programs and initiatives to succeed? What opportunities exist for organisations/programs/initiatives to share resources?
- What are the key requirements for successful and long-term initiatives?
- What opportunities exist to improve efficiencies, collaboration and coordination across sectors?

- Who is silenced in discussing the needs of SSAGD young people? Who are the gatekeepers and how would/could we access alternative voices? What discussions are required and with whom?
- How do we engage ethnic and religious media to provide access to debates and texts and examples of a *range* of lived realities of gender and sexuality within their own cultures in Australia and in countries of origin?

## 5. SUMMARY OF RESEARCH FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

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The findings will be organized according to the following headings, which are a combination of the original research questions and specific themes introduced to the interviews by the participants. Sections C-J are listed according to their prevalence in the interviews.

### **A/ The Needs of MCMF SSAGD young people**

- a) the need to understand intersectionality of sexualities, genders, cultures and faiths
- b) the need to understand intra-cultural and intra-faith realities and not homogenise their MCMF backgrounds
- c) the need to explore queer MCMF pre-colonial heritages and educate both the SSAGD and MCMF communities about them
- d) the need for safety and safe spaces and an understanding of the potential ramifications of “coming out”

### **B/The Strengths and Weaknesses of Existing MCMF SSAGD Programs and Resources**

- a) a range of existing programs and resources were identified and discussed, with both strengths and weaknesses highlighted eg JADE, Muslims For Progressive Values, AGMC, Minus 18, YGender, Multicultural Centre for Women’s Health

### **C/The Need to Engage and Educate Religious Leaders**

- a) this was considered to be very important, and although potential obstacles were identified, suggestions were made regarding how to undertake this, for example both intra-faith and inter-faith opportunities to engage and educate

### **D//The Need to Engage Cultural Community Leaders**

- a) this was considered very important, and although potential obstacles were identified, suggestions were made regarding how to undertake this
- b) the importance of whole community approaches rather than individual or family focus as the latter two could ostracise the family within the community
- c) the connections between religious condemnation of SSAGD young people to radicalization need to be discussed

### **E//The Need for Funding and Other Forms of Resourcing**

- a) the need for funding and in-kind resourcing in order to sustain projects and programs beyond the short-term, to avoid burn-out of volunteers, and demonstrate the significance and understood difficulty of this work
- b) the need to be wary of money-wasting funding of new projects which may replicate existing programs and organisations, or indeed endeavor to partner with existing organisations without recognition of the existing work.

### **F//The Role of Government and Policy**

- a) the need for stronger community collaborations and consultations when developing policies
- b) education policies and the need to remove religious exemptions in schools
- c) marriage equality: both useful in legitimating SSAGD relationships in marriage focused cultures; and problematic in divesting attention from other concerns such as homelessness, family violence, forced marriages, socio-economic issues
- d) immigration policies
- e) workplace policies and ongoing discrimination

### **G//The Role of the LGBTIQ Community**

- a) the ongoing need to address racism, Islamophobia, anti-religious discrimination and a lack of understanding of the significance of family and culture in MCMF SSAGD young people's lives
- b) the need for the Pride Centre to be truly demonstrative of inclusivity by being a place of cultural and faith diversity via organisations represented there, prayer rooms, safe meeting spaces, visual culture.

#### **H/ The Need for MCMF SSAGD Role Models, Mentors and Youth Leaders**

- a) the need for the encouragement, skilling and funding for MCMF role models, older mentors and peer leaders.

#### **I/The Role of Education and Health Sectors**

- a) the Safe Schools Coalition: concerns with its lack of awareness, consultation and engagement with MCMF communities which has led to widespread fear and misunderstanding when their only "information" has been mainstream media and religious fundamentalism
- b) the need for universities to support MCMF SSAGD young people, particularly international students
- c) concerns with counselling and counsellors and why MCMF SSAGD young people may not utilise them

#### **J/ The Role of The Media**

Discussions re concerns with and using

- a) social media
- b) LGBTIQ media
- c) ethnic media
- d) mainstream media

## **A. The Needs of MCMF SSAGD Young People**

### **a) “You're dealing with both, you're a person of color and your sexuality”**

Every research participant discussed the need for greater awareness of the confluences and contestations between various facets of one’s identity and various community belongings, and needing “spaces where both identities can be not just tolerated, but celebrated” (YP, 19, non-binary, demisexual-bisexual, Jewish).

I think we need to think of more sophisticated ways about the way we collect data on culturally diverse people. I, for example, as someone who moved here, have Asian appearance, have experienced lots of racism throughout high school. I grew up in a white household, so I'm really culturally diverse. I spoke English as a second language at home.

(YP, 21, queer-bisexual, non-religious, Malaysian-Chinese-Anglo)

For some young people, the points of contradiction were based around various constructs of permissible sexual behavior according to religion, ethnicity and Australian heteronormative and LGBTIQ community codes: “we don't fit in [to the LGBTIQ community] because of their hyper-sexualization [and] we don't fit in the conservative faith based communities that just completely make homosexuality sinful” (YP, 22, F, bisexual, Sufi Muslim, Pakistan).

### **b) “The diversity makes it just further challenging”**

Some research participants were concerned with the homogenising of terms such as CALD and in the way such broad terms prevented more specific engagement with intra-cultural and other forms of intra-category heterogeneity of SSAGD individuals within communities due to variations within religions, class, educational background and geographical locations:

The diversity makes it just further challenging. You add recently arrived, you add the refugee asylum seeker experience, ... You got the hardliners, you

got the softies. The Sufis and the Salafis. Then you got a lot of low socio-economic versus a bit more middle class... language groups in sub-continent Horn of Africa, Middle East, South East Asian

(CL, 47, M, heterosexual, Muslim, Turkish)

An “inclusion with specificity” approach (Pallotta-Chiarolli & Martin, 2009) would be useful to adopt whereby within broader framing policies, programs and resources, strategies are suggested for implementation with specific groupings.

**c) “Being queer is still a really white, Christian concept”: The Need to Explore MCMF Queer Cultural Heritages**

Many young people wanted opportunities to explore and educate their elders about their own pre-colonial cultural and faith SSAGD histories and heritages so their communities do not think “it’s a Western thing”: “So many people of these cultures have rich, historical sexualities themselves that are not being explored” (CL, 49, M, gay, spiritual, Indian-Chinese); “Islamic history has a very rich queer history yet it’s not addressed” (CL, 33, M, gay, Muslim, Somali). Events which explore and showcase SSAGD MCMF cultural heritages were suggested such as: “a drop in center with a library” (CL, 33, M, gay, Muslim, Somali); “an exhibition at the Immigration Museum” (YP, 22, F, bisexual, Sufi Muslim, Pakistani) and “artwork and artists from across the globe” (YP, 22, F, bisexual, Sufi Muslim, Pakistani).

**d) “It’s like a secret society because we’re all protecting each other”: The Need for Safety and Safe Spaces for SSAGD People and their Allies**

All research participants expressed concern for the emotional and physical safety of SSAGD MCMF young people if their sexualities are disclosed or discovered:

In some instances, disclosure has resulted in withdrawal of family support, including financial support, forced marriage, family violence, homelessness and exclusion from communities. This may be due to patriarchal structures and rigidly defined gender roles within migrant families and communities.

(CL, F, 45, Greek Orthodox, Greek)

Sadly, while parents may have seen Australia as a place of safety for their children, this was conditional on children adhering to heteronormative and heteropatriarchal values and life trajectories. Otherwise, the family space itself was not safe: “you hear about women getting acid thrown in their faces and all that stuff... if they ever found out that their daughter was a lesbian” (CL, 29, F, lesbian, Buddhist-Catholic, Filipina).

Peer support from SSAGD young people from one’s own culture was seen as one way of counteracting the fears of emotional and physical harm from one’s family, as well as providing emotional and physical spaces of safety: “a home for them [who] can end up homeless and in crisis homes... I was lucky I had somewhere to go” (YP, 24, F, lesbian, Agnostic-Muslim, Pakistani).

Just to have a safe space for people to come along and talk about everything or anything that they feel they would like to talk about, knowing that no one will judge them, is important

(YP, 18, FTM, pansexual, Buddhist, Vietnamese).

a space where kids can come out and share their stories like, "Hey how do we get our parents to accept us again," or "how do we talk about these things with our parents”

(YP, 24, F, lesbian, Agnostic-Muslim, Pakistani)

Many expressed the need for all sectors to be aware, prepare and strategise for the possibility that with more visibility and vocality in relation to MCMF SSAGD policy, programming and implementation, there could be a backlash and targeting of SSAGD people and their allies: “it’s unfortunate that young people are pressured to come out without knowing if the support is there to deal with all the repercussions” (CL, 27, MCWH Project Worker). This concern can be understood through the theory that in communities where there has been “homoerasure” or complete silencing of LGBTIQ issues, the shift into visibility, vocality and action can lead to “homohysteria” (McCormack & Anderson, 2014) in various forms of reactionism and resistance:

These are people who wouldn’t want to press charges on their family members and I understand Victoria Police and the law but just the sensitivity needs to be understood... a safe house would be very

helpful because it will help them still keep in contact with the family members but get out of that environment... It's exactly similar to how they would deal with a domestic violence issue. They have resources to get that woman out. They have connections and contacts with refugees and things like that... [and] a mediation facility where if a person comes out and he's ostracized and marginalized, ... to unite families of queer Muslims

(CL, 33, M, gay, Muslim, Somali).

However, the theory also shows that if this stage is managed well with strategies such as the above, then inclusivity can be achieved.

## **Recommendations**

- **Research, policy and program development need to be more inclusive by engaging with a greater understanding of and engagement with the intersections of ethnicity, religion, class, disabilities, spiritualities, age, sexualities and genders. This is particularly pertinent to third generation SSAGD MCMF who embody multiple, mixed and emerging identity formations and labels.**
- **The adoption of more inclusive terms such as Multicultural Multifaith (MCMF) to replace Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) allows for greater understanding of and engagement with diversity in research, policy development, and program design.**
- **Government and community organisations to invest in projects and events which acknowledge, explore and showcase SSAGD MCMF cultural heritages, such as a drop-in centre with a library; an exhibition at the Immigration Museum or Pride Centre, with artwork and artists from across the globe.**
- **Government and other funding bodies such as universities to support research projects that explore and uncover SSAGD narratives and historical cultural constructs in MCMF communities.**
- **In conjunction with SSAGD young people, government and community organisations to develop whole of community strategies to support young people and their families in the face of potential negative and/or violent ramifications of their disclosure and/or discovery by members of their MCMF communities**

and/or the broader Australian community. Responses must include stakeholders from policy makers to policing to social welfare and community sectors.

- The development of familial, community and statewide responses and strategies to address any potential “homophobic” repercussions to increasing visibility and vocality of SSAGD MCMF young people’s experiences, needs and affirmations in both cultural communities and the broader Australian community.
- The provision of practical resourcing for safety such as:
  - ✚ Crisis accommodation and safe meeting spaces
  - ✚ Mediation services that are relevant and appropriate for MCMF communities to strengthen intergenerational and intra-familial relationships
  - ✚ Community conversations to foster physical, psychological and spiritual safety for young people

**B. “A Chance for Us to Tell Our Stories”: The Strengths and Weaknesses of Existing MCMF SSAGD Programs and Resources**

Participants identified a range of existing MCMF SSAGD programs and resources for young people that were successful, discussing what made them effective: “We recommend the *How2Program*, run by Gay and Lesbian Health Victoria to be extended to community and faith leaders” (CL, 45, F, Greek Orthodox, Greek); “the Safe Schools program, despite some of the very spiteful inaccurate claims, might have been an absolute life saver” (YP, 22, MTF, bisexual, Jewish-Agnostic, Romanian Malaysian-Chinese). The need for and success of youth-driven or community-controlled programs and resources was consistently highlighted:

[our program was] run by and for refugee and immigrant women. Rather than an organization that's primarily run by Anglo-Australians, a lot of importance was placed on there not being this divide between the service providers and the people who were accessing the service

(CL, 27, MCWH Project Worker)

[we] made the video. ... to tell our stories...It was led by us, it wasn't people coming and saying, "We've designed this project, could you advise us on how to then promote it to young people?"

(YP, 19, non-binary, demisexual-bisexual, Jewish)

Given the above, when asked to consider the limitations in existing programs and resources, many young people identified problematic methods in consulting and collaborating *with* young people in projects *for* young people:

I think often people try to kind of run ahead and do things and sometimes the actual young people get left behind... It can also be a bit scary and often it's like we are not in the driver's seat, it's happening around us.

(YP, 22, MTF, bisexual, Jewish-Agnostic, Romanian Malaysian-Chinese)

Other examples of the lack of community collaborations were given:

sometimes whole projects will be designed without any community consultation. Then the people who are taking part in the project are asked to join after they have already designed exactly what it's going to be

(CL, 27, MCWH Project Worker)

Also of concern and to be further explored later in this Report is short-term funding as it is considered to prevent the consolidation of relationships, continuity and self-reflexivity:

when things are funded short-term, the project ends, and you're not really given a chance to think about what didn't work so well, what can we do next time, because you're already starting on a new project with a different community. You don't get a next time.

(CL, 27, MCWH Project Worker)

The lack of funding was further evident in the inability to publicise, promote and disseminate MCMF SSAGD resources which had already been developed.

The interface between policy development and community consultation and collaboration in the development of resources and programs was also an area of contention: “policy consultation is very top down... use more peer to peer based consulting...getting the voice of the community into higher levels of policy” (CL, 49, M, gay, spiritual, Indian-Chinese). Policy developers were seen as not taking into account the full concerns of a community:

These are the communities that already have social cohesion, security [problems], low unemployment, ...financial hardship. ...We have a full load that's just on those issues. We're not a super funded organization, so I'm taking LGBTI additionally to my portfolio, and I'm doing three people's jobs

(CL, 49, M, gay, spiritual, Indian-Chinese).

Also of concern was the lack of awareness within policy, resource and research development of existing research which did not require replication: “be aware that there's quite a few decades worth of research already. They're starting the conversation not acknowledging that” (CL, 49, M, gay, spiritual, Indian-Chinese).

## **Recommendations**

- **Service providers must engage and collaborate with SSAGD MCMF young people and their organisations to ensure program design and implementation, and resource development, are appropriate and relevant to their needs.**
- **Programming and resourcing strategies must address the complex needs of MCMF communities when developing specific SSAGD programs eg unemployment, financial hardships, discrimination.**
- **Resources and program development must identify and utilise existing research and resources to avoid replication and duplication.**
- **Good practice models to be promoted and shared; sufficient funds and in-kind resourcing allocated for the dissemination and promotion of completed resources and programs that are benchmarked as good practice.**
- **Training of bilingual/bi-cultural health educators to facilitate SSAGD MCMF programs.**

- **Culturally and religiously specific social groups for SSAGD to be established, within which to develop and provide resources and conduct programs.**
- **School-based SSAGD MCMF groups to be established that are resourced and supported to conduct youth-led projects.**
- **Faith and community leaders, as well as community service providers, to establish culturally and religiously specific support groups for parents of SSAGD MCMF young people.**

**C. “Religion's supposed to be a beautiful inclusive thing”: The Need to Engage and Educate Religious Leaders**

All research participants believed there was a need to educate and engage with religious community leaders as they are the main gatekeepers in relation to community attitudes and behaviours toward SSAGD members.

a lot of these religious organizations are run by people with formal qualifications who are used to being the most knowledgeable person in the room. ...I'm totally happy to recognize a rabbi's authority and expertise in Judaism because they've studied it a lot but, when you're looking at the intersect of Judaism and queerness, then there's a massive area that they know absolutely nothing about.

(YP, 19, non-binary, demisexual-bisexual, Jewish)

A lot of our youth their faith is important to them. We need to accommodate and find ways if they want to be spiritual... a Muslim who is known as a queer Muslim cannot go into a mosque

(CL, 33, M, gay, Muslim, Somali)

Participants discussed the potential obstacles to this engagement/education, and made suggestions regarding how to undertake these strategies: “being proactive and extending the olive branch” (YP, 22, MTF, bisexual, Jewish-Agnostic, Romanian Malaysian-Chinese); “have queer-run mosques or queer-friendly mosques” (CL, 33, M, gay, Muslim, Somali).

We have on our program that we put out every week, and the flyer in the synagogue, "We welcome people of all sexes and genders, sexual

identity, gender identity, religion and faith". ...When I put a Facebook post up or when I spoke at the Marriage Equality March, I've got some congregants who said it's really validating (CL, early 50s, M, heterosexual, Jewish)

something like speed dating various LGBTQI Muslims from a variety of Islamic sects...that means you 're actually willing to open yourself to a dialogue, to a conversation about the taboos within interfaith and intrafaith communities.

(YP, 22, F, bisexual, Sufi Muslim, Pakistani)

For many participants, the absence of their SSAGD realities in faith-spaces was deeply felt:

a lot of Buddhist temples do run a lot of programs engaging young people. Usually they are called Buddhist family. These young would go to a temple and learn Buddhist philosophy once a week, and engage in other activities ... for a lot of young people, this has a lot of meaning to them. Then if they happen to be queer and if they are not being supported by their peers from Buddhist families and/or their religious leaders, it can have a really negative impact on them.

(YP, 18, FTM, pansexual, Buddhist, Vietnamese)

I used to go to Saturday religious school, we read the Quran, we did have an open forum where we could ask questions, but there were certain things they didn't feel the need to mention like homosexuality.

(YP, 24, F, lesbian, Agnostic-Muslim, Pakistani)

When the loudest threat to your identity is under the banner of Christianity, it can lead people to be very uncomfortable around religion. ...and desire not to have to engage with religious spaces.... They can feel like it's a betrayal or if someone is religious, they must necessarily be rejecting their queerness.

(YP, 19, non-binary, demisexual-bisexual, Jewish)

I felt a really big animosity towards my Jewishism. It was only when I started seeing really visible things, doing projects, I was,

"That's actually really fantastic". That's when I start gravitating towards it. I think if that had been happening for me a bit younger, I might have not even drifted in the first place.

(YP, 22, MTF, bisexual, Jewish-Agnostic, Romanian Malaysian-Chinese)

Participants also acknowledged that many religious leaders may wish to support and affirm SSAGD people, but may not have the resources or training:

They've got the goodwill but they might not have the level of experience, they might not have, knowingly, someone who is out in the community... sometimes even super supportive people will spend twenty or thirty minutes of that first conversation kind of being educated by me. That's a really good thing that they are listening but it can also be exhausting for an individual seeking support to have to do.

(YP, 22, MTF, bisexual, Jewish-Agnostic, Romanian Malaysian-Chinese)

There were differing perspectives regarding whether MCMF SSAGD young people should or should not have to pro-actively educate and out themselves to their faith leaders: "Having queer Muslims speaking to elders in their community. Particularly young people. As living proof it's not against their religion" (YP, 17, M, gay, atheist, Turkish-Filipino).

to explain this is the struggles that we have gone through and highlight that our spirituality is important to us, but several of our members have either rejected Islam or they submitted to the stresses and pressures of the family and the community and got married, fathered children or mothered children, and are leading double lives. I think a genuine, authentic religious leader, his or her goal is how to spiritually care for someone and if they see a person going through that, it will, I think, move something in them

(CL, 33, M, gay, Muslim, Somali)

there's a Buddhist abbot in the Vietnamese community and he takes care of one of the biggest Buddhist temples. He wasn't entirely supportive when I first met him because my family was wanting me to meet him hoping that he could convert me. Then I talked to him about gender and orientation and how things are not black and white.

He was listening to what I have to say. I said surprising not because Buddhism is inherently hetero-cis-normative but because I thought that most if not all current Vietnamese community leaders are.

He even referenced in one of the Buddhist books that he read a passage that says how some people don't fit into the female or male binary. That was such an important thing. It's not a new, modern Buddhist text. It's at least more than 2,000 years ago.

(YP, 18, FTM, pansexual, Buddhist, Vietnamese)

A wariness was expressed by some that training should not be seen as an external imposition, particularly as government policy:

I don't think that's something that government policy can fix. I think people are going to come to it themselves. ... There's another monastery now that is much more progressive on gay marriage, women being equal in the monastic community. ... That monk didn't suddenly come to that position because of some government policy. He came to that position on his own.

(YP, 21, M, queer-bisexual, non-religious, Malaysian-Chinese Anglo)

the training would have to come from within that cultural and religious space ... Otherwise, coming from an external agency and trying to train them in a very particular kind of way might be a bit imposing

(YP, 24, non-binary, gay, atheist, Mexican)

Other participants believed specifically addressing SSAGD issues by religious leaders was not required, nor did it require specific resources or training if religious leaders undertook the responsibilities they were meant to and addressed all specific examples of marginalisation under the same banner of social justice, peace and duty of care:

as a Muslim, we have many ways of listening to people. Every day we have got five types of prayers, every week we have got words to reflect on the whole week. Imams have got a big opportunity ... you don't need to pick one or two [issues], you bring that justice overall

when people are in peace, when everyone is ready to listen [in prayer]. Peace doesn't come by one having more rights and one not rights.

(CL, 53, M, heterosexual, Muslim, Egyptian)

Many participants believed it was important to distinguish between the various roles and responsibilities of religious leaders: spiritual or social leadership, cultural or theological “rulings”: “[Religious] places have become cultural institutions. Religious and cultural” (YP, 21, M, queer-bisexual, non-religious, Malaysian-Chinese Anglo); “Religion's supposed to be a beautiful inclusive thing and unfortunately the bad side of humanity has tainted all of that” (CL, 29, F, lesbian, Buddhist-Catholic, Filipina).

A lot of traditions and what rulings we follow are more culturally driven. I am really spiritual so I do really agree with a lot of the theory, a lot of the disciplines and the doctrine of Islam but I think culturally it's been really difficult

(YP, 24, F, lesbian, Agnostic-Muslim, Pakistani)

you need to differentiate, although not mutually exclusive, the theological aspect to the social aspect. Islam has a very clear position theologically on homosexuality, it is a sin. It is not permissible. However, it's not the only sin. There is dozens of sins, and its people sin every day. We're talking about major sins, gambling, adultery, drugs, deception by fraud, or fraud by deception, alcohol and so on. Why is it that it's sensitively acceptable to us, he's a womanizer so be it, but it's not acceptable [to be gay]. You have to have a very consistent positioning on all major sins, and not cherry pick. ... Whilst you could have a very clear conscience to say theologically no, socially you need to do something... We have an obligation to save these kids' lives. You are a social creature. God sent you to this world to live in a community, not in a bubble of your own. ... the majority of the Muslim communities' understanding of their faith is culturally-based. They're very ignorant about what true Islam is. ... Where if they were educated, if they really know their religion, I don't think it would be a problem to actually have a conversation.

(CL, 47, M, heterosexual, Muslim, Turkish)

This separation between theological and social leadership could be symbolized by a separation between the responsibilities of the religious place of worship such as a synagogue, mosque, church or temple; and the organisations responsible for the social and cultural health and wellbeing of the communities of faith:

Rabbis ...[are] employed by the synagogues, who are members [of the Jewish Communities Council of Victoria], but the Rabbis aren't members, and we don't have Rabbis on our board, so we're not a religious party. We can't make statements on matters of religion, but we can talk about health issues, and how you treat people, and we have a policy about respect, which includes a statement about community...They can talk about Biblical stuff, and the Torah. That's their space, and this is our space,... there are a lot of very Conservative Rabbis who are not very supportive, but will agree that people should be treated with respect and dignity...it works to have research if you're talking about self-harm, and suicide, and mental health issues... If you approach things from a health and well-being point-of-view of the individuals and the families, then it's much harder for them to argue against what you're doing, and you don't get into that religious debate...the Orthodox Rabbi in charge of the Great Synagogue in Sydney did a sermon just before Mardi Gras: "Unless we are more inclusive, and welcoming, we ...will increase pain, and diminish faith, and that is not the way of the Torah."

(CL, early 50s, M, heterosexual, Jewish)

youth who passed away and they were HIV positive, no mosque would do the final funeral proceedings for them. ... this is a person who is dying and they want spiritual care, pastoral care ... in the hospital, HIV clinic, no [Muslim chaplain] visits them. .... so it's a stigma.... ...[In] Malaysia I had a friend who was transgender and died who was not to be washed. It took the mother to pay for my ticket. I went there and I said "I'm going to publicize this in the media" and then the Imams came, "Oh brother sorry, brother sorry", but that's there. ... They are shunned and it's very painful. The stigma from family is there, the stigma from the community is there

and even the final days, stigma even in death. ...we need to pass policy where patients that are palliative who are in the infectious diseases unit [eg HIV] can be cared for and can have those final funeral rites“

(CL, 33, M, gay, Muslim, Somali)

A further point in regard to religion and society raised by a few participants was the need to partially or completely remove religious exemptions in addressing SSAGD issues in religiously controlled settings such as schools, hospitals and the workplace: “those [religious] exemptions need to be scaled back and ultimately work towards being removed” (YP, 22, MTF, bisexual, Jewish-Agnostic, Romanian Malaysian-Chinese). This required a clarity regarding religious rights within a framework of secular law:

all religions I'm aware of have a principle which is the law of the land is the law. If it's illegal you can't do it even if your religion allows you to do it. The law of the land takes cognizance...religious traditions ultimately have a vote, not a veto

(CL, 57, M, heterosexual, Jewish)

As well as differentiating between spiritual and social responsibilities, some participants called for a differentiation within theology itself, between temporal contexts and their limited knowledge such as situating religious text about homosexuality into the broader analysis of all religious text: “We believe it was written by humans trying to understand what God wanted but limited by their time and their context” (CL, 57, M, heterosexual, Jewish).

“God created humanity, male and female God created them”.  
When you come to gender fluidity then it becomes an obstacle, that text... It's very important to understand that we [Progressive Judaism] are in a sense rejecting the traditional Jewish belief that what we have inherited is God's word. We don't believe that the Torah was written by God. ...There's a good Jewish principle that we are like midgets standing on giant's shoulders of the past [and] we can actually see further than they can see ... we don't take the Torah literally. It's of its

time and its limitations and it's thousands of years old. It doesn't say much about in vitro fertilization or nuclear fuel either

(CL, 57, M, heterosexual, Jewish)

Given the above factors, all participants called for both inter-faith and intra-faith sharing of resources and training for religious leaders:

I think there should be a LGBTQI inter-faith conference every year when we invite and reflect upon the issues of inter-faith, not atheists

(YP, 22, F, bisexual, Sufi Muslim, Pakistani)

in a forum for Muslim leaders ... we came up with three things. One was: what is a religious leader. Second: what are the needs of the queer Muslim youth. Third: how those needs can be met. ... If we can organize forums and trainings for the religious leaders, they don't necessarily have to participate, just listen to what these issues are and that would be a great step, to sit at a table and talk about the LGBTIQ because there's stigma even in the topics.

(CL, 33, M, gay, Muslim, Somali)

Jewish Christian Muslim Association to do a 2 or 3 day seminar away in-service training, let them do their own agenda.. You don't have to impose an agenda otherwise you'd be accused of imposing it.

(CL, 57, M, heterosexual, Jewish)

I did have Islamic Council ask for copies of some of the things we've done. We did also have people connected with Islamic Council come to our symposium... as well as people from different faith communities

(CL, early 50s, M, heterosexual, Jewish)

religious leaders come together and talk and find an agreement, they would feel more empowered to do this work [and] they

also have the support from their colleagues, from other religious leaders”

(YP, 18, FTM, pansexual, Buddhist, Vietnamese)

## Recommendations

- **Faith leaders to encourage visible signs of welcome, programs and resources in religious places of worship which promote SSAGD inclusion, participation and leadership.**
- **Faith leaders to be engaged and educated through inter-faith and intra-faith forums, roundtable discussions and other events, in consultation with and/or with the presence of SSAGD MCMF young people.**
- **In consultation and collaboration with faith leaders, government bodies, community organisations and cultural community leaders will clarify rights and responsibilities, develop policies and statements, resources and programs pertaining to spiritual leadership, social leadership, and the pastoral care of community members in settings such as hospitals, schools and the courts.**
- **Genuine engagement of religious leaders in inter and intra faith discussions on gender diversity and same sex attraction to be supported.**

### **D. “Community leaders can’t bury their heads in the sand”: The Need to Engage Cultural Community Leaders**

All participants believed their MCMF community leaders needed to take responsibility and be accountable for the safety, health and wellbeing of SSAGD young people by working with parents, families and the whole community. Thus, unanimously, there was a call for community leaders to be accountable and drive this work:

I think a big onus on community leaders, to when they see injustice, when they see inequality, to challenge that, and that sometimes can ruffle feathers, but that is a necessary step in creating a space where everyone can feel welcome

(YP, 22, MTF, bisexual, Jewish-Agnostic, Romanian Malaysian-Chinese)

Furthermore, several participants pointed out that community leaders themselves require support and direction to do their work, but that this lack of efficacy and experience, and the risk of losing community respect, could not be used to excuse inaction: “For people that are really respected within the community, to come out and even talk about this risks that respect being taken away from them” (YP, 24, F, lesbian, Agnostic-Muslim, Pakistani).

if community leaders want to continue to call themselves community leaders, they will have to put up with making some unpopular decisions for a while. That will be a difficult position to be in but, it's a lot easier than the 14-year-old in a religious school being in that position. You want to be a leader, this is what you signed up for, lead

(YP, 19, non-binary, demisexual-bisexual, Jewish)

The Muslim community leaders can't bury their heads in the sand. We need to be prepared to have a conversation irrespective of what positions you take. There are three categories of GLBTI of concern to the Muslim community. One is they are marrying, a gay is marrying a lesbian and a lesbian is marrying a gay..., camouflage, to hide their identity, living a life of deception ...Second is they are converting out. They're saying, “If my community can't accept me, then I'm going to become an atheist”. The third category is suicidal or a lot of pressure, mental health issues, psychological. ...The community has an obligation to attend to these concerns, and these individuals have a right over the community to say, “Hey, I'm crying out for help, I'm calling for attention here.”

(CL, 47, M, heterosexual, Muslim, Turkish)

Gerontocracy, government by old men, gatekeepers who are stuck in old archaic ways of thinking and overlooking the needs of their children. ...doing a lot of damage ... An example is a Turkish chap who was in a gay relationship and the father found out. They went to Turkey, got a girl from the village and came

back here and he has fathered three children now. He says to me, “Brother, sexually I have to pop a pill”. I said, “Brother, you have summoned four people including yourself to a life of imprisonment”. . . . The number one guilty ones are those gatekeepers. They are making families, children, lead double lives and they’re bringing innocent people into this web of lies. . . . and it goes against the basic teachings of honesty in Islam.

(CL, 33, M, gay, Muslim, Somali)

Also of significance, however, was the interrogation of who defines a community leader, for whose purposes, and who are the “unofficial” community leaders often unacknowledged by gatekeepers:

Often, when it comes to governments or mainstream organisations working with community leaders I think about how those leaders are chosen. . . . Leaders could be leaders of organisations, or be chosen by people unofficially. As a women’s health organisation we are always talking about the ways that women are leaders, it isn’t always in such an official capacity but their work is equally important. We need to work with these people as leaders too. . . . the media plays a big role in who gets turned into a leader and who doesn’t for the mainstream audience. And that doesn’t always match who the actual community feels their leaders are. For example, the media will always want to pay attention to those conservative leaders who say outrageous things because it adds to their existing narratives. . . . queer and trans people of colour might have their own leaders that they go to for advice and support and these people might not be known so publically.

(CL, 27, MCWH Project Worker)

Community leaders were often considered to be those with education and career status: “It’s almost like they [my parents] need that validation to come from somewhere else. I’m not enough unfortunately” (YP, 24, F, lesbian, Agnostic-Muslim, Pakistani).

anybody who was a CEO of a company, or a doctor, come and talk to them [parents] they would really respect that because they respect status; they respect educated people, people of importance... you're speaking to the people from down here but you also need the support, knowledge, and guidance from the people up there

(CL, 29, F, lesbian, Buddhist-Catholic, Filipina)

a leader is a person has got some vision that takes the whole picture... I say we want to create respect. It's a vision. ... where do you start, some of them could be in level A, some of them could be in level Z...bring the lower level to the most upper level in terms of educational background or knowledge background. People with no knowledge here with people with this knowledge ... the people at the bottom are the ones that need you to be elevated, to have hope, ... Most of these unemployed, most of these women, most of these mothers who are not interacting with others. To bring them into exposure, into interaction, it requires to engage the entire community to exercise this strategy. I'm a farmer background. If you don't have fertilizer in the soil, you're not going to grow anything. To have fertilizer is to create a general consensus of people feeling that what they [SSAGD MCMF] lack is justice.

(CL, 53, M, heterosexual, Muslim, Egyptian)

It was important for community leaders to bring parents of SSAGD young people together to address their fears and beliefs: “Letting the parents know, a lot of the negative ideas that they may have about their children's futures aren't necessarily objective truths” (YP, 22, MTF, bisexual, Jewish-Agnostic, Romanian Malaysian-Chinese). More broadly, community leaders need to inform and engage all parents, regardless of whether they had SSAGD children, with resources that are linguistically and culturally relevant:

target parents of immigrant backgrounds, provide resources in languages other than English. For example, if my mum were to go to an event run by the Filipino community, she'd be able to

find resources there relating to young queer people and what their needs are and how to go about talking about it with your children. Having it in her language would be a whole lot easier for her.

(YP, 17, M, gay, atheist, Turkish-Filipino)

The need to engage and educate all members of a community was seen as important because the young people did not wish to “shame” or “ostracise” their families from their communities. Thus, any actions needed to be at a collective community level, not at an individual family level: “it's not the family, the family has repercussion from the community. That is where the groundwork is needed. It's broader than the family, the community will not accept” (CL, 53,M, heterosexual, Muslim, Egyptian).

[the fear of] losing dignity and respect which is built on the success of their kids. If it wasn't the fear of being extradited from the community and being ostracized, and the shame, then my family would completely accept me. ... me and my mother we did talk and she said "People are going to look at you differently. This is going to be a black mark on your forehead for the rest of your life." ... I think it would be really helpful to have mediators go out to families, because I know with their friends they would never talk about the issues that they're going through because it would bring shame or it would become this horrible reason for the communities to ostracize them.... [Someone] that could empathize or that could tell them that it's not a unique case or it's not messed up.

(YP, 24, F, lesbian, Agnostic-Muslim, Pakistani)

There needs to be a lot of comforting, a lot of moral support, because the parents themselves at first are devastated by the shock, they didn't see it coming... the parents themselves definitely don't know how to handle it... as soon as their child comes out they withdraw into the closets. They try to hide, they are no longer engaged with their local circle, the environment. ... The families have got to know that they've got the support of their fellow community

(CL, 47, M, heterosexual, Muslim, Turkish)

the families will often be more supportive, if they feel like the community's supportive: "What will everybody else think? Well, if Mrs. Goldberg's kids are out, and Mrs. Stoneberg's kids are out..." Then, it's a lot easier than if it's all silenced and not talked about.

(CL, early 50s, M, heterosexual, Jewish)

In particular, both the young SSAGD interviewees and MCMF community leaders were very aware of the ramifications for other family members on having a SSAGD sibling: "There was a shame thing to it. No one wants to come and ask for the other sibling's hand. ...you're like tainted. These are serious ramifications" (CL, 47, M, heterosexual, Muslim, Turkish)

I'm the oldest in my family, I have a little sister and a little brother, one of the first things my mother told me was, "You're basically killing your siblings because your sister would never be respected because everyone would just say 'your older sister's a lesbian.' She would never be able to make friends in the community because no one's parents want their daughter to be friends with someone who's a lesbian's sister;" and my little brother would just have to live with our shame. It's this massive burden that she put on me. I love my sister, me and my sister are inseparable and through my coming out she's been my rock, she's had to suffer a lot because of it. She did a really good job of trying to speak to my parents, tell them that I'm still human.

(YP, 24, F, lesbian, Agnostic-Muslim, Pakistani)

It's not about the individual, it's about families ...my sister, she's living in Pakistan, and she has to deal with an elder sister who is bisexual. Will she be getting any marriage proposals? ... if I'm openly bisexual, does it mean that my brothers would have to also face discrimination in the society? ... and if you have accepted [your gay child] then the community disowns you.

YP, 22, F, bisexual, Sufi Muslim, Pakistani)

Ongoing consultations, strong community leadership and community-administered education and events are required, preferably from religious leaders,

local political leaders, respected educated members of the community, and health service/community service providers. In the following, a community leader talks about ever-widening circles of engagement of community members via the personal approach of conversation and relationship:

You got to build up the momentum and say, “Let’s come together.” ... a couple of individuals have got to group feed. Again, they have got to be very, very mindful and confident and strong in character... it needs to be planned with well drafted scripts, and choose respected community leaders. It doesn’t have to be elders, predominantly the late 30s, 40s brackets who’ve got a foot in both camps. Who are educated, and respected, and very foresighted and have a reputation in engaging social issues. These individuals have got to approach certain groups, have a private conversation, and then bring them all together at a round table... You can’t mince words, you got to say it is a problem, “Stop being judgmental, God will judge how He determines. We have a social problem”. And then at that round table, someone’s going to have the wisdom of what I call guided democracy, steer the conversation to some ownership, some output and then you got to be connected to the resources out there. ... And then this group would be able to round up a collective 30/40 leading people, representative sample, and know how to lead their conversation...and these people are coming because of my personal relationship if we all say, “Hey dude, I’ve had this conversation with you over coffee, I want you to join.” Reluctantly he or she comes, but more of a favor ... When they realize there’s about 30/40 of me, it is a closed room, it’s a private conversation, there isn’t anyone from the outside, it’s not a conspiracy to convert you all to being all gay. This is a community leader saying, “We got to talk.” ... They might have a second meeting and a third meeting. Take as long as you want, and then scatter or evolve into a wider net, and say it’s actually bigger than we thought.

(CL, 47, M, heterosexual, Muslim, Turkish)

Community leaders were also aware that these events and strategies cannot be seen to be externally imposed by policy and its implementations, but need to be incorporated into the everydayness of community leadership, fairness and human rights:

as a refugee myself, my first question is, if I want fairness for myself why not fairness for everyone? That's the logic of this whole issue. ... They have to accept me and I have to accept them. ... I never took it [SSAGD] as one issue I took it a broader issue of human rights. ... For me it's not rocket science. We're all born the same with equal needs, but society dictates us to like something, to dislike something. ... the gay community is part of the community, let's make it that way and that's the best way of addressing it rather than isolating. .... I say in my community or anywhere when I speak, we all have little kids inside us that we need to be pampered. Every one of us, when given that good feeling, he/she reacts. ... Majority of these migrant Muslims they all cry for justice, be it back home, be it here, well they can be asked of it. You need to open with the right key rather than the wrong key....The right key is to make you feel about rights of everyone, about justice. The Muslim community got a big shock in this [SSAGD issues]. Use this shock as an entry into their hearts and minds. Don't tell them, "Oh, we've got this problem," [because] this is not a problem.

(CL, 53, M, heterosexual, Muslim, Egyptian)

The importance of dialogue and collaboration between SSAGD young people and MCMF community leaders was a significant issue:

I think that a lot of our multicultural community organizations are quite stagnant, they're quite stale and they do need renewal. ... a lot of our senior members don't recognize that there are Chinese young people who are of the LGBTI backgrounds and also ask for recognition. ... We need to see more multicultural leaders involve them [SSAGD] in the community and actually seek their views on how our community should be working. I am a very big supporter of dialogues between different groups, and I

think you would start understanding one another... Multicultural young Australians from LGBTI backgrounds need to understand where their seniors are coming from too.

(CL, 31, M, heterosexual, atheist, Chinese)

Alright, specific plan. Online, anonymous forms, particularly if you're looking to engage with younger people. Bearing in mind language, age, and ability barriers being that not everyone can do it online. Having hard copy as an option. Something they can grab off a reception desk or download off the website without anyone needing to see that they've asked for it. It can't be a big deal, it needs to be as easy as possible, so that [SSAGD MCMF young] people can submit their suggestions and their complaints easily. Put together an advisory group of a diverse range of LGBTI people. Make sure that membership of this group can be anonymous. The group will need to know who's in it, but the community in general doesn't. Again, a closed or secret Facebook group can be a good way so that people aren't coming to meetings publicly if they're not comfortable with that yet. Check in with the group of people you end up getting and ask them what format works best for them ... Look for ways to signal that you [MCMF community leaders] want us to be here.

(YP, 19, non-binary, demisexual-bisexual, Jewish)

A final issue raised by a few participants that required strong and sensitive community leadership was the connection between being SSAGD from Islamic communities and radicalization:

ISIS and extremist groups always prey on the vulnerable. The classic example is the boy in Craigieburn, 15-year-old. The boy was [homophobically] bullied and when you have predators out there who are just waiting for youth who are disenfranchised, who have no role model figures in their life, they have no purpose in life, the parents, the home, is a shattered one. They would be prime candidates. They're told go and join this group and become a martyr.

(CL, 33, M, gay, Muslim, Somali)

They [Muslim gay and bisexual young men] wouldn't know how to communicate because their language skills, social skills, education skills would be they would have gone through some bullying, so incredibly introvert, or incredibly withdrawn ... and it's actually a suicide mission for him to escape this world. He doesn't even know who he was fighting. This ISIS mob just using him as fodder. His motivation is he has to cleanse his soul ... because he knows that it's [homosexuality] a sin, yet he's got these inclinations. The best way is to redeem yourself by offering yourself, Jihad warfare or something. Most of them are just vulnerable, impressionable, very ignorant young people, predominantly men. In that sample [of radicalized young men], I wouldn't be surprised if there's about 10 of them [who are SSAGD]... They're just trying to run away from themselves, which is sad... If the community showed that support, that understanding, the community would actually be saving lives.

(CL, 47, M, heterosexual, Muslim, Turkish)

I plan to help a few young people who have been going through this traumatic journey of jail, or having no one to defend them, they can't tell their families for reasons of whatever. That creates revenge in their system so that brings this radicalization that brings this hate.

(CL, 53, M, heterosexual, Muslim, Egyptian)

## Recommendations

- **Government and service providers to identify and engage community leaders who are respected and willing to come together, formulate a position, and articulate it publicly.**
- **Government and service providers to identify, support and engage “unofficial” or hidden community leaders to come forward, participate and safely represent their communities’ perspectives.**

- **Government and service providers to utilize strategies of anonymity and confidentiality to maintain safety for community leaders and/or individual community members in supporting SSAGD young people in MCMF contexts.**
- **The collaborations of leaders from a range of communities to develop intercultural and interfaith service provision for SSAGD young people must be supported.**
- **Community leaders must be supported in raising awareness on issues affecting SSAGD young people for all parents and families in a culturally appropriate manner.**
- **SSAGD young people to be engaged to meet, dialogue and work with MCMF community leaders in the development and planning of policy, programs, resources and publicity.**
- **Community leaders need to recognise and address the links between homophobia and the radicalization of some SSAGD young people who are indoctrinated to believe that acts of violence in the name of their faith will purge them from eternal punishment for their same sex attractions.**

**E. “The money is there. It just needs to be channeled in the right direction”: The Need for Funding and Other Forms of Resourcing**

As has already been discussed, all participants emphasised the need for funding and other forms of resourcing in order to effectively undertake work with MCMF communities *in relation to* SSAGD young people and *by* SSAGD young people: “Funding will encourage some of these young people to develop some initiatives to help other young people. It would also encourage multicultural organizations because they're always struggling for funding” (CL, 31, M, heterosexual, atheist, Chinese).

the majority of queer organisations, particularly ones for young people, are either entirely volunteer-led or primarily volunteer-led. There's a limit to how much research and community engagement you can do when you're volunteering all of your time.

(YP, 19, non-binary, demisexual-bisexual, Jewish)

I think if groups are funded then they can feel more empowered to do things and also they can dedicate more time to the great work. It also sends a really affirming message that the body that funds these groups are behind them. Having someone who is paid to work on this project, people would tend to listen to these people more as well...Employing a young person is not just something really empowering, it also sends a strong message to young people that your voice is valued and that the community recognized your work

(YP, 18, FTM, pansexual, Buddhist, Vietnamese)

Somewhat cynically, a few participants noted how because funding was being made available, certain MCMF groups were finally going to address previously ignored SSAGD issues: "now there is money there, everyone is really interested in showing that they are able to work with these groups" (CL, 27, F, Muslim); "when you see a funding program specifically targeting LGBTI, it will encourage them [MCMF organisations] to do some work in this space" (CL, 31, M, heterosexual, atheist, Chinese).

The issues of prioritizing which projects to be deemed useful for MCMF and/or SSAGD grants, and the extent of the funding, were addressed by some interviewees: "The money is there. It just needs to be channeled in the right direction" (CL, 33, M, gay, Muslim, Somali); "Definitely accountability is critical... there's a lot of duplication or there's a lot of missed opportunities" (CL, 27, MCWH Project Worker).

We know through our research and consultations that inadequate funding and short term funding limit the potential for long term planning which seriously impact upon program outcomes...Priority will be given to projects that increase community awareness about the issues and needs of LGBTI culturally diverse Victorians; reduce or prevent discrimination, vilification and harassment; develop resilience, capacity and confidence; address gaps in the current service system that prevent LGBTI culturally diverse Victorians from being able to access the support they need; and celebrate diversity and promote inclusion of LGBTI culturally diverse Victorians within

the wider community, particularly in rural and regional communities.

(CL, F, 45, Greek Orthodox, Greek)

There needs to be more funding for interpreters and bilingual health educators. They need to be supported with proper working conditions and not be just contracted... It would be amazing to have interpreters trained in working on LGBTIQ issues specifically.

(CL, 27, MCWH Project Worker)

Funding and in-kind resourcing were required to sustain existing projects and programs beyond the short-term, to avoid burn-out of volunteers, and demonstrate the significance and understood difficulty of this work:

there is not a lot of long-term sustainable funding for organisations... There have been quite a few successful short term projects but you need long term support to help with structural change... Short term projects can be great but often mean that people start over again each time. When you are working with marginalised communities it's the long term trust that you build up that's important. That takes time.

(YP, 22, MTF, bisexual, Jewish-Agnostic, Romanian Malaysian-Chinese)

You need to pay somebody. You can have volunteers giving their time and doing talks and running the board and making decisions but you ultimately can't rely on them to keep it together, build it up and be effective. Until you get funding for 1 professional, even 1 part time director, you will not get traction. ... I think an organization should have an opportunity to have a 5 year grant for employing someone. ... funding for even a half time director for these organizations would speed change

(CL, 57, M, heterosexual, Jewish)

Several participants raised concerns about the processes by which these funded projects were designed and undertaken with MCMF SSAGD young people. They felt the project applications of SSAGD and/or MCMF young people needed to be supported and encouraged rather than constrained or determined by overarching grant program frameworks:

The project that looks ridiculous or unnecessary to a cisgender, heterosexual, white, male who's from a middle-class background is going to look very different to the project that looks useful and groundbreaking to people who are actually living this  
(YP, 24, FTM, femme women, Buddhist-Muslim, Dominican-Filipino)

It seems that organisations are always trying to make their work fit the grant rather than the other way around.... They just really want to tick the boxes of how many different communities they have accessed. I felt that taking part in the project, that I was a statistic, rather than a person. It was really quite a full-on process. I didn't feel like it was relaxing or about me at all. It was just a very stressed out project worker who was trying to run this project on limited funding. I understand the difficult position that she would have been in but it wasn't a positive experience for me

(CL, 27, F, Muslim)

whoever defines the agenda controls the agenda. The way that the government therefore expresses their understanding is through funding grants. The way the programs are enacted are through the criteria of those grants. So whether or not they're beyond it or not, they're [funded groups] stuck at having to meet the criteria where the government says. They're going to have put their advanced, innovative, perceptual relationship in high trust aside to meet restricted boxes. ... They're [grants] very much about spreading local Australian values. They haven't consulted the community first. ... It's very much geared to selling LGBTI values and acceptance of those to ethnic community leaders and cultures and getting acceptance, which is a laudable concept, which our organisation supports, but it's been

done without a lot of consultation with those communities that the grants are seeking to have an influence on through the partnerships of the grant applicants. ... We are the ones that are going to have to deal with the complaints from the community. If the young person is not handled properly in these wonderful projects that are going to spring up at a hundred miles an hour, the communities will come to us, the families will come to us. We'll have to advocate on their behalf. Then we'll have to go to government and we'll have to take a combative, operative approach, which we don't want to do.... We're right there in the middle

(CL, 49, M, gay, spiritual, Indian-Chinese)

Another issue was the understanding that many community members may not have the skills or capacity to be able to undertake the grant application process:

if you want to support these grassroots projects that are actually coming from community, then people have to be able to navigate the funding system. ... run a grant-writing workshop ... It's about access and equity. .. There needs to be more training, capacity building and funding given to the immigrant and refugee sector.

(CL, 27, MCWH Project Worker)

I don't have any funding, I am a student and I don't really have a stable job. And I've got these ideas it's going to be hard to implement. And also we've never done this before so having assistance would be good. Having someone to work with [on the grant application]. I can't really think of an organization where I would go, 'Hey I have some ideas and if you could assign me someone that we can work together and they can check up on me'.

(YP, 24, FTM, femme women, Buddhist-Muslim, Dominican-Filipino)

Participants said the Department of Premier and Cabinet (DPC), the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), CMY, VMC and other departments needed to provide funding and in-kind support to run education programs, set up safe spaces, and provide “back-up” support for if and when "homophobic" backlashes occur:

it's really about awareness and justice. ... Someone who's basically 18 year old who's been thrown out of her house because of her sexual identity. She's struggling, she hasn't got the money. People in that situation need financial support

(CL, 57, M, heterosexual, Jewish)

we were one of the first programs to be run out of a migrant and refugee service. We often got referrals from lots of different organizations. I had lots of refugee services calling up and asking if they could refer clients to us but the Project wasn't actually funded to be a support service...what's important is that there is a first-point of contact program...Organisations that can provide safe spaces and specialized resources and capacity building

(CL, 27, MCWH Project Worker)

Some participants also pointed out the need to be wary of wasteful funding of new projects which may replicate existing programs and organisations, or indeed endeavor to partner with existing organisations without recognition of their earlier work and cultural capital built over time:

have more services offered within a migrant and refugee organization rather than funding LGBTIQ organizations that don't necessarily historically have the links yet with different cultural communities. ... The work that the mainstream LGBTIQ sector does is really important but I feel like often funding is just given to that sector with the idea that they will be able to cover all LGBTIQ issues no matter which group. For refugee and immigrants who are LGBTIQ, it's not always going to be so clearly about sexuality. An intersectional approach is needed... money is given to the LGBTIQ sector to work around issues of sexuality and gender and funding is given to the immigrant and refugee sector to deal with issues around culture and cultural diversity. People don't divide their identities like that. If you are

a queer woman of colour you don't visit both services to get the bits you need for each part of yourself. You need a service that understands both... it's important to fund that work that's being done rather than starting again each time... we got a lot of requests for partnerships during [funding applications] [and] often these organizations wanted to do the work but they didn't necessarily have the experience. They wanted us to partner with them to say, "Oh, we're partnering with this organization which has these links"... I hope that we will be able to get some of that money to continue the great work that we're doing. We have LGBTIQ projects that have been running for the last 10 years.

(CL, 27, MCWH Project Worker)

Several participants also suggested that funding applications of any MCMF community organisation, program or event across any grant scheme needed to include how these will address and support SSAGD members. Furthermore, evaluation reports of these funded schemes need to provide evidence of this inclusion. These were strategies that were seen to lead to stronger accountability and responsibility for SSAGD research and resourcing in MCMF organisations and community groups:

one of my problems with government at the moment is in funding system... I said to a minister, "You've got to give funding to make sure that the community bring 20 to 25% people of different background". That way encourages communities to include others, and people start to respect. You give them money to dance their own dance and they greet each other, it doesn't make a difference to others. ... the system is bad because they just want a good report, they want to put it on the shelf, accountability is done. Finished. That mindset is killing us. Yes, community groups need support but that support needs to be conditioned with inclusion, acceptability and respect... Let that narrow old culture settle into concrete. I get invited to all these African events, but the question is how many are there from non-African cultures? How do you expect them to change when we are dealing with the same people and in the same environment? ... we need to say, "How do we break this?" This is where the

government has a role to play. How do you bring the Xs and the Ys together? You'll give them money, but the condition is this. If you don't follow these conditions, unfortunately we don't want to give you... We cannot break stereotyping by people doing the same thing over and over. ... and the measure would be, have they developed a good network outside their norm in the process, have they diversified themselves?

(CL, 53, M, heterosexual, Muslim, Egyptian)

I don't think we should be funding any organization which is teaching bigotry as religious truth. Public funding is for public good, not for harm and hatred... It's not responsible to spend people's money on creating and fostering hatred, whether it's against refugees or against Muslims or against gays.

(CL, 57, M, heterosexual, Jewish)

You give the grants, you set out guidelines that require there to be LGBTIQ, culturally, linguistically, and religiously diverse people involved in the project and then you let those people decide what they want to do. ... Then, in the review process after the project or resource or event has been delivered, they should be able to demonstrate that they did what they said they'd do at the start. Or, if they deviated from that, that it was because it was physically impossible to do what they did and that the ways they changed it would still have met that criteria

(YP, 24, FTM, femme women, Buddhist-Muslim, Dominican-Filipino)

## Recommendations

- **Government and service providers to deliver community training workshops in preparing grant applications**
- **The following are to be prioritized in government funding:**
  - ✚ **paid positions in volunteer organisations and groups;**
  - ✚ **existing MCMF organisations with a track record of previous commitments and work for SSAGD MCMF;**

- ✚ **new MCMF organisations partnering with existing ones in respectful ways that extend previous work rather than replicate it;**
- ✚ **projects created by SSAGD MCMF young people for themselves (auspiced by credible organisations who have demonstrated long-standing successful projects and project management).**
- **Accountability to and participation of SSAGD MCMF communities to be demonstrated in all grant aims and outcomes/evaluations, not just grants specifically catering to these communities.**

#### **F. “We need a whole of government approach”: The Role of Government and Policy**

Most participants discussed government frameworks and policy development as significant to addressing the needs of SSAGD MCMF young people, their families and communities: “The Victorian Government is currently developing a Multicultural Policy Statement that will provide a framework to better support LGBTI young people” (CL, F, 45, Greek Orthodox, Greek).

It's important for governments to show leadership and it sends a really big message to have a Minister for Equality, to have a new multicultural policy, because it makes the work of our local councils easier. ..It sends a very strong message symbolically that Victoria is leading the way. I think Daniel Andrews has done an exceptional job around the social policy space... Multicultural issues can't just sit within VMC. Every government department needs to be thinking about issues facing multicultural communities. Let's start mainstreaming the issue.

(CL, 31, M, heterosexual, atheist, Chinese)

Just even watching what having the Gender and Sexuality Commissioner has done, it's hard to see how having people in

designated positions for multicultural, queer representation would be a negative thing at all.

(YP, 21, M, queer-bisexual, non-religious, Malaysian-Chinese Anglo)

I do a bit of work in a local council with their LGBTI advisory committee and they are reaching out to multi-faith and multicultural people and that's just beginning to be incorporated in their LGBTIQ policies. ... having those [state] policies set in place, it'll create a much more fostering and active space because it does acknowledge that these people exist and there's a space for them.

(YP, 24, non-binary, gay, atheist, Mexican)

However, concerns were expressed in regard to the breadth and depth of state government MCMF SSAGD policy content, its ability to enforce significant implementation, and its assumptions regarding the communities it was addressing:

It [state policy] can be good as a recognition that this is a priority, and as something that will force people to move closer to it. There is a danger in people looking at a very general statement that isn't tailored to their community and reacting one of two ways. One is to say, "This isn't relevant" and then switching off entirely. Or looking over a very general statement that doesn't really demand all that much and going, "Okay, we're done now." It's [state policy] not useless but unless it's followed up on, then it ends up encouraging this sort of tokenistic engagement where people are ticking the boxes, saying, "Well this is an official policy from a figure of authority. This is what has been set out as best practice" when best practice isn't what the statewide policy has set up. Best practice is the ideals and specific practical desires of the LGBTIQA people in your community.

(YP, 19, non-binary, demisexual-bisexual, Jewish)

It's [state policy] really assuming that the multicultural communities are regressive, conservative, faith-based. It should be about helping to create a unique identity in collaboration between LGBTI multicultural youth and their communities and the mainstream LGBTI community. I don't see that option to create a fusion, the new. It tends to be a bit like this is for the socially underdeveloped. ... These young people, they're way ahead online, they're way beyond these policies. Offline, they're not. These policies are offline, directed at offline young people from a fairly parental point of view.

(CL, 49, M, gay, spiritual, Indian-Chinese)

Four specific areas of policy development and implementation were raised, listed here in order of significance according to how often participants discussed them: a) the need for stronger community collaborations and consultations; b) education policies and the need to remove religious exemptions in schools; c) marriage equality and its positive and problematic implications for MCMF communities; and d) workplace policies and ongoing discrimination.

**a) “The LGBTI multicultural policy landed from the sky very suddenly”: the Need for Community Collaborations and Consultations**

Concerns were expressed by some participants about the lack of thorough consultation with MCMF communities regarding SSAGD inclusion in the new Multicultural Statement:

Discussion papers take a year sometimes. Research takes a year. ... the LGBTI multicultural policy landed from the sky very suddenly. Without consultation. Not only that, it was embedded in a very complex area of cultural diversity at a time where social cohesion, counter terrorism issues are really, really heightened and multiculturalism is being questioned. ... We totally support the goal of government [but] you consult, you have conversations, you're close to the community, you're in there. Then we decide, what is the best way to put this in

writing? What is the best way to listen? How do we ensure their safety? ... I consulted with the Equality Unit and I understand that they have extensively consulted with the LGBTI community, including the multicultural committees . We recognize and we applaud them for doing that. But we [MCMF communities] are a resource [they needed to consult]. We also create resources. We think outside the box. We identify the difficult issues.

(CL, 49, M, gay, spiritual, Indian-Chinese)

You can have as detailed a policy as you want, it's just getting people on board with it... These communities really need to be there for every step of this policy, because if there's something that's amiss with what the government writes, then it's on them... you need to figure out the strategy, how do you think you're going to influence these people? ... you've got to know who your enemies are... do we know what the landscape really looks like? ...Quantifying comes into play again. How many different cultures do we have here in Melbourne? How many of these families have gay children in it or gay parents? Yeah, let's go to the demographic data so that we can see the big picture

(CL, 29, F, lesbian, Buddhist-Catholic, Filipina)

That attitude of wanting validation and public recognition for treating me like a person does not convince me that you genuinely care. It convinces me that you're trying to look sufficiently intersectional that you'll win enough social justice points. That's not genuine engagement. It's important to remember that the people here are people, not just your new policy

(YP, 19, non-binary, demisexual-bisexual, Jewish)

Given the above concerns about a top-down approach and lack of collaboration with local communities, local councils were suggested as being instrumental in bridging state government and grassroots communities:

Local governments are more open to consultation, and open to dialogue compared to other levels of government. Everyone knows local government is responsible for the 3Rs: roads, rates and rubbish. Local governments exist for community and I think we can be that community forum... Asian Australian communities are generally less outspoken and they don't speak out as much on issues. That would require a different strategy. European communities are generally more outspoken within their own sort of networks and that requires a different strategy. I think local government has the potential to bridge these groups together across the table to have these conversations. Our council for example we have a very active young persons' reference group that constantly brings issues to the council around climate change, sustainability, school leadership programs. They could be a good vehicle to have these conversations.

(CL, 31, M, heterosexual, atheist, Chinese)

**b) “I don’t think there should be religious exemptions”: Incorporating MCMF SSAGD Rights into Education Policies**

Several participants discussed schools as significant places to be compulsorily targeted for the implementation of SSAGD MCMF policies:

I don't think there should be religious exemptions. I don't think that there should be any public funding to any school which says that this is wrong.

(CL, 57, M, heterosexual, Jewish)

With most young people school is ubiquitous in their lives. It would be one of the most obvious places for the government to target policy towards... I think I've come up with a solution on how you can get independent schools on board. Having the more progressive schools in that community and inviting them to get on board with the policy and from there, those smaller community focused schools forming coalitions with each other.

(YP, 17, M, gay, atheist, Turkish-Filipino)

Every religious school, yes, they should [enforce the policy]. Because there's this theology or beliefs that are being taught to these youngsters that are eighth century and whatnot, so the trauma that it does on a spiritual level, on a psychological level, is mind boggling.

(CL, 33, M, gay, Muslim, Somali)

**c) “Marriage is a big thing in these cultures”: Marriage Equality and MCMF Communities**

Achieving marriage equality was raised by some participants as either positive or problematic. It could be useful in legitimating SSAGD relationships in marriage focused cultures or as part of Australian law; and problematic in divesting attention from other pressing concerns such as homelessness, family violence, forced marriages, and socio-economic issues.

You can use a policy like marriage equality and if you have a campaign about it you can show people with multicultural backgrounds in it...It would definitely help the cause and marriage is a big thing in these cultures. ... It's going to help in the sense that, in general, out there, we'll be more accepted because we live in a country governed by law and people are naturally just going to follow the rules. That's the general gist of what law does, right, people follow it, people don't break the laws.

(CL, 29, F, lesbian, Buddhist-Catholic, Filipina)

as a gay or bisexual Muslim I'm not going to have sex outside marriage because it's part of my faith. I would wait for the right person and have a marriage then I can have sex after marriage... People like us we also don't engage in orgies or threesomes or open or casual relationships because these relationships are not something that are part of our value

system which is about a family unit, having a family and taking care of each other

(YP, 22, F, bisexual, Sufi Muslim, Pakistani)

It would be like marriage is such a sacred thing and here's what the Australian government's done with it. ... it would be the complete opposite of what it's intended to do... there's so many other really important issues like safety, like security, like homelessness in the [MCMF] LGBTIQ community that marriage is something that you don't even get an opportunity to think about once you're actually going through all of it... It's for people that are privileged enough to come from communities and families that are able to embrace marriage... It's beautiful, we would love to get married someday but we've got so much else.

(YP, 24, F, lesbian, Agnostic-Muslim, Pakistani)

Marriage is an important institution in our community and sometimes same sex couples have much more stable relationships compared to heterosexual couples. ... Actually that [accepting same-sex marriage] took me a while as someone who is very proud of my own cultural heritage, who's very well versed in the ways of Confucius and other philosophical leaders in the Chinese culture who actually condemn same sex marriage, or condemn same sex relationships. When I grew up I was very influenced by my parents thinking that ... I'm proud to say that I've changed my views and be more progressive in this issue. I hope that there are more people like me who are multicultural leaders in our community that are heterosexual. I think generationally we'll change.

(CL, 31, M, heterosexual, atheist, Chinese)

#### **d) “Let migrants know”: Incorporating MCMF SSAGD Rights into Immigration Policies**

Some participants expressed the need to introduce Australian MCMF SSAGD policies to immigrants and refugees as soon as they arrived in Australia:

Where do you start? With people moving into this country.  
That's at the immigration point, when they start applying. It's educating them, let migrants know of the social, political, cultural [SSAGD] landscape here... there's trans people around, there are gay people around from different backgrounds.

(CL, 29, F, lesbian, Buddhist-Catholic, Filipina)

**e) “They say they’re inclusive but they don’t actually practice that”: Incorporating MCMF SSAGD Rights into Workplace Policies**

A final area of policy concern was workplace policies around discrimination against MCMF SSAGD employees:

I have experienced unfortunate and really terrible situations at work, people just being sort of passive aggressive and passing off comments, and they would get away with it.

(CL, 29, F, lesbian, Buddhist-Catholic, Filipina)

I think we should be more supportive and sensitive to them [MCMF SSAGD] entering the workforce. Even if the employer says 'Oh yeah we're inclusive', how far does that mean? I think that sometimes they say they're inclusive but they don't actually practice that. ....So I think having programs for employers to contact diversity training

(YP, 24, FTM, femme women, Buddhist-Muslim, Dominican-Filipino)

Do you have explicit policies that I can see easily and access readily without having to ask anyone for them and they are right there on your website so you're publicly declaring your support for us? Policies that if someone in your organisation does mess up, that I can refer back to and say, "Actually, you've already agreed to do this. Now you need to follow through on it," and other staff in your organizations trained in them.

(YP, 19, non-binary, demisexual-bisexual, Jewish)

## Recommendations

- **Stronger community collaborations and consultations in the development and implementation of policy to avoid a top-down approach, and to successfully navigate between general policy statements and implementation specificities.**
- **More effective use of local councils as bridges between state government and local MCMF communities.**
- **Remove religious exemptions in schools which negatively impact on the health and wellbeing of MCMF SSAGD students, staff and families.**
- **Marriage equality policies require an understanding of and frameworks about the multiple positions of MCMF SSAGD in relation to culture, privilege and other social health needs.**
- **Workplace policies such as anti-discrimination policies to address the ongoing discrimination of MCMF SSAGD employees.**

### **G. “All I see is white faces”: The Role of the LGBTIQ Community**

Although the Anglo-LGBTIQ community was not mentioned in the research questions, it was a sector that most participants wished to discuss. Indeed, the absence of this perspective was identified as a problem in previous research projects:

annoyance that they were always being asked to talk about the homophobia that existed in their cultural communities and there was less space to talk about the racism and discrimination that they faced from mainstream queer communities... Many participants spoke about how they didn't think mainstream LGBTIQ communities and services realised how white they were and how it was impossible for many people from refugee or immigrant backgrounds to feel at home or part of the 'family' within them.

(CL, 27, MCWH Project Worker)

Participants in this project expressed the ongoing need in predominantly Anglo-SSAGD communities to address racism, Islamophobia, anti-religious discrimination, narrow media representations, and a lack of understanding of the

significance of family and culture in MCMF SSAGD young people's lives. By not addressing these issues, these communities were preventing MCMF SSAGD from participating, belonging and indeed, undertaking leadership positions in the wider SSAGD community:

the lack of visibility and support for Muslim youth, they're widely unrepresented [in SSAGD communities], and I've seen them come for very brief periods to a lot of the youth groups, that space where you feel kind of relief and wild escape, but then drop off very, very quickly. As they kind of start to support their cultural identity more, the tension just heightens dramatically  
(YP, 22, MTF, bisexual, Jewish-Agnostic, Romanian Malaysian-Chinese)

Those people that are pro-LGBTQI often tend to be anti-religious in Australia and we're having an issue with that because supporting gay people and helping them doesn't mean that you have to be against Islam. ... and then when someone comes out as gay, that person is perceived as a hero, rebelling from Islam when the person isn't...I don't go to things like gay prides because I don't know what we're celebrating, are we celebrating the white diverse sexuality of LGBTQI?

(YP, 22, F, bisexual, Sufi Muslim, Pakistani)

if I come into a space and all I see is white faces, then that creates a bit of a barrier for me. I'm like, "Um, okay. I don't feel this might be a space for me or that might be inclusive and I know that this might not be the place to bring up race and cultural identity and all that" ...having representation within those spaces is important so making sure the resources and materials have more than just one culture being represented, that there are more than one language there

(YP, 24, non-binary, gay, atheist, Mexican)

A lot of the time they [queer organizations] keep on saying, "We are trying to be inclusive, we are inclusive, but there is some

really strange reasons that these particular groups of people don't come to us". I think instead of being defensive, I know that it's hard to be more proactive and we don't really like our work being criticized, but it's important to look back at the practice currently happening, evaluate it as well as working with different organizations that work more with people of different religions, people with other cultural backgrounds. Listen to them, talk to them, and work hard on how to ensure that practice can make it more inclusive and safer for these people to come.

(YP, 18, FTM, pansexual, Buddhist, Vietnamese)

in queer spaces your being religious or being culturally diverse is something that's accepted but not celebrated. Where it's fine to be any of those things, but not if it's too visible when parts of your cultural identity start to be prominent. If you're missing events or meetings because of your religious holiday. If the times when you can't be as active in groups doesn't coincide with the secular calendar, all of those things are sort of, "Well, fine then," as opposed to actively seeking out, "How can these different elements then inform our projects, inform on the services we provide, and enrich our community?"

(YP, 19, non-binary, demisexual-bisexual, Jewish)

Several participants hoped the forthcoming Pride Centre would be truly demonstrative of inclusivity by being a place of cultural and faith diversity: SSAGD MCMF organisations and groups having offices there, the presence of prayer rooms and safe meeting spaces, and MCMF SSAGD diversity represented in its visual and media culture:

Is it 15 million that's going to the Pride Center? I've just been thinking will any of that be allocated specifically to refugee and immigrant people? Then what would that mean? Will it go to language resources or will it go to someone being employed to actually work in that area?

(CL, 27, MCWH Project Worker)

if the Pride Center had some form of space for various cultural backgrounds, ... where people from different faiths could come and say, "We're going to have a meeting" or "We're going to have this event", that'd be great... if they have that specific multicultural room or whatever, but the broader structure retains a very white-centric and very European-centric focus, then it might create that barrier there. But there's also the fact some people might not be comfortable going to the Pride Center because of either fear of outing themselves or fear that they might run into someone they know

(YP, 24, non-binary, gay, atheist, Mexican)

### **Recommendations**

- **Recognise, name and address racism, religious bigotry and other discriminations that prevent MCMF SSAGD individuals from joining and staying engaged within LGBTIQ community structures and organisations.**
- **Recognise and address barriers to MCMF SSAGD individuals taking positions of leadership within LGBTIQ organizations.**
- **The forthcoming Pride Centre to be a space of diversity, inclusion and specificity.**

### **H. "Someone that gave me a sense of a future": The Need for MCMF SSAGD Role Models, Older Mentors and Youth Leaders**

Participants believed there was a need for the skilling, funding and encouraging of MCMF SSAGD role models, older mentors and youth leaders who can support MCMF SSAGD young people and their communities. This was seen as particularly important for those who are not university-educated or very literate in English, require support in navigating bureaucratic processes and procedures, and would benefit from someone taking on the administrative load of MCMF SSAGD youth groups such as gaining funding, "filling out forms", and planning events: "mentoring, people that are willing to guide these kids... a buddy program" (YP, 24, F, lesbian, Agnostic-Muslim, Pakistani).

I've always found other trans people of color to be a really big part or even bisexual and transgender Jewish people ... .Being

able to see someone that gave me a sense of a future was really powerful because when I was younger I didn't know that there were people like me out there, particularly not people that I could be like, "Well that's what I can grow up to be." It just created this kind of a void of, "Okay I can come out, and then what happens next".

(YP, 22, MTF, bisexual, Jewish-Agnostic, Romanian Malaysian-Chinese)

having positive role models out there that are saying we've been through the same stuff and it's okay, and you'll get through it...To know that is really, really meaningful.

(YP, 24, F, lesbian, Agnostic-Muslim, Pakistani)

I'm not good at admin stuff. We would need to establish a committee such as president, treasurer and secretary. The ultimate goal is hopefully to have the group registered as a charity. However, what's needed is to have that structure. Someone [mentor] that is aware of how those types of organizations are established will be very, very helpful.

(CL, 33, M, gay, Muslim, Somali)

long-term sustainable programs so that any work with young people now factors in these young people becoming role models later as they get older, cos we eventually get old.

(YP, 24, FTM, femme women, Buddhist-Muslim, Dominican-Filipino)

there isn't an easy way for people to start. A lot of people just don't feel like they have the knowledge or the capacity. People are afraid of getting it wrong, so they'll cut off at the start.

(YP, 19, non-binary, demisexual-bisexual, Jewish)

Many participants were aware of the benefits and risks associated with becoming a public mentor or SSAGD community leader, role model or spokesperson:

youth peer leader programs are supporting young leaders to develop new sets of skills that will definitely help support them with their leadership in activities in the community. From my

experience as a youth peer leader who is being paid, and from the evaluation of last year's youth peer leaders program, we see how young people are becoming more and more open to us. Also, young people would tend to listen and share their experience with their peers rather than people with a more age gap to them.

(YP, 18, FTM, pansexual, Buddhist, Vietnamese)

I feel that when you publically out yourself as someone who is gay by becoming a spokesperson for your cultural or religious group you can also risk getting pushed out of that group and that can leave you feeling very isolated and cut off from a culture that means a lot for you. To many it makes more sense to not be so public in the way that the West often wants you to be. I feel like you are really jumped on when you are queer or trans and a person of colour to be a spokesperson for your community.

(CL, 27, MCWH Project Worker)

This could be particularly problematic if the leader was a young person:

make sure that we support these young people when there is all this pressure to be a spokesperson or a leader for your cultural community once you're out. When you're dealing with racism and discrimination from mainstream communities and also from homophobia or transphobia within your cultural communities, that's a very hard position to be in, and then to also be young on top of that. There needs to be support to grow and develop, to do this all in the public eye.

(CL, 27, MCWH Project Worker)

I think it's phenomenal we have some very amazing young leaders in our community setting up and doing great stuff, but there does need to be a bit more leadership from the leaders who are already there too

(YP, 22, MTF, bisexual, Jewish-Agnostic, Romanian Malaysian-Chinese)

Some participants acknowledged that straight leaders also had a role to play as allies in mentoring and leadership:

but it's important to recognize that that's a role of an ally and a peer that helps amplify the message of LGBTI people. That it's not about speaking on behalf of them. ...sometimes people can run ahead and they'll have great ideas but the LGBTI people in that space might be like, "I'm not ready for that" or "I think maybe we should approach it differently."

(YP, 22, MTF, bisexual, Jewish-Agnostic, Romanian Malaysian-Chinese)

### **Recommendations**

- **Service providers and community organizations to support MCMF SSAGD role models, mentors and leaders, particularly young people whilst at the same time ensuring there is a good mix of all ages.**
- **Service providers and community organizations to establish and fund buddy programs to support young MCMF SSAGD role models, peer leaders and spokespersons.**
- **Service providers and community organizations to provide SSAGD MCMF young people with formal and informal access to older role models and mentors who can provide appropriate support and encouragement**

#### **I. "A little safe haven": the Role of Education and Health Sectors**

Participants specifically identified two sectors within which action for MCMF SSAGD young people was needed: the education and health sectors.

##### **a) "Sheer Amount of Resources": MCMF SSAGD Young People in the Education Sector**

Supportive schooling was considered essential to the health and wellbeing of MCMF SSAGD young people:

Something I benefited from is the sheer amount of resources that the school has. The fact that I can do basically anything I want

here, I feel like it would have been a lot tougher for me to come out anywhere else.

(YP, 17, M, gay, atheist, Turkish-Filipino)

there are youth who are queer Muslims who are oppressed and suppressed in these Islamic schools so how can we reach out to them? ... I taught at an Islamic school for five years, I finished from one my VCE. I say it's like a disaster waiting to happen. I spoke with a 16-year-old girl who is going to an Islamic school, transgender feelings. Luckily, she had a non-Muslim psychologist that she approached. We can't have health care professionals who are of another denomination to access those schools because Islamic schools are very contained. That's something for the government to address. ... There's a lot of policies when it comes to these religious schools. Something though has to be done because these are our youngsters and they're being damaged.

(CL, 33, M, gay, Muslim, Somali)

The Safe Schools Coalition was referred to as raising concerns with its lack of awareness, consultation and engagement with MCMF communities. This has led to widespread fear and misunderstanding when the only "information" received by these ethno-religious communities has been mainstream sensationalist media and religious fundamentalism:

I do think it's been really cool to see Safe Schools starting to do a lot more work to be inclusive....I think Safe Schools is doing vital work and we need to support more work with culturally diverse and religious diverse LGBTI youth.

(YP, 22, MTF, bisexual, Jewish-Agnostic, Romanian Malaysian-Chinese)

we [MCMF organisation] haven't been briefed on the issue of Safe Schools. We would love to have somebody talk to us about the multi-cultural component of the Safe Schools program. How can we begin this conversation?

(CL, 49, M, gay, spiritual, Indian-Chinese)

Another example of needs in the educational sector was universities supporting MCMF SSAGD young people, particularly international students:

I went to university and the place that I felt most comfortable in was the women's group and the queer community. They had very limited funding, there were very little opportunities for them to go out and do stuff. I think having more support for groups like that because it changes someone's life, and it changed mine.

Coming from a community that I did I had no access to people like that, that was my only little safe haven and it really helped me be able to accept who I was.

(YP, 24, F, lesbian, Agnostic-Muslim, Pakistani)

I feel like a lot of the universities are still struggling to catch up with gender things in particular. For example, either changing your name or changing your pronouns is a whole ordeal in itself because people are just not used to it. There are no frameworks that you can easily access and say, "All right, my pronouns are this" and then it changes all across the board. You have to repeatedly do it and it becomes quite a bit of a struggle.

(YP, 24, non-binary, gay, atheist, Mexican)

Universities are the best place [for learning about SSAGD MCMF]. I used to lead prayers at the university and every Friday we called for a person to do a sermon. I wanted that person to bring a challenging issue at the sermon rather than the normal issue.

(CL, 53, M, heterosexual, Muslim, Egyptian)

having support services at unis. ... university social workers or counselors that can actually support cultural needs as well. For example, most universities have a disabilities officer, a queer officer, a women's officer. I don't know of a single university that has a culturally diverse officer to represent those needs of those students.

(YP, 21, M, queer-bisexual, non-religious, Malaysian-Chinese Anglo)

[SSAGD international students] are uncomfortable to just take out a leaflet if in the open, it's to be located in a place that people don't really frequent. ...I definitely feel uncomfortable walking in to the Queer space. I walked up to the Queer stall at Orientation week and the person looked so uncomfortable. I didn't even say anything rude. Like I was an alien so after that I was like, "OK I'm never really going to go there until I have friends and we can go in". Now I feel more comfortable, but this is after 3 years at Uni. ... I've never really seen a leaflet in another language other than English. And I mean I can speak English, it's fine. I'm just wondering about people whose main language is not English.

(YP, 24, FTM, femme women, Buddhist-Muslim, Dominican-Filipino)

Another suggestion was to set up a school specifically for MCMF SSAGD young people:

I would love a queer-run school. If we had families who had queer children and they cannot go to school because bullying is common in the schools, and that's a long-term vision that I have but why not?

(CL, 33, M, gay, Muslim, Somali)

## **b) "Lots and lots of horror stories about different counselors": SSAGD MCMF Young People in the Health Sector**

The health sector raised some thoughtful and thought-provoking comments, such as the concerns with counselling and counsellors and why MCMF SSAGD young people may not use these services:

for the most part, LGBTI health is reduced to white men, gay men's health and everything else is kind of erased...it's vital to have councillors that can cater to CALD sections of the

community, particularly to community members that can't speak English.

(YP, 17, M, gay, atheist, Turkish-Filipino)

one of the hardest things was that from all my friends I would get something like, "You need to go talk to a psychologist," or "You should go talk to a therapist." I was thinking, "But they wouldn't understand my issues. They're not from my community". ... It's very easy to say, "Look your family think that way, frankly your family is shit; a shit family for not understanding you're a person of your own". It's easy to say that but when you're going through it, it's not what it is.

(YP, 24, F, lesbian, Agnostic-Muslim, Pakistani)

One of our members has been seeing a psychologist who didn't have that much insight said to him, "Why don't you just come out to your family?" I said [to the psychologist], "Look, it's not possible". Even some of the health care workers need some training when it comes to dealing with queer Muslim youth.... Training how to manage this type of traumatic environment that queer Muslim youth are in and how to empower the youth to transition psychologically, socially.

(CL, 33, M, gay, Muslim, Somali)

Lots and lots of horror stories about different counselors. There are queer young people of color I know who have been to counselors who have just assured that all their problems are to do with culture or to do with religion instead of actually listening to what the actual issues are. ... queer people of color have really struggled to find any counselors who are relevant to them. ... I think it would be really, really helpful to have some kind of publicly known and promoted, easily-accessible contact that people could reach out to for a range of support services... there's so much social stigma around mental health, they don't even tell their parents they're having mental health issues, let alone a local community leader. I think pouring all the resources into trying to get brochures and translated materials, I'm not even

sure that would be the best response as would be having easily accessible, online resources

(YP, 21, M, queer-bisexual, non-religious, Malaysian-Chinese Anglo)

one of the key issues that come across for gay Muslims is, "Keep it within the family," that means not going to a counsellor, that means not sharing your problems with the chaplain at school. I was raised with that. Whatever arguments we have in the family we keep it within the family. If you know that your dad's gay, keep it within the family. Understand that if we try to send them to a counsellor, a counsellor can't do much if they're not willing to talk about their own issues.

(YP, 22, F, bisexual, Sufi Muslim, Pakistani)

## **Recommendations**

- **Government educational bodies to build on existing educational policies, programs and resources which address the needs of SSAGD MCMF young people in schools.**
- **Any state or national educational policy, initiative, program or resource such as the Safe Schools Coalition must be undertaken with thorough and ongoing consultation and collaboration with MCMF communities to ensure cultural relevancy and to prevent negative and fear-inducing mis-information from gaining authority in these communities.**
- **Universities and other tertiary education sectors to develop stronger policies, programs and resources in order to support the inclusion and social and civic participation of MCMF SSAGD young people, particularly international students.**
- **Counsellors and counselling services to build on existing research, resource-development and education in order to encourage access by SSAGD MCMF young people.**
- **Health researchers to undertake research with SSAGD MCMF young people and their families in regard to appropriate and effective mental health service provision.**

## **J. “Training the Media”: The Role of The Media**

Participants discussed the importance of using various forms of media to promote recognition and affirmation of SSAGD MCMF young people: social media, ethnic

media and mainstream media: “Arts and creative projects, including video, social media, visual arts/exhibitions, theatre/dance/performance and cultural print media, newspaper/magazines/television/radio” (CL, F, 45, Greek Orthodox, Greek). Concerns and cautions were also presented in regards to preventing misrepresentations, under-representations, sensationalism and “whitewashing”:

media starts something and then the dialogue goes on even if the media forget about it. People remember because it was such a hyper issue... media goes for what sells, I'm talking about someone who's a conservative Muslim is going to get a lot of garbage thrown at him for his views, but that sells. As a result of that there's a sense of unity within the Muslim community that we're not going to be in particular shows simply because of how they fabricate the actual opinions. .. [we need to]get people from different faith-based backgrounds that are from LGBTIQI backgrounds to write articles for The Age, talk about your experiences, have an opinion column in the Australian Health/Lifestyle magazines. Why not? I mean these are all the newspapers we can access. ... I think what's stopping young gay Muslims from coming out is the lack of representation . . . . also stopping us is something that broke my heart that was said to me by somebody who's well known in the community and often comes on media. She said, "You are being bisexual and you're saying and talking about it as a Muslim to get attention, to get immediate popularity." Like, "Do I really want to go through listening to this garbage from community? Why is it that I do it? I do it for my God. I do it for the victims of violence in Pakistan of LGBTIQI community that are fighting so hard. They don't just experience random violence from street people. The abuse often comes from the family and community by disowning and abandoning us”.

(YP, 22, F, bisexual, Sufi Muslim, Pakistani)

**a) “Virtually advanced, materially stuck”: Social Media**

Participants believed social media was a platform that could be used to a much greater extent by SSAGD MCMF young people and their communities: “you could be reaching double or triple the amount of people, and doing something that can be more sustained or for longer period of time” (YP, 22, MTF, bisexual, Jewish-Agnostic, Romanian Malaysian-Chinese). It was a safe virtual space wherein SSAGD MCMF young people often performed different selves to the constrained “real world” selves:

I think there's online communities where young people can express their LGBTI without having to worry about their real community. ... The great thing about the internet is that allowed them mentally and virtually to advance ... We're dealing with people who are way advanced beyond us online. When you talk about young people, which one? The virtual one or the real world one? I would say the virtual one is like totally can sit here with you and meet like a 40, 50 year old and get it. You know how great they are verbally. ... I don't think programs deal with it. I don't think policy makers deal with that. I don't think ethnic communities and the media deal with that.... a complex individual problem of young LGBT people who are both virtually advanced, but materially stuck.

(CL, 49, M, gay, spiritual, Indian-Chinese)

social media is a very big world and we need to start investing money in that world .... I took steps for safety. We have the Facebook group is a closed group and within the group we have a secret group which I didn't know you could do which I just found that out last month. They feel safe because they are not exposed. We also have an email, we have Twitter account and also the phone number.

(CL, 33, M, gay, Muslim, Somali)

I know lots of young people online who aren't out to their community, and yet they still have a profile and they're still open in that way... There's no point making these really great places where people can access culturally relevant services and not promoting it on social media, and not promoting it in ways that

young people will actually find. I work at radio and I don't know a single person that listens to it because it's a generational thing. (YP, 21, M, queer-bisexual, non-religious, Malaysian-Chinese Anglo)

**b) “Very conservative thinking”: Ethnic Media**

Even when specifically asked, most participants were unable to identify positive representations in ethnic media, or they felt ethnic media was irrelevant to SSAGD MCMF young people: “most of the Muslim media are run by very conservative thinking and there is no avenue for the discussion of being queer in Islam” (CL, 33, M, gay, Muslim, Somali). One suggestion was for government bodies to engage with ethnic media management in how to include SSAGD representation in their content: “they can say, “Look, we will support you guys but you need to address these issues within your community” (CL, 33, M, gay, Muslim, Somali).

**c) “Try to keep the idiots out of arguing in the media”: Mainstream Media**

Concerns were raised about the absence, misrepresentations and sensationalist entertainment value of any SSAGD MCMF presence in mainstream media. This not only impacted on young people with minimal visible role models, but also on parents, families and communities whose knowledge about SSAGD was what could be gleaned from these “whitewashed”, predominantly middle class representations:

I think a misconception is that that there's some kind of entertainment value associated, which is one of the things that have really kept my parents from really opening up to it [SSAGD communities] because for them it's just what they see on the TV. They don't see any positive role models  
(YP, 24, F, lesbian, Agnostic-Muslim, Pakistani)

try to keep the idiots out of arguing in the media. If we can keep Rabbi --- from pretending that he represents the Jewish Community, we can explain to the mainstream that he doesn't represent the Jewish Community, same as I wish some of the

churches would stand up and say, the ACL [Australian Christian Lobby] doesn't represent all of the churches.

(CL, early 50s, M, heterosexual, Jewish)

the American Hollywood celebrities don't help because they're like, "Oh I'm bisexual," and the kissing scenes and there's the Muslim kids who are like, "Hey, we are just not part of that", we are like, "Modesty, get a room".

(YP, 22, F, bisexual, Sufi Muslim, Pakistani)

## Recommendations

- **Research media consumption and media creation, especially online media, of SSAGD MCMF young people and their families and communities.**
- **Media training to be provided across the range of ethnic and mainstream, online and traditional mediums to enable accurate representations of SSAGD MCMF young people and their families.**
- **Mainstream media to be trained regarding how they can work more respectfully with SSAGD MCMF young people, their families and communities.**
- **Ethnic media to be engaged in discussions, funding and developing policies and plans for increased and accurate SSAGD MCMF representations.**
- **Develop and fund social media strategies for SSAGD MCMF young people, their youth groups, families and communities.**

## LIMITATIONS AND FURTHER DIRECTIONS FOR RESEARCH

1. A few participants pointed out the need to address disabilities in this and future projects:

There is one point that I would like to emphasize, is neurodivergence people and disabled people. Neurodivergent people are people who are autistic people, people with attention deficit traits, attention deficit, hyperactivity traits, those who have mental illness etc. They are diverse in terms of the way their brain responds to things and stuff like that. It doesn't mean that there's anything wrong with them and it's not like a disease or a disorder or an illness. It's just a part of who they are. It's just how their body works, how their brain works. Not only these people are under-represented in the mainstream queer community, they are also under-represented in the multicultural and multifaith communities. A lot of the time these people are silenced, and I think it's important to remember that they are around and they are a part of our community and we need to create safe space to listen to them.

(YP, 18, FTM, pansexual, Buddhist, Vietnamese)

There can be a tendency to view intersectionality as a two box option, like we've covered two items so we're good now. ... In terms of the location of your event, is it wheelchair accessible? Is your definition of wheelchair accessible sending someone five minutes around the back of the building to come in through the storage section? I've seen some places lock their disabled toilets and then you have to go to reception and get a key to access them. Which is a ridiculous and embarrassing policy for a lot of people. Things like that, accessibility in terms of economic access, in terms of ability, in terms of neurodiversity. Are all of those things being considered?

(YP, 19, non-binary, demisexual-bisexual, Jewish)

2. The dearth of out SSAGD MCMF community leaders was identified in this project. A major recommendation was for government, in collaboration and consultation with MCMF organisations and communities, to determine strategies for mentoring and supporting leadership goals and career trajectories, as well as caring for their safety. Further research in relation to SSAGD MCMF community leadership would be useful.
3. Attempts were made to contact a broader range of religious leaders such as Buddhist, Catholic and Greek Orthodox. Only two religious leaders agreed to participate in the research: an Imam and a Rabbi. Further research with a broader range of religious leaders would be useful.
4. Attempts were made to reach an Italian and/or Greek SSAGD young person but were unsuccessful. This leads to reflecting upon if and why the issues explored in this research seem to be more pertinent to newly arrived and first generation MCMF SSAGD as contrasted to third generation who may have more successfully integrated their cultures and sexualities within their various communities. Future research could explore if this is why they seemed less interested or emphatic about wanting to speak about these issues. Is length of time in Australia a pertinent factor in the decline of marginalization among SSAGD MCMF young people?
5. There was some reluctance from some MCMF community members to participate. This manifested itself in emails and phone calls not being answered, or final dates not being arrived at. It was agreed the researcher would cease trying to contact community leaders who were not responding as her actions may have been construed as harassment. Further research could explore a range of research methods, such as anonymous online surveys, to determine why there was this reluctance and is it linked to the strong feeling expressed by many research participants that MCMF community leaders are not equitably consulted and collaborated with in the development, planning and process of research, policy, programming initiatives of government?



## CONCLUSION: “IT'S A GREAT TIME FOR IT”

It's a great time for it. Let's face it we've never had this much progression ever. There are people bursting to talk about this stuff, people who have had their entire lives to think about it like us and here we are

(CL, 29, F, lesbian, Buddhist-Catholic, Filipina)

When reconsidering the initial research aims and questions, and subsequent recommendations based on the findings, the following overall needs become apparent:

- **There is a need for a more in depth understanding of the intersections between issues of race, culture, religion, class, disabilities, spiritualities, ages, sexualities and genders in SSAGD MCMF young people. And this understanding needs to frame all policy, program, resourcing and implementation strategies and include recognition and respect for pre-colonial pre-Christian SSAGD MCMF heritages.**
- **A relationship of trust has to be established between government bodies, SSAGD and MCMF service providers, SSAGD MCMF young people and MCMF communities, particularly their religious and community leaders. A major strategy in achieving this is consultation and collaboration with SSAGD MCMF young people and their MCMF communities from the initial stages of planning potential research, policy and resourcing directions through to the final stages of implementing, disseminating and publicising policies, programs and resources.**
- **Anglo-SSAGD communities and organisations have a very significant role to play in becoming more culturally and religiously inclusive, and providing safe spaces. The forthcoming Pride Centre could be a welcomed demonstration of “inclusion with specificity” in action.**
- **Government bodies, particularly in relation to health and education sectors, need to discuss further direction in regards to**  
 **complete or partial removal of religious exemptions,**

- ✚ **compulsory inclusion of SSAGD MCMF aims and evaluations in grant applications, and**
- ✚ **the training and support of SSAGD MCMF community leaders, mentors and role models**

my relationship is valid and the person that I love is a valid person, and the love I feel for that person is valid, so I feel like it's important to make sure that people see that as valid; that it's not just a lifestyle or a phase, or this horrid brainwashing system, or the result of the gay agenda.

(YP, 24, F, lesbian, Agnostic-Muslim, Pakistani)

I wish to conclude this Report with words from two participants that provide inspiration, hope and joy in what lies ahead as we continue to live, love and work across MCMF SSAGD intersectionalities:

We are some of the strongest most resilient people out there. If you're talking about cultural sins, we've had to go through homophobia, racism, sexism. There's a lot of experience and knowledge out there amongst the community. .. I was the first out person in my family and the only gay person in my family that I know of. It was very nerve wracking for me to go and meet my family at gatherings. I went from having long, pretty hair and being my mum's trophy daughter, and “Look at you with makeup on” to having short hair, wearing pants. It was a weird experience for them. ...If you were to support and counsel kids who go through these situations, it's also the strengths that you could draw from it, it's a big pat on the back. We're really strong people for being able to do that because it's a really hard thing and acknowledging that. ... In all honesty, if I turned out a straight person I don't think I would have grown nearly as much as I have today

(CL, 29, F, lesbian, Buddhist-Catholic, Filipina)

in general every person needs love and affection, appreciation of who they are and who they are becoming. We're all on a journey of exploration and discovery of ourselves and we're always

growing up. I think that's the key thing to recognize that we have to stop forcing people to be fitting into pigeon holes. Also it's a waste religiously and politically and socially and sexually.

(CL, 57, M, heterosexual, Jewish)

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## APPENDIX A

### 1. Table of MCMF SSAGD young people participants

	Age	Gender	Sexual Identity	Ethnicity	Faith	Languages	Residential Area	Education	Occupation
YP	21	M	Queer Bisexual	Malaysian- Chinese	Non-religious	English Malay	North	University	Journalist
YP	22	Trans- female	Bisexual	Romanian and Malaysian- Chinese	Between Jewish and agnostic	English	Inner City	Secondary	Communications Manager
YP	22	F	Bisexual	Pakistani	Sufi Muslim	English Urdu	South-East	University	Aged care worker
YP	19	Non- Binary	Demisexual Bisexual	Not specified	Jewish	English	Inner South	University	Sex-worker
YP	18	Trans- Male	Pan- Romantic/Demiromantic Pan-sexual/Demisexual	Vietnamese	Buddhist	English Vietnamese	North	University	Student
YP	24	F	Lesbian	Pakistani	Between agnostic and Muslim	English Urdu Arabic Hindi	West	University	Contract Administrator

						Panjabi Pashtu			
<b>YP</b>	17	M	Gay	Turkish and Filipino	Atheist. Parents are are Muslim and Catholic	English. Parents speak Turkish and Tagalog	West	Secondary	Student
<b>YP</b>	25	Non- Binary	Gay	Mexican	Atheist, Catholic family	Mexican, English	CBD	University	Student
<b>YP</b>	24	Trans- Male	Attracted to femme women	Dominican and Filipino	Buddhist and Muslim	English, Arabic, Tamarind	South-East	University	Student

## 2. Table of MCMF community leaders

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Name	Age	Gender	Sexual Identity	Ethnicity	Faith	Languages	Residential Area	Education	Occupation
CL	53	M	Heterosexual	Egyptian	Muslim	English Tigrinya Amharic Ethiopian Arabic	North-East	PhD, University	Research and education
CL	47	M	Heterosexual	Turkish	Muslim	English Turkish	North	Hons, University	General Manager
CL	49	M	Gay	Indian and Chinese	Spiritual	English	CBD	Hons, University	Senior Policy Officer
CL	27	F	Not-specified	Not-specified	Muslim	English	West	Hons, University	National training Officer, Multicultural Centre for Women's Health
CL	45	F	Not-specified	Greek	Greek Orthodox	English Greek	Not specified	University	Media and Community Leadership
CL	57	M	Heterosexual	English	Jewish	English	Inner South	Rabbinic Ordination	Rabbi
CL	31	M	Heterosexual	Chinese	Atheist	English Chinese Mandarin and Cantonese	South-East	University	Local council leader
CL	Early	M	Heterosexual	Unspecified	Jewish	English	Inner South	Masters,	Executive Director

	50s							University	
<b>CL</b>	29	F	Lesbian	Filipino	Buddhist Catholic	English Tagalog	West	University	Business analyst, Project manager
<b>CL</b>	33	M	Gay	Somali	Muslim	English Arabic Italian	Inner City	University	Imam