

The background of the slide is filled with numerous overlapping, stylized teddy bears in various colors including light blue, pink, yellow, light green, and light orange. The bears are rendered in a soft, painterly style with visible brushstrokes.

# Gay and Lesbian people: what's the difference?

Gay and Lesbian Health Victoria

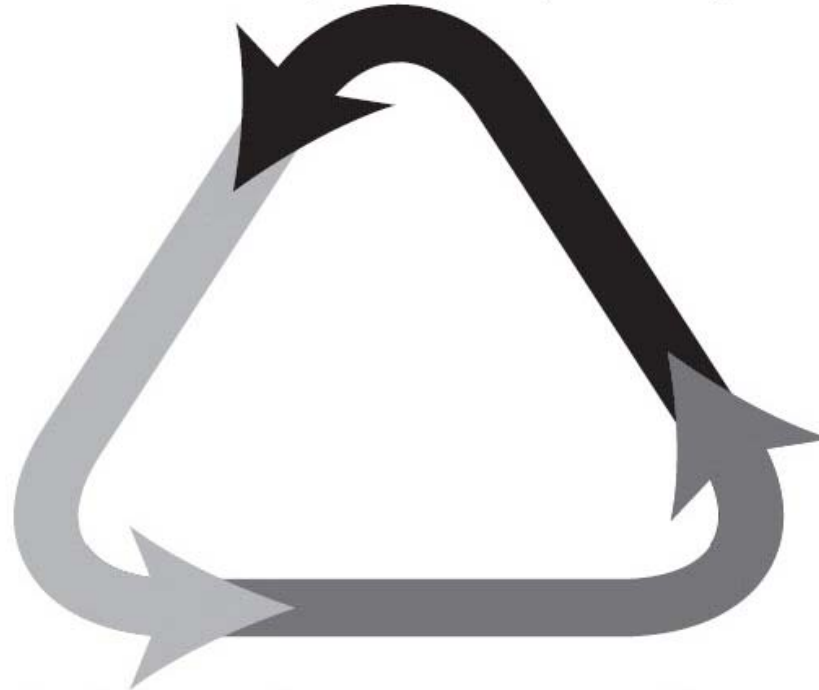
# How many gay and lesbian people are there?

- The Australian Study of Health and Relationships (2003) found that while only 2% of the population identify as non-heterosexual, up to 15% have experienced same sex attraction or had sexual contact with someone of the same sex
- It is clear that how a person identifies does not always tell you all about their sexual experiences, this is particularly the case with young people who make up about 10% of adolescents

# The sexual trichotomy

## Sexual Identity

(how we self-identify and/or publicly identify)



## Sexual Orientation

(who we are attracted to)

## Sexual Behaviour

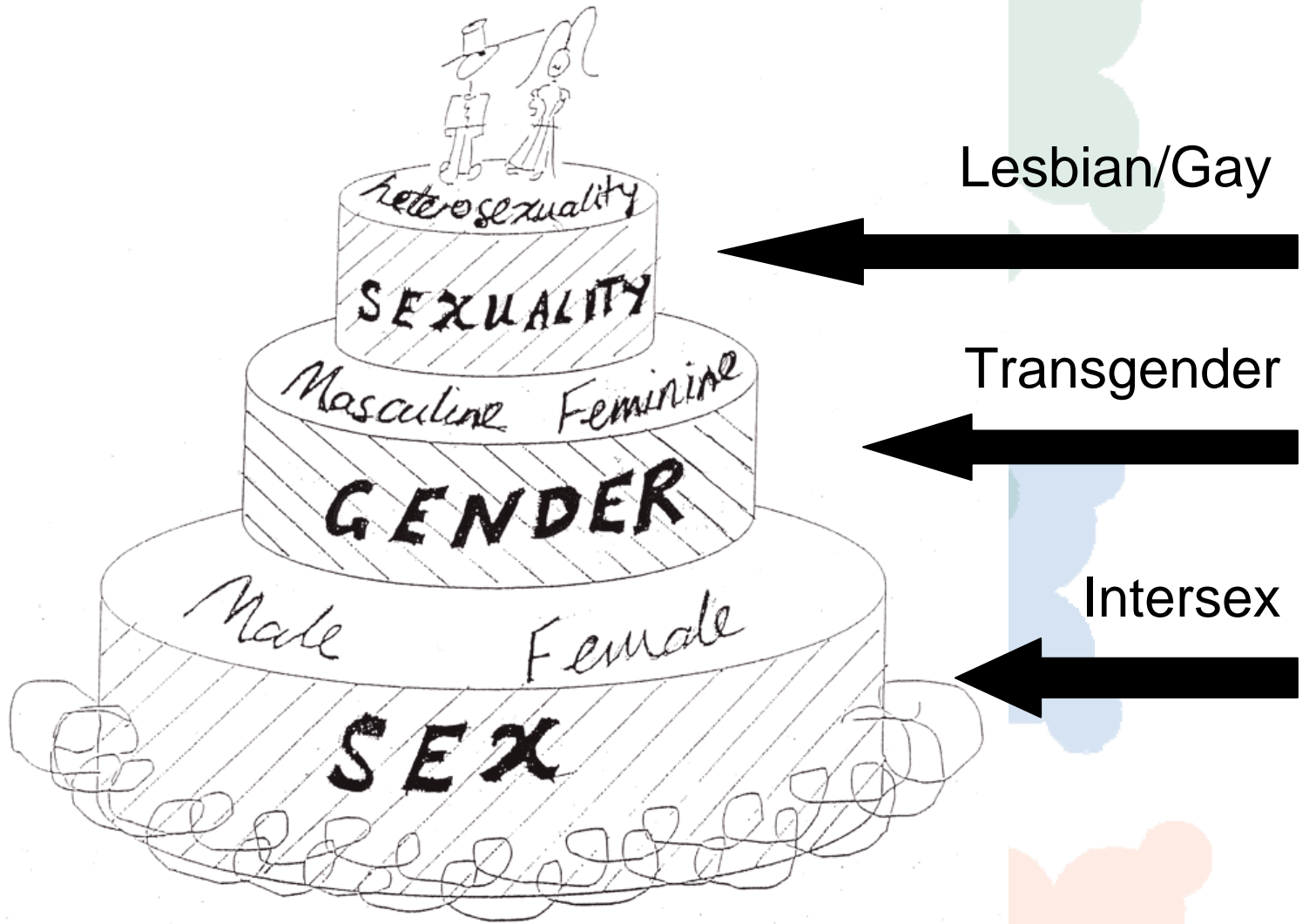
(the sexual contacts we have)

# Identity

I think of myself as a lesbian because my attraction to men is generally small, rare and squashable. In my case, even though I have a boyfriend I still think of myself as a lesbian. As a general rule (98% of the time) I am ONLY attracted to the same sex, occasionally (rarely) I might be attracted to the opposite sex (as I have a boyfriend currently)

*Mary 16 yrs*

# GLBTI?



# Why is sexual orientation an issue?

Many things have improved for gay and lesbian people over the last 20 or 30 years, including:

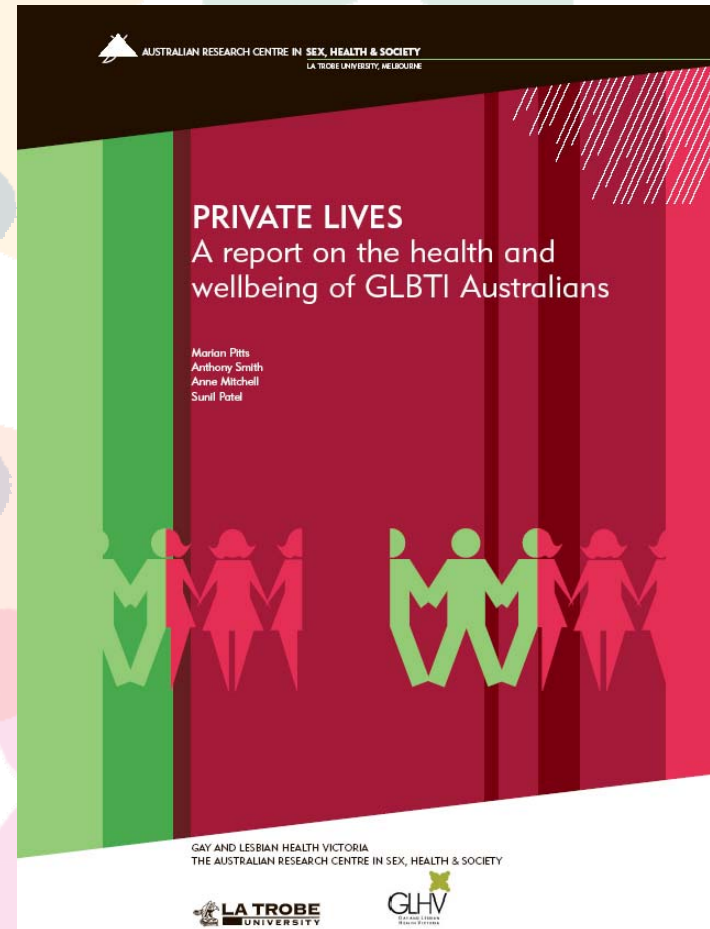
- Greater visibility and acceptance generally.
- Greater legitimacy through legal reforms.
- More positive images of gay and lesbian people in the media.
- More support services and other resources.

Despite these positives GLBTI people can still never be sure of the reaction of family, friends and work colleagues to their sexuality in any given situation.

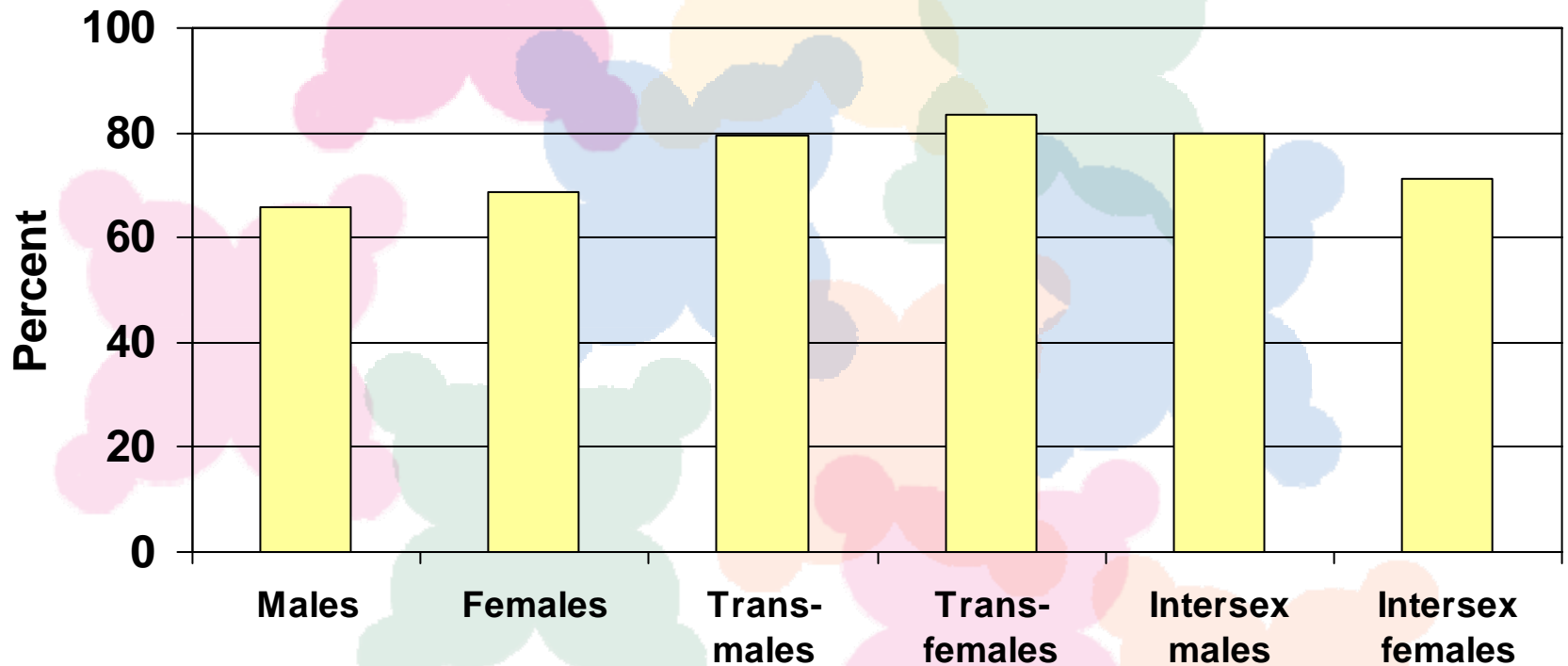
The prospect or experience of discrimination still has a marked impact on people's health and capacity to participate fully in work and in education settings.

# Private Lives 2006

- 5476 GLBTI people, a quarter of whom were Victorian



# Modifying daily activities at least sometimes



# Modifying activities daily

	Males	Females
	%	%
At home	17.3	7.9
<b>At work</b>	<b>57.5</b>	<b>48.6</b>
In social settings	55.8	42.6
With your family	43.0	41.9
In public	73.6	71.2

Many of the different health and wellbeing outcomes experienced by GLBTI people can intuitively be traced back to their experience of homophobia and heterosexism in their daily lives.

This will also impact on their willingness to use services

## Heterosexism

The belief that everyone is, or should be heterosexual and that other types of sexuality are unhealthy, unnatural and a threat to society.

## Homophobia

Fear and hatred of gay and lesbian people

# Homophobia in Australia

- 35% of Australians aged 14 and above believe that homosexuality is immoral
- This belief is more widely held in rural areas than in large cities

*Mapping Homophobia In Australia (2005) Flood & Hamilton*

# Barriers for service providers

- Sense that it is “private” and none of their business. “Like taboo, the concept of privacy ... serves as a barrier to full understanding of a client’s life experiences and understandings” (Harrison 2001)
- Fear of offending or upsetting patient/client

# Barriers for service providers

Belief that it is unnecessary to know about sexual or gender identity because “we treat everyone the same.”

Treating people the same usually means treating everybody as if they are heterosexual



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# Responding to GLBTI people

The single most important element of an appropriate response is that the presenting issues and the relationships of GLBTI people are taken seriously; that the response is one which acknowledges the rights and dignity of the person

# *Relationships Acts 2001*

- A new category of relationships called ‘domestic partner’ replacing de facto spouse.
- Covers all couples who aren’t married, regardless of gender. It includes legal recognition for:
  - inheritance rights
  - ‘next of kin’ for autopsies & organ donation
  - disclosure of partner’s health information
  - Protection from discrimination on basis of marital status
  - Recognition as parent of non-biological child in some cases.

# Elements of inclusive service provision

- Waiting room material to signal openness
- Intake forms which do not exclude
- Language which does not foreclose on any disclosure eg “partner” without a gender assumed

# Elements of inclusive service provision

- Guarding against heterosexual assumptions eg questions about contraception, pregnancy
- Not assuming that identity implies a particular sexual history
- Assurances of confidentiality



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