







Supporting LGBTIQ+ Youth in Regional WA

Brooke Taylor (she/they)

Role: Regional LGBTIQ+ Youth Community Development Officer – Midwest WA

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Acknowledgement of Country

We acknowledge the Wadandi people, the first and true custodians of the land on which we meet today. We pay respect to the Elders, past and present, and the immutable strength and resilience of all Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander people.



ABOUT ME.

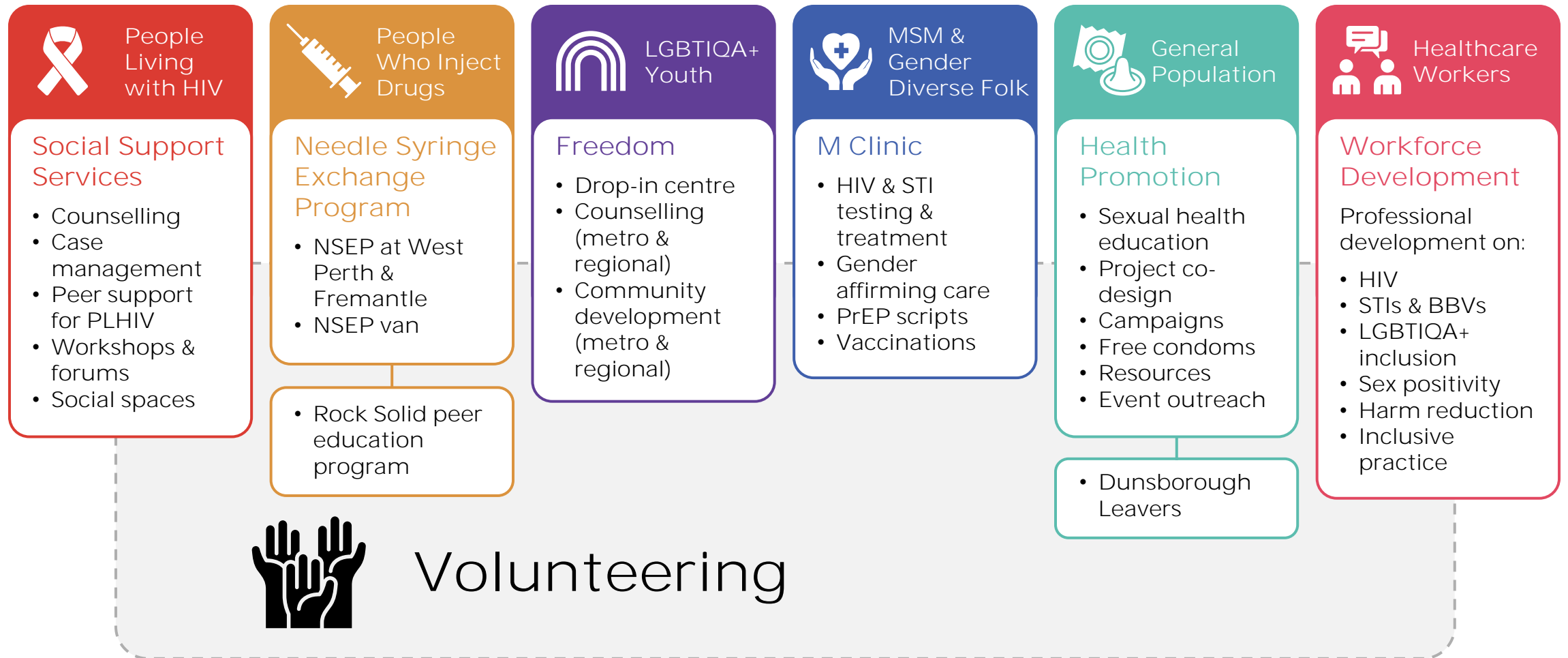
Brooke Taylor (she/they)
LGBTIQA+ Youth Community
Development Officer (Geraldton)

Background

- Parent & LGBTIQA+ Community member
- TransFolk WA Parent Support Online Group
- Previous TransFolk WA board member (retired 2023)
- OUTMidWest Leadership Group
- Grad Dip Psych/BBus
- Lover of all things shiny and fun

About WAAC

We work to make a difference around HIV, STIs and sexual health in WA



Freedom State

Why?

WA is the second largest administrative subdivision in the world and represents 33% of Australia from a land point of view. There is approximately 2.4 million people in Perth with a further 700,000 people living in regional & remote areas.

Where?

Geraldton: 418km North of Perth in Midwest WA population 41,182 in the greater area

Bunbury: 169km South of Perth in Southwest WA, population 82,000 in the greater area

Kalgoorlie-Boulder: 593km East of Perth with a greater area population of 29306

How: Mental Health Commission Funding to employ 1 part time staff member 3-4 days a week in each location as Community Development Officers and also funds a free counselling service for 12-25 year olds.

What do we do?

- Resource Distribution
- Event Outreach & Attendance
- Free LGTBIQA+ Education Sessions & Workshops
- Support the development & running of safe spaces and activities
- Advice & Referrals
- Support local schools, services & businesses to be more LGTBIQA+ friendly
- Free Mental Health Counselling
- Just about anything else

Why is it needed?

Research indicates that LGBTIQ+ communities generally have greater challenges across most areas of health and social determinants compared to the rest of the population, these poorer outcomes are magnified in regional/rural areas:

- Higher rates of anxiety & depression
- Higher psychological stress
- Greater difficulty accessing inclusive mental health services
- Significantly higher suicidal ideation and suicide attempt rates
- Higher tobacco, alcohol and drug consumption rates
- Poorer general health
- Greater feelings of social isolation
- Lower levels of acceptance
- Suffer higher levels of verbal & physical discrimination or harassment & assault
- Higher levels of domestic violence
- Lower levels of support in education settings
- Lower income and higher unemployment
- Higher homelessness rates

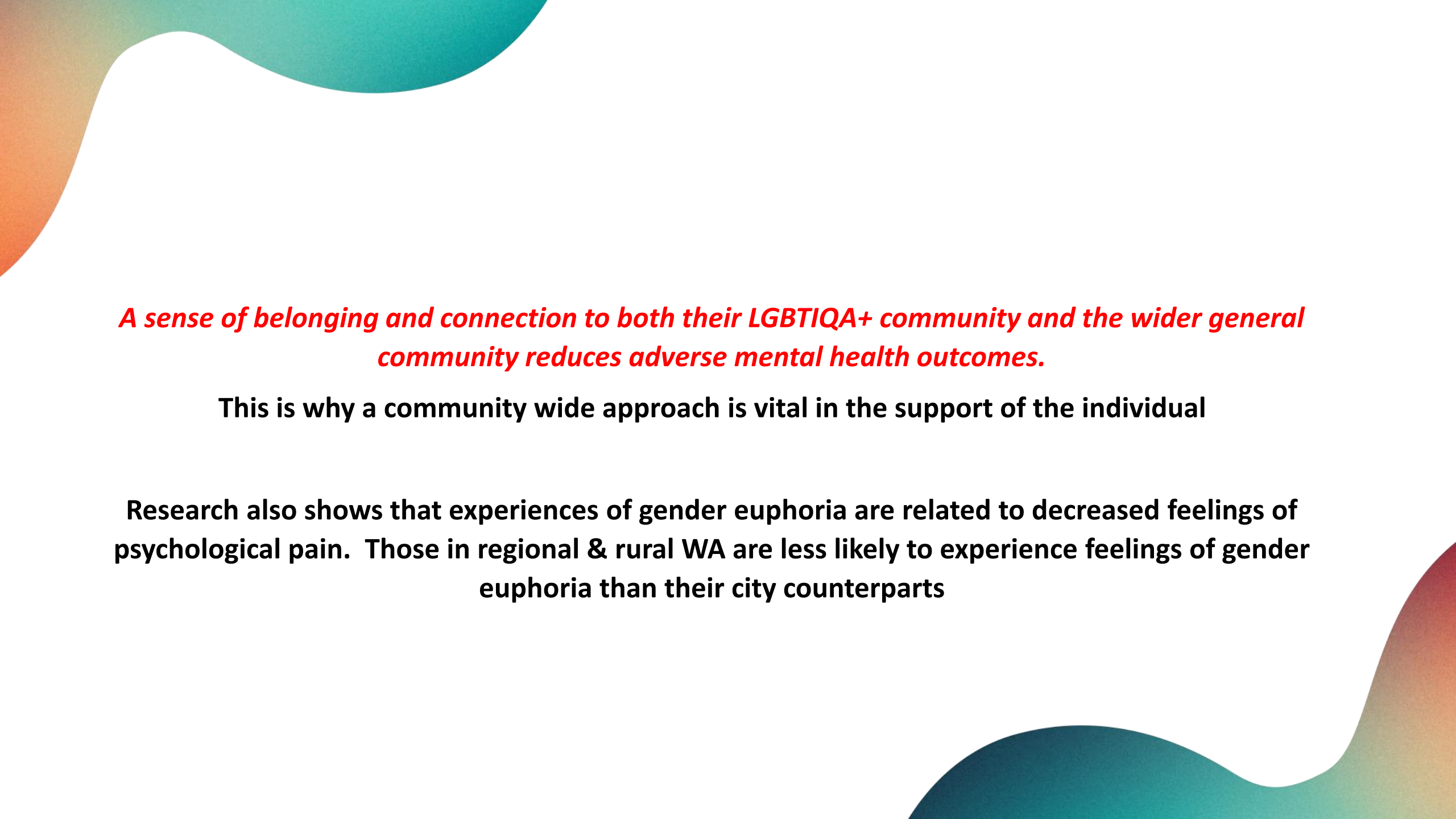
Most decision making & funding relating LGBTIQ+ issues is centred around services in Perth

Let's look at Mental Health

Comparing Mental Health Rates for Trans & Gender Divers Communities

Trans & Gender Diverse (TGD) Folks	TGD Capital City	TGD Regional City/town	TGD Rural/Remote	Cisgender City Folks
High Psychological Distress (past 4 weeks)	70%	75.8%	74.4%	45.5%
Suicide Ideation (lifetime)	90.5%	92.4%	95.2%	57.4%
Suicide Attempts (lifetime)	44.3%	45.1%	48.8%	50.9%

Source: Grant, R., Amos, N., Lyons, A., McNair, R., Power, J., Carman, M., ... Bourne, A. (2023). Out in Suburbia: Associations between residential location, mental health, and community connectedness among LGBTQ Australians. *Social & Cultural Geography*, 25(8), 1272–1290. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14649365.2023.2296472>



A sense of belonging and connection to both their LGBTIQ+ community and the wider general community reduces adverse mental health outcomes.

This is why a community wide approach is vital in the support of the individual

Research also shows that experiences of gender euphoria are related to decreased feelings of psychological pain. Those in regional & rural WA are less likely to experience feelings of gender euphoria than their city counterparts

Challenges

- Community pushback
- No other local specific LGBTIQ+ support services
- No support for community over 25
- Finding local suitable staff
- Community fears of being visible
- Limited safe referral pathways
- Often no local options for affirming medical care
- Most support options are only available online
- Many services/institutions don't wish to engage
- Regional/remote WA is often ignored in planning & decision making
- Regional Pride Groups are burning out
- Lower community LGBTIQ+ education levels & exposure
- Community fear of stigma
- Finding safe venues

Challenges

For Staff

- Boundaries in the face of overwhelming demand
- Being the face of LGBTIQ+ in town
- Breadth of role/burnout
- Feeling like you need to constantly fill a gap
- Physical safety issues
- Isolation
- Costs/time involved in Perth travel for professional development
- Less opportunity to attend networking & conference events due to cost/distance
- No support or physical backup if unwell or to take breaks at events

What works?

- Peer Support
- Flexibility
- Tailoring programs to specific region's needs
- Supporting local LGBTIQ+ groups to improve capacity
- Staff local to the community where possible
- Encouraging local community to volunteer as peers
- Social events & opportunities for connection
- Community education & visibility
- Building capacity of local organisations
- Geraldton community indicates work targeting schools, healthcare access & visibility are the highest priorities for them
- Perseverance often in the face of much negativity & rejection
- Events which target the whole LGBTIQ+ community.
- **A thick skin, it doesn't matter how much you do, when the need is so great folks will often complain that you aren't doing enough!**



What doesn't work?

Replicating city programs and ways of working

Doing all the work yourself rather than building capacity of local organisations

Saying yes to everything and burning out

Being rigid

Assuming that each location's needs are the same

Supporting only one segment of the local community

What's Needed?

- Funding for all ages
- Funding to support and educate the families of LGBTIQ+ folks
- Medical transition options locally (GP training)
- More in person peer support options
- Case work funding to support individuals & their families
- Additional funding for things such as hire of space for events/groups, consumables & catering
- Staff in other areas such as Gascoyne, Pilbara, Albany, Esperance etc
- Funding for more than one staff member in each location to improve safety for staff
- Development of more online support options for those more rural/remote residents
- Compulsory training for schools, government organisations & services
- More funding for travel so we can service smaller towns in our regions

Regional Support Options

- Local Pride Organisations
- TransFolk WA Online groups & Catch ups
- Freedom Centre Phone/Telehealth Counselling (12-25)
- Freedom Centre monthly Discord Peer Drop In Group (12-25)
- Some Headspace offices have peer groups (ie The Space in Geraldton 12-25)
- Qlife phone & Webchat
- Perth based Facebook groups (ie TransinWA, Perth LGBTI+ Community & many others)
- Good sources of information such as TransHub, Minus 18, Transforming Families websites

Support Services

Sexual Healthcare
for Community



HIV and STI
information for
Clinicians



Department of
Health



ashm



Social Support and
Mental Health



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