



RIAC Research Update

June 2025

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CRICOS Provider 01241G, TEQSA Provider Code: PRV12043 Australian University



Co-researchers and lived experience advisors hit the ground running

The Rainbow Inclusive Aged Care project is rapidly moving towards Stage 2 (Discover) to understand what enables and constrains inclusive care for gender and sexually diverse people in residential aged care. Stage 1 (Dawn) set the conditions for collaborative research by bringing together our Lived Experience Advisory Group (LGBTQ+ older people and carers), setting up the National Reference Group and recruiting six LGBTQ+ co-researchers. One of our co-researchers, Dr Tonia Naylor, is profiled in this update.

Two communities of practice (one in Western Australia, one in Queensland) serve as the ‘engine rooms’ for the research and involve the co-researchers, our research fellow Dr Meaghan Vosz, representatives from Amana Living (WA) and Wesley Mission Qld, and colleagues from LGBTQ+ organisations GLBTI Rights in Ageing Inc (WA), Rainbow Health Australia, and Val’s Ageing and Aged Care.

We’re delighted that ethics approval has been granted to proceed with our fieldwork research at Amana Living and Wesley Mission Qld. This will include observations, interviews and focus groups in 6 residential aged care communities in WA and 6 in Qld. Our co-researchers and lived experience advisors were instrumental in refining the fieldwork methods and working on resources to support ethical research practice. This has included developing a safety protocol, distress protocol and processes to help participants understand their rights and provide consent. The observations kick off in June and July.

Our partners at the Australian Research Centre in Sex, Health and Society (ARCSHS), La Trobe University, are continuing to develop the national survey for residential aged care workers. Dr Ruby Grant (also profiled in this research update) from ARCSHS is spearheading the design and consulting with lived experience advisors, communities of practice, the national reference group and our chief investigators. Thank you to all those who have provided input into its development. See below for more information on the project stages.

The project is funded by the Medical Research Future Fund (MRFF) - *2023 MRFF Models of Care for Sexuality and Gender Diverse People & People with Innate Variations of Sex Characteristics - Stream 2*. This research aims to:

- improve the quality of care provided to gender and sexually diverse people, and
- increase safety and inclusion of all gender and sexually diverse people living, visiting and working in residential aged care.

Southern Cross University leads the research project, with four other universities involved: La Trobe University (Australian Research Centre in Sex, Health and Society, Rainbow Health Australia, and Val's Ageing and Aged Care), University of New South Wales (Centre for Social Research in Health, and Ageing Futures Institute), University of Queensland (Centre for Health Services Research) and Edith Cowan University (SAGE Futures Lab). Partner organisations include: Amana Living (WA) and Wesley Mission Qld, along with GLBTI Rights in Ageing Inc, LGBTIQ+ Health Australia, Australian Association of Gerontology, Ageing Australia, and Older Persons Advocacy Network.



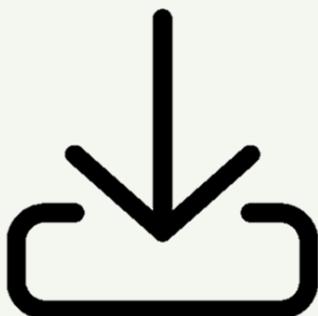
Researcher profile: Dr Ruby Grant

A Senior Research Fellow with La Trobe University's Australian Research Centre in Sex, Health and Society (ARCSHS), Ruby joined the project in February 2025 and jumped straight into consultations with the lived experience advisors and communities of practice in March.

Ruby is an applied sociologist with extensive experience in qualitative research with LGBTQ communities. She has worked in both academic and government roles developing health and social policies to support LGBTQ community wellbeing.

Ruby will lead the national survey of residential aged care workers with the support of ARCSHS Director Professor Adam Bourne.

New project resources



We've just released some new project resources on the website:

- Project information sheet
- Evidence summary
- Methodology
- Ethical considerations

We'll be adding to these resources as the project develops. You can find them on our [media and resources](#) page.

1. Dawn	Set up National Reference Group (NRG) & Lived Experience Advisory Group(LEAG)		Year 1
	Set up Qld Community of Practice	Set up WA Community of Practice	
	Qld Co-researcher capacity building	WA Co-researcher capacity building	
2. Discover	National survey of residential care workers		Year 2
	Observations Qld	Observations WA	
	Interviews Qld	Interviews WA	
3. Dream	Focus Groups Qld	Focus Groups WA	Year 3
	Organisational Summit Qld	Organisational Summit WA	
4. Design	Co-design workshops Qld	Co-design workshops WA	Year 4
	Rainbow-Inclusive Care Model implemented and evaluated		
5. Destiny	Model, guidelines and resources finalised		Year 5
	National Forum		
	Dissemination of resources nationally		

Project stages

Dawn Stage 1: research engagement

Stage 1 Dawn established three collaborative mechanisms, which will shape the rainbow-inclusive aged care model over the life of the project:

1. A six-person **Lived Experience Advisory Group** (LEAG) meets 3 times per year to contribute members' lived experience of being LGBTQ+ older people with experiences of ageing, caregiving, living with frailty, living with HIV, mental health and disability. The LEAG met in January and March 2025, and has contributed to the Stage 2 survey and fieldwork methods and design of the Safety Protocol for identifying and responding to abuse, neglect and discrimination.
2. Our **National Reference Group** (NRG) includes our associate investigators, a member of the LEAG, representatives from our seven partner organisations and co-opted members who contribute lived experience and research expertise, but also policy and practice wisdom. The NRG will provide feedback on project material and promote the project and its outcomes nationally.
3. Our **Communities of Practice** (CoPs) in WA and Qld bring together LGBTQ+ researchers, community organisations and residential aged care staff in an online co-learning space every 6 weeks. CoPs have already contributed to the Safety Protocol, informed our ethnographic approach to observation, shaped the interview scaffold and helped design the survey. CoPs will be the 'engine room' for reviewing and interpreting research data to draft the rainbow-inclusive aged care model and co-design the resources needed to implement the model in 2028.

Amana Living and Wesley Mission Queensland have been deeply involved in implementation planning, including communication with staff, residents and visitors about the research prior to fieldwork research. Meanwhile, our LGBTQ+ co-researchers have been participating in research capacity building, ready to start fieldwork in June 2025.

Discover Stage 2: 2025 research kickoff!

Research data collection begins in earnest in 2025, and will identify and articulate rainbow-inclusive practices and explore the conditions enabling and constraining rainbow-inclusive care, using:

1. **June – October:** fieldwork research in 12 residential aged care homes. Research includes day-long observation in each home and 60 interviews with residents, staff, family members/friends, and other visitors. The fieldwork component has now gained ethical approval (no. 2025/038) and our team has locked in dates for the first sites.
2. **July – November:** a survey of the national residential aged care workforce. The survey will include 2500 staff, contractors, volunteers and visiting clinicians working in diverse residential aged care roles, such as personal care workers, allied health, hospitality, maintenance, management, administration, laundry and accommodation services, leisure and recreation and spiritual care – and any other people delivering services to support people living in residential aged care.

The two streams of research will present findings to Communities of Practice in early 2026.



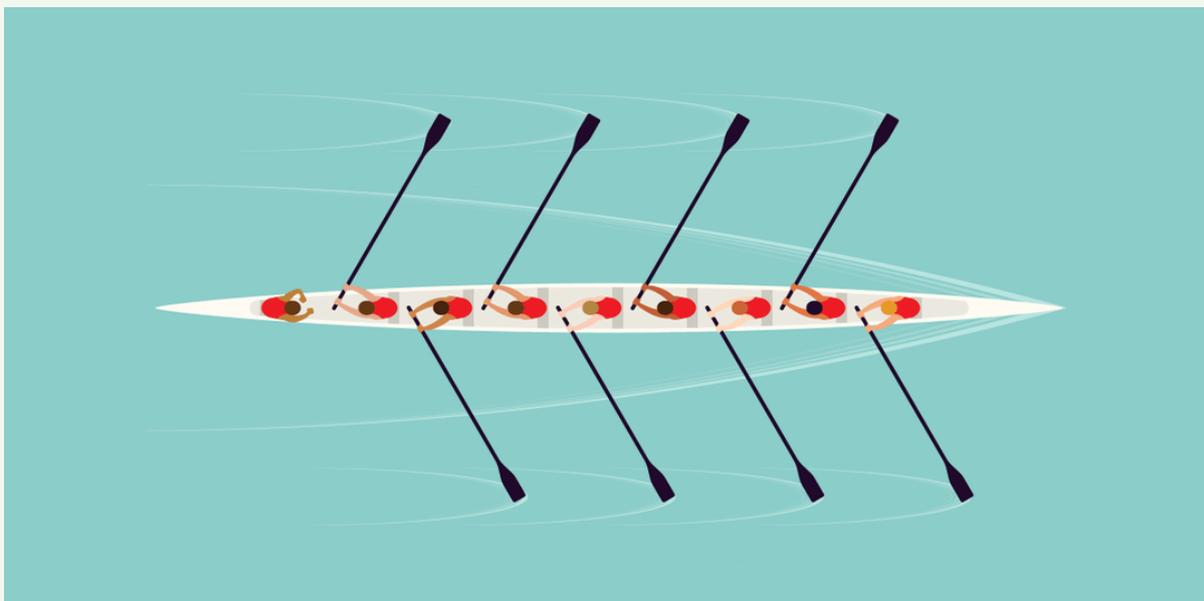
Co-researcher profile: Dr Tonia Naylor

Tonia is a nurse with experience in spiritual and palliative care, aged care, emergency management, evaluation, interdisciplinary education, education for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, and research ethics.

Tonia joined the project in December 2024 and has been active in shaping our thinking about research ethics, informed consent, and Community of Practice development in Western Australia.

In 2025, Tonia will participate in research fieldwork, including observation in Amana Living homes, and interviews with residents, staff and visitors. Tonia will also contribute to our systematic review of

co-research with older LGBTQ+ people.



Research impact plan

Timeline

- December 2026: develop rainbow inclusive model of residential aged care
- December 2027: co-design resources that support the model's implementation, develop implementation evaluation plan, and implement in 12 homes.
- December 2028: implementation evaluation, refine model and resources, and share widely across the sector, including public, online National Forum.

Outputs

- Rainbow inclusive model of residential aged care
- Co-designed implementation resources
- Easy access summaries: evidence review, research findings, and research methods
- Case studies reflecting rainbow inclusive aged care
- Academic publications: research protocol (2025), co-researching with gender and sexually diverse older people (2026), residential aged care workforce analysis (2026), published research findings (2027-2028).

Implementation

- Model co-designed with key stakeholders and grounded in lived experience, practice wisdom, policy context, organisational systems and research evidence
- Initial implementation in 12 homes, followed by implementation evaluation, will pave the way for a broader sector implementation plan

Communications, media and wide dissemination of the model and implementation resources to monitor, sustain and impact residential aged care.