



MEDIA RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

NEW BENCHMARKING TOOL TO ASSESS LGBTI INCLUSION AMONGST HEALTH AND WELLBEING PROVIDERS LAUNCHES

A new benchmarking tool launched by leading LGBTI inclusion initiative, Pride Inclusion Programs, now provides health and wellbeing organisations the opportunity to assess, measure and improve their practices to better include lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) people in their services.

The *Health + Wellbeing Equality Index* is Australia's first instrument to annually benchmark LGBTI inclusive service provision amongst organisations in the health, human services and wellbeing sectors. The index is administered by Pride in Health + Wellbeing, a national program that provides support, training and guidance in LGBTI inclusive service delivery. Pride in Health + Wellbeing is part of Pride Inclusion Programs, a suite of social inclusion initiatives delivered by Australia's leading LGBTI health organisation, ACON.

ACON CEO Nicolas Parkhill said the *Health + Wellbeing Equality Index* will be an important resource for health and wellbeing service providers across Australia.

"With significant health disparities between LGBTI and non-LGBTI people and issues many LGBTI people experience in accessing important and critical health services such as perceived or previously experienced stigma, discrimination, harassment or refusal of service, this index is an instrumental tool for service providers as they seek to be more inclusive of all Australians," Mr Parkhill said.

"We are proud to announce the launch of this index, which builds on ACON's decades-long experience in LGBTI health and wellbeing. This instrument, in addition to our Pride in Health + Wellbeing support program, will provide a much-needed resource for those seeking to ensure full inclusivity of LGBTI people within the services and programs that they offer and will assist providers in working towards the Rainbow Tick accreditation if that is their ultimate goal," Mr Parkhill said.

Participation will give service providers clear guidelines on getting started or on progressing their work in LGBTI inclusive service provision, as well as an opportunity to survey both staff and service users regardless of how they identify going forward.

The *Health + Wellbeing Equality Index* builds on from Pride Inclusion Programs' benchmarking instruments, the Pride in Sport Index and the Australian Workplace Equality Index (AWEI).

Dawn Hough, Director of ACON's Pride Inclusion Programs, said just as the AWEI has been instrumental in shifting practices in LGBTI inclusion in workplaces across Australia, the *Health + Wellbeing Equality Index* will be critical in improving health and wellbeing service provision.

"The feedback provided as a result of participation will allow health and wellbeing providers to not only focus their inclusion work in areas of good practice, but also determine annually what they need to do to improve," Ms Hough said.

"As index participation grows, the benchmarking data will provide a valuable reference in terms of current best practice as well as both qualitative and quantitative data to show improvements in their service provision."

Participants to the index do not need to be a member of the Pride in Health + Wellbeing support program to take part. Submissions can be made online and close Friday 8 March 5pm.

For more information about the Health + Wellbeing Equality Index, and Pride Inclusion Programs, go to www.prideinclusionprograms.com.au/health-index