

## Sydney WorldPride 2023: The LGBTQIA+ Human Rights Conference

### Women's Caucus Report

#### Summary:

LBQ women face unique barriers to accessing and attending conferences like this, and difficulty in carving out space to discuss specific issues related to the intersection of gender and sexuality.

Sessions like the caucus provide valuable space to have these conversations, but they need to be treated as a focus of the conference itself.

#### Recommendations:

The Women's caucus recommends:

1. A caucus specifically related to sexuality diverse women (cis and trans) at future human rights conferences.
2. Access to donors and donor networks in caucus and conference spaces to facilitate direct interaction between community groups and donors.
3. Space within the conference programs to explore the needs and human rights more specifically of lesbians and dykes, who are often invisible or side-lined.
4. Scheduling of caucuses that avoids overlap so that people with intersecting identities are able to access multiple spaces that are relevant to them.
5. Scheduling the women's session at a time that does not clash with lunch in order to allow for more in depth discussion without the risk of missing out on food.



## **Introduction:**

The following report outlines the reflections of participants of the Women's Caucus on 28 February as a part of the pre-caucusing that occurred prior to the start of Sydney World Pride Human Rights Conference 2023.

The facilitators for this session were:

- Jessica Mayers: Senior Relationship Manager, Pride in Diversity, ACON
- Lucy Watson: Manager, Policy, Strategy and Research, ACON
- Tanners Gillmore: Policy and Development Officer, ACON

The primary goals of this caucus were to provide a safe space for delegates from diverse backgrounds and experiences to gather, connect, build relationships and to engage in conversations with their peers globally.

Participants worked in both small and larger groups to discuss their reflections, ideas, and recommendations across a few key topics:

- Understanding the voices in the room, recognising the importance of intersectionality
- Identified shared priorities/goals in LGBTQIA+ Human Rights, both at the conference and at home
- Barriers and challenges
- Reflections on the conference
- The need for LGBTQ women to claim space.

Around 20 women from around the world participated in these discussions. Participants came from:

- Australia
- Canada
- Kenya
- Myanmar
- The Philippines
- Swaziland
- Thailand
- Timor Leste
- USA
- Vietnam

## **Items for Discussion**

### Who's in the room

While there was a range of nationalities, there are still a number of voices that either can't or won't be present. This included:

- Young people
- People with a disability
- Lower socio-economic people
- Those that can't afford a three-day pass
- Most people worked for a NFP, so limited perspectives from other industries and organisation types

These are viewpoints and experiences that we can't speak to or for. It was important to be mindful of this and acknowledge the additional barriers to conference attendance for some.

### Priorities

We discussed the priorities of participants at home, and at the conference.

There are still human rights being taken away, abuses against First Nations people, conversion therapy, infiltration of LGBTQ groups by 'ex-gay' groups to try and convince them to go through conversion therapy. There's violence experienced by women as a result of their gender and/or their sexuality. There are experiences of poverty and access to basic human rights that women in many countries are missing. It is important for a conference in Australia to acknowledge and discuss the issues facing women across the world, and fight for funding for global human rights initiatives.

Another priority is to make connections with other LGBTQ women – there is a different feeling of acceptance from other LGBTQ women, and it is important to increase or further that connection. There was also a strong sentiment of solidarity and care – to support other LGBTQ women around the world.

### Barriers & challenges

#### 1. *Religion*

- Religion still one of the biggest barriers to equity, as well as a patriarchal society. Women's rights often not even considered in religious contexts where patriarchy dominates.

#### 2. *Healthcare*

- A lot of stigma around mental health and accessing services. LGBTQ specific services struggle to reach and help young people because of the stigma, and at times because of the political and legal status of LGBTQ people in the country.
- There is often a lack of access to healthcare, education, and jobs. LGBTQ people not represented in these spaces so no knowledge in how to access, or safety.

#### 3. *Homophobia*

- There were many stories of participants who had very homophobic families acting as a significant barrier to furthering their rights as LBQ women.

#### 4. *Sexism*

- Patriarchy makes for added barriers to women's rights
- Many women felt that men's issues were always the priority, especially in global philanthropic funding

#### 5. *Lack of resources/support*

- A lack of resources can lead to conflict in the movement – everyone vying for the same 'pot of resources' and there isn't enough.
- Hopeful of solidarity, but there is frustration in the lack of support or failures of others in the community.
- There are a lack of support options, especially in rural spaces, and especially that are trans-inclusive.

#### 6. *Additional burdens placed on minority groups*

- There are often additional burdens placed on women just for being women. That's without considering if someone is LGBTQ.
- Acknowledgement that there is a pressure on women to care for everyone else before themselves. There are expectations made of women to prioritise caring and acting as carers, which conditions them to think about others, making it difficult to focus on and prioritise their own needs.
- Often there is pressure to appear perfect so you don't cause problems in the movement. The burden of the 'perfect model' passes down to children.

## **Conclusions**

Overall, the participants were an engaged group and keen to talk. There were common themes that came up throughout the discussions:

- The lack of an 'LGBTQ woman' voice either in their country or in the LGBTQ movement
- The burden often placed on women to care for others and also fix their problems
- The lack of spaces for LGBTQ women to come together and connect, including at the conference
- The desire for such spaces, without an expectation for them to solve the problems of everyone else
- The increased danger that can exist for LGBTQ women, both because of being a woman and being LGBTQ

The feedback from the group specifically in regards to the conference was an observation around a lack of space for women. A couple of the participants were planning on setting up a 'Dyke led conversation about overthrowing the patriarchy' during the lunch break on the Thursday as they felt this was a conversation and voice missing. There was also comment on the lack of topics throughout the conference agenda that dealt specifically with the additional challenges faced by LGBTQ women around the world.

The session ran from 11:30-2pm, and lunch was served from 12-2pm. In order to allow participants time to eat, we scheduled a longer break, which limited the time and space for women to gather. While we got straight back into the conversation after the break, stopping right in the middle of what was a very honest and productive conversation wasn't ideal. This disruption amplified the need for more time and space to be carved out for this group.