

HOW TO BE AN LGBTQIA+ ALLY

**LOVE
IS A
HUMAN
RIGHT**

Amnesty International
PROTECT THE HUMAN

**AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL**



DEFENDING HUMAN RIGHTS



INTRODUCTION

We acknowledge the Traditional Owners of this land and pay our respects to their Elders - past and present. We acknowledge that this land was and always will be Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander land. Queerness has existed since time immemorial, and we honour the sistergirls, brotherboys and other First Nations LGBTQIA+ people who paved the way for the community today.

We thank Amnesty staff, activists, and members of the public who kindly shared their stories of lived experience to create this guide. This guide would not be possible without their generosity. Inside you'll find practical tips and resources to help you better understand what you can do as an ally to the LGBTQIA+ community.

Amnesty International Australia is a community of compassionate people from all walks of life - defending human rights is what brings us together. We are powerful when we act in solidarity.

Allies like you play a vital role in challenging injustice, and we thank you for the work you are already doing to stand up for justice, freedom and equality.

Thank you for being part of a movement creating a kinder world.



This guide discusses discrimination against LGBTQIA+ people and includes examples that could be distressing. If you need resources or support go to beyondblue.org or ring **Lifeline at 13 11 14** for 24/7 free counselling. You can also contact **QLife at 1800 184 52** for anonymous support and referral on topics like sexuality, identity, gender, bodies, feelings or relationships. Please look after yourself and don't be afraid to reach out for help.

WHAT IS AN ALLY?

Pride is a rebellion of authenticity - to stand unapologetically as the people we are, and as the community we make. To feel joy in the lives we lead and share them with the people we love - and who love us.



The history of the LGBTQIA+ community is one where any public expression of sexual orientation or gender identity - be it party or protest - was in many places incredibly dangerous.

Pride comes from the stories and memories of people who challenged injustice and paved the way for LGBTQIA+ people throughout history. It's built on knowing that the work we do today will change the world for the next generation.

As a community we have so much to celebrate and be proud of. But the world is still unsafe for many. There is so much that needs to be done, in Australia and across the globe, to protect the rights of all LGBTQIA+ people.

We all have different life experiences growing up, fitting in, feeling safe, finding community and discovering identity. But allyship is all about the values we share. Being an ally means standing up for those whose human rights are denied, ignored or abused. Being an ally means using your privilege and power to fight for systemic change. Being an ally means never taking the spotlight but supporting in solidarity and uplifting the voices of the community.



IT ALL STARTS WITH YOU!

Have you ever wondered where your understanding of sex, gender and sexuality come from?

Self-reflection is how we grow but it also means challenging the concepts and beliefs core to our identity and the way we see the world - sometimes even challenging the people who raised us. If it feels overwhelming, remember to take your time. This is a lifelong journey of learning and unlearning, and fighting for what is right. Being curious is an amazing first step and it's one that you should celebrate.



©Joshua Morris Photography

Robbie (they/them)

“

YOU DON'T HAVE TO UNDERSTAND US TO STAND WITH US. UNPACKING YOUR EXPERIENCES OF GENDER TAKES TIME, AND IS AN INCREDIBLY WORTHWHILE EXPERIENCE THAT IS CENTRAL TO ALLYSHIP - IF YOU DON'T UNDERSTAND OUR IDENTITIES, IT DOESN'T MEAN YOU ARE EXCLUDED FROM ALLYSHIP.

”

? Some questions we can ask ourselves to start with are:

- Growing up, what representations of LGBTQIA+ people did I see around me or in the media?
- How do people close to me think about LGBTQIA+ rights and how might they be different to my own?
- What was I taught about LGBTQIA+ rights?
- What do I wish I could do as an ally?



KNOWING



TRANSGENDER
CHILDREN
ARE NOT
POLITICAL
PAINS

TRANSGENDER BOYS
ARE
BRAVE
WONDERFUL
ME

FIRST OFF - WHAT DOES LGBTQIA+ MEAN?

LGBTQIA+ is an acronym that stands for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and gender diverse, Queer and Questioning, Intersex, and Asexual (as well as Aromantic and Agender). The acronym is an inclusive umbrella abbreviation to encompass a diversity of sexualities, genders and sex characteristics.

LESBIAN

Generally refers to a woman who is romantically and/or sexually attracted to other women. However, non-binary people may also use this term. In addition, not all women who are attracted to other women will use this term to describe their sexual orientation.

GAY

A person who is romantically and/or sexually attracted to people of the same gender as themselves. This term is often used to describe men who are attracted to other men, but some women and gender diverse people may describe themselves as gay.

BISEXUAL

A person who is romantically and/or sexually attracted to people of their own gender and of other genders.

TRANSGENDER

A person whose gender does not exclusively align with the sex they were assigned at birth.

QUEER

This term is often used as an umbrella term for diverse genders or sexualities. Some people use queer to describe their own gender and/or sexuality if other terms do not fit. For some people, especially older LGBTQIA+ people, 'queer' has negative connotations because in the past it was used as a derogatory term.

QUESTIONING

This term is used to refer to people who are still exploring or questioning their gender or sexual orientation.

INTERSEX

People with intersex variations have innate sex characteristics that don't fit medical and social norms for female or male bodies.

Sex characteristics are physical features relating to sex, including chromosomes, genitals, gonads, hormones, and other reproductive anatomy, and secondary features that emerge from puberty.

ASEXUAL AND AROMANTIC

An asexual person experiences little to no *sexual* attraction to others. This is different to someone who is aromantic, meaning someone who experiences little to no *romantic* attraction.

PLUS

Plus refers to the huge variety of identities that exist under the umbrella terms listed above, or who aren't represented with the letters "LGBTQIA", but who form part of the same community. This includes people who identify as pansexual, demi-sexual, non-binary, genderqueer, gender non-conforming, and more.

Why have I heard different acronyms?

Over time, the acronym LGBTQIA+ has changed. Which letters are included and in which order is a deliberate choice depending on factors like who is included in the group, historically what the group may have been called, or who leads the group.

One example is the inclusion of the 'I' in LGBTQIA+. Discrimination faced by people with intersex variations and the LGBTQIA+ community are different, though sometimes linked. So if you see the 'I' included, it generally means that the issue being discussed affects people with intersex variations as well.

► LEARN MORE

through our inclusive language guide:

[amnesty.org.au/inclusive-language-and-events-guide](https://www.amnesty.org.au/inclusive-language-and-events-guide)

SEX, GENDER, SEXUALITY AND ATTRACTION

In this section, we will dive into sex, gender, sexuality and attraction.

Most of us, for our whole lives, have been taught to see the world through binaries.

Binary: a way of classifying things into two distinct and opposite groups. You are either one or the other.

Binaries can make the world seem a lot simpler than it really is. We're told you're born a man or a woman. We're told you're either gay or straight.

It's also easier to make 'rules' about what is 'normal' when you have binaries. We're told blue is for boys and pink is for girls.

But the human experience is far more diverse and complex than these false binaries.

These binaries are so deeply embedded in our lives - in our schooling, the families we see on movie screens, healthcare - that we rarely reflect on where they came from, who they benefit and who they harm.

In reality, understandings of sex, gender, sexuality and attraction have differed - and still do - across time and across cultures. But growing up with certain ideas means it can take a long time to imagine other ways of thinking.

That's why it's so important to broaden your knowledge as an ally to the LGBTQIA+ community.



IT CAN FEEL OVERWHELMING TO CHALLENGE YOUR BELIEFS ABOUT GENDER AND SEXUALITY AS AN ALLY. THIS IS NO DIFFERENT FOR LGBTQIA+ PEOPLE, WHO CAN BE CONFRONTED WITH FEELINGS OF DOUBT, SHAME, OR 'OTHERNESS' WHEN EXPLORING THEIR IDENTITY. THAT'S WHY REPRESENTATION AND AWARENESS ARE SO IMPORTANT IN SUPPORTING LGBTQIA+ PEOPLE.



Jax (she/they)

SEX ≠ GENDER

Did you know that the words sex and gender represent distinctly different concepts?

Sex is a biological construct based on biological sex characteristics such as genitals, hormones and chromosomes.

You may have been taught that all people are born with either *only* 'male' sex characteristics or *only* 'female' sex characteristics, however, this isn't actually true!

When babies are born, they are usually assigned a sex based only on their external genitalia. But people have incredibly diverse bodies, like different body shapes, heights, hormone levels and secondary sex characteristics (like facial hair or Adam's apples).

Some people are born with intersex variations. At least 40 different variations with different characteristics are so far known to science.

Sex can also change over time, either through medical intervention or even naturally.

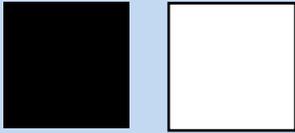
There is no need to know what someone's sex is, except in particular situations (eg. you are a doctor who is administering hormone replacement therapy).

DID YOU KNOW?

According to historian Thomas Laqueur, prior to the 18th century in the west, all people were viewed as different forms of the same sex. However, a number of scholars (including Katherine Park and Robert Nye) have argued that there were other understandings of sex at the time.

► **READ MORE**
about how to be an ally to people with intersex variations:
ihra.org.au/allies

LET'S VISUALISE A BINARY VERSUS A SPECTRUM



A BINARY CHOOSING BETWEEN ONE OF TWO FIXED OPTIONS



Try thinking about gender and sexuality as a spectrum.

WHAT DOES IT LOOK LIKE TO YOU?

LEARNING ABOUT PRONOUNS

Do you know what pronouns are? Let's take a moment to consider how we refer to ourselves ▶



GENDER

Robbie (they/them) and Nina (they/them)

Gender is a social and cultural concept about what it means to be, act, or express a gendered identity - some examples are man, women, non-binary person and genderfluid people. Everyone's understanding of gender is completely unique.

Our gender identity is our internal sense of self. Some people's gender identity aligns with their sex assigned at birth. For example, a woman who was assigned female at birth. This is called being cisgender (cis = this side of). Some people's gender does not align with their sex assigned at birth. For example a man who was assigned female at birth. This is called being transgender (trans = beyond).



Nina (they/them)

“

I AM AGENDER, WHICH TO ME MEANS THAT I FEEL GENDERLESS. WHILE THERE ARE MANY THINGS ABOUT ME THAT OTHERS WOULD THINK ARE FEMININE OR MASCULINE, TO ME THOSE TRAITS DON'T MAKE ANY DIFFERENCE TO HOW I FEEL ABOUT MYSELF AND MY GENDER IDENTITY - THEY ARE JUST THINGS ABOUT ME!

”

DID YOU KNOW?

Many cultures throughout history have recognised and celebrated diverse genders. Leitis are a culturally specific gender in Tonga (from the local word 'fakaleiti' meaning 'like a lady'). Pre-colonial Tonga had fluid notions of gender. But with the advent of colonialism and Christianity from the late 18th century, Tongan society became much more conservative and religious. As a result, attitudes towards Leitis have now been tainted by prejudice and anti-LGBTQIA+ sentiments are rife.



Some people might express their gender through behaviour, clothing, aesthetic choices or medical intervention.

Gender affirmation or transitioning is when a trans or gender diverse person takes steps to be more aligned with their gender. This might include social, medial, and/or legal processes. There is no one way to be trans, and the gender identity of each trans person is valid regardless of how or whether they transition or not.

► **READ MORE**

about gender affirmation on ACON's TransHub transhub.org.au



DID YOU KNOW?

By age four or five, most kids are already entrenched in the gender stereotypes and biases which lead to inequality. To combat gender inequality, we need to start by challenging our understanding of gender.

Gender euphoria is the feeling of joy that someone may experience when their gender identity is affirmed, validated and respected. For many transgender and gender diverse people, it can come from things like:

- People using their pronouns and name
- Being referred to with correctly gendered language
- Being able to wear clothes that reflect their expression
- Using hormone replacement therapy
- Having gender affirmation therapy.

Gender affirmation is an important action allies like you can take to make trans and gender diverse people feel supported and welcome!



What are some ways you express your gender? What are some of the gender stereotypes that have affected you?



Isabelle (they/them)

RESPECTING SOMEONE'S GENDER IDENTITY IS SUCH A SIMPLE WAY TO SHOW SUPPORT. AS A NON-BINARY PERSON, I CAN QUITE HONESTLY TELL YOU THAT WHEN SOMEONE GETS MY PRONOUNS RIGHT, USES INCLUSIVE LANGUAGE, OR ASKS ABOUT MY NEEDS IN A SITUATION THAT IS FREQUENTLY GENDERED, I FEEL SO WARM AND SEEN.

FROM AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL AUSTRALIA'S INCLUSIVE LANGUAGE GUIDE

The terms *sistergirl* and *brotherboy* are general terms used in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, with distinct cultural identities and roles.

Sistergirls are First Nations People who were assigned male at birth but live their lives as women, including taking on traditional cultural female practices. *Brotherboys* are First Nations People who were assigned female at birth but have a male spirit.

The terms *sistergirls* and *brotherboys* may also be used by other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples – for example, both lesbian and heterosexual Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women may refer to themselves as '*sistagirls*', '*sistas*' or '*tiddas*', which has the meaning of the word '*sisters*'. Gay Aboriginal men may also refer to themselves as *sistas*.

In broader Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, the terms '*sistagirl*' and '*brothaboy*' are used as terms of endearment, for women and men respectively, with no reference to gender diversity.

Not all First Nations people who are transgender use these terms and it should not be assumed that a trans person who is First Nations can automatically be called a *brotherboy* or *sistergirl*.



WHAT ABOUT SEXUAL AND ROMANTIC ORIENTATION?

‘Sexuality’, ‘sexual orientation’ and ‘sexual identity’ all refer to who, if at all, someone is sexually attracted to.

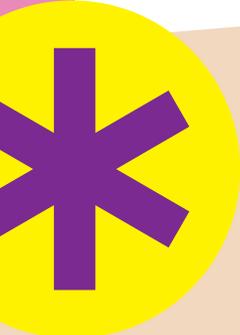
Everyone has their own understanding of their sexuality and what it means for how they act, feel and understand themselves.

Some labels people use to describe their sexuality include:

- Lesbian
- Gay
- Bisexual
- Pansexual
- wlw (woman loving woman)
- mlm (man loving man)
- Queer
- Asexual

DID YOU KNOW?

Attraction is fluid. Someone's sexual or romantic orientation isn't determined by who they've dated in the past, or even who they're seeing now. Sexual and romantic attraction can change over time in a person's life.



Sexual orientation is separate to romantic orientation. Asexual people experience little to no sexual attraction to others, but they may or may not experience romantic attraction.

Some labels that people may use to describe their romantic orientation include:

- Aromantic
- Homoromantic
- Biromantic
- Panromantic
- Heteroromantic



CHALLENGING ASSUMPTIONS



©Abby Ashfield/Crook

Nina (they/them)

“

WHEN I THINK OF MY IDEAL WORLD, I IMAGINE ALL FOLKS HAVING THE FREEDOM AND SUPPORT TO EXPLORE THEIR GENDER WITHOUT FEAR OF DISCRIMINATION AND VIOLENCE.

”

Just like how patriarchal assumptions about women can also hurt men, the gender binary and stereotypes that come along with it harms all of us.

It doesn't have to be this way. We can instead embrace individuality and celebrate the diversity of the human experience.

LET'S DEBUNK

Cisnormativity is the false assumption that everyone's gender identity matches their biological sex and that there are only two unchangeable genders.

Heteronormativity is the false assumption that being heterosexual ('straight') is the 'default' and 'better' way to be.

What does this look like in real life?

- Mostly showing heterosexual couples in TV shows, books, movies, music and other media
- Asking kids when they're going to get a boyfriend/girlfriend, assuming that they are heterosexual
- Only having male and female as answer options in surveys

WHAT DOES SUBTLE LGBTQIA+ DISCRIMINATION LOOK LIKE?

“YOU SHOULD KEEP YOUR SEXUALITY PRIVATE, IT’S INAPPROPRIATE.”

This implies that their sexuality is something shameful and should be kept secret. Everyone should feel safe and comfortable to talk about their relationships, crushes and love life. Even if the intention behind this statement is made out of concern for safety it only promotes shame and fear.

“YOU DON’T LOOK LIKE A LESBIAN.”

What does a straight person look like? In the same way that there are infinite ways heterosexual and cis people can look, there is no specified way to look queer. Queer people can dress, cut their hair, express their gender, speak, act and present themselves however they want to. None of this makes them any more or less queer.

“I’VE ALWAYS CALLED YOU BY THAT NAME AND IT’S TOO HARD TO CHANGE.”

When someone changes their name after marriage, we not only celebrate the change but put in the work to remember and use their new name. It takes a lot of courage for someone to change their name and/or pronouns - saying that it’s too hard can feel very hurtful and dismissive.

“YOU’RE TOO YOUNG TO KNOW ABOUT THAT STUFF.”

Being old enough to know about heterosexuality means being old enough to know about queerness. Kids are exposed to heteronormativity and cisnormativity from birth - think of how people and families are portrayed in movies, books and toys. Young people who see all kinds of relationships, genders and bodies represented around them are less likely to develop feelings of shame and isolation.



Lucy (she/they)

“ A LOT OF US IN THE LGBTQIA+ COMMUNITY CAN REMEMBER THE PAIN, SHAME, FEAR AND LONELINESS WE FELT WHEN WE CAME TO THE REALISATION THAT WE WERE QUEER AS KIDS. A LOT OF US WERE TERRIFIED THAT WE WOULD LOSE OUR FAMILY AND FRIENDS, BE JUDGED BY OTHERS AND THAT THERE WAS SOMETHING INHERENTLY WRONG WITH US. THIS IS WHY REPRESENTATION IN THE MEDIA AND POSITIVE QUEER VISIBILITY IS SO CRUCIAL TO THE MENTAL HEALTH OF LGBTQIA+ YOUNG PEOPLE. WE NEED TO KNOW THAT WHO WE ARE IS COMPLETELY NORMAL, THAT THERE ARE SO MANY PEOPLE IN THIS WORLD WHO ARE JUST LIKE US AND THAT OUR QUEERNESS WON'T STOP US FROM LIVING HAPPY AND FULFILLING LIVES LIKE OUR PEERS. ”

SOME KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Gender is a concept informed by your social and cultural environment.
- Everyone has a unique experience of gender. For some people their gender identity is an important part of who they are. Labels can be an important way for LGBTQIA+ people to relate to themselves and others. Some people prefer not to use them.
- The assumption that everyone is cisgender and heterosexual leads to discrimination and inequality.
- It's impossible to know someone else's gender unless they have informed you.

WHERE YOU CAN GO IF YOU'RE QUESTIONING YOUR SEXUALITY:

- [QLife](#)
- [ReachOut](#)
- Your local pride centre
- [Living Proud \(WA\)](#)
- [Twenty10 \(NSW\)](#)
- [Switchboard \(VIC\)](#)



INTERSECTIONALITY

Intersectionality is a way of explaining how people may experience additional forms of inequalities or discrimination because of the different characteristics and identities they have.

Intersectionality was coined in 1989 by Black feminist lawyer, professor, activist and scholar Kimberlé Crenshaw who used the gaps in anti-discrimination law to explain why intersectionality was needed.



Everyone has different experiences of being LGBTQIA+ depending on other aspects of their identity - whether that be their race, gender, ability, sexuality, age, class or refugee or immigration status.

Think of intersectional identities not as 'layered', but as 'fused'. Discrimination faced by people with intersectional identities can't be attributed to a single identity that they hold, but instead the intersection of their multiple identities.

For example, a trans person with a disability could experience difficulty in getting the correct diagnosis or

treatment because their healthcare provider assumes that any medical issues are the result of them being trans. In this case, the patient experiences discrimination due to the intersection of their gender identity and disability.

An important part of allyship is thinking about how our actions affect everyone. LGBTQIA+ allyship without solidarity for race, ability or class only deepens the divide between those who are given privilege and those who are not. For this reason and many others, it is vital that our LGBTQIA+ allyship is intersectional to achieve meaningful change.

DID YOU KNOW?

- The Morrison Government's proposed Religious Discrimination Bill would have allowed religious schools to terminate staff for their views on sexuality, putting religious LGBTQIA+ teachers, in particular, at risk.
- 73% of Indigenous LGBTQIA+ people have experienced discrimination according to Edith Cowan University. Historical underrepresentation of First Nations People in research on issues affecting LGBTQIA+ people has led to a lack of tailored support for Indigenous LGBTQIA+ people.
- People with disabilities are more likely to experience violence and discrimination than those without. The rate of violence and discrimination among LGBTQIA+ people with disability is even higher.



Privilege: a right, advantage or benefit afforded to one group of people and not another.

Reflecting on and understanding our privileges allows us to question how the society around us and broader discriminatory structures encourage privilege and discrimination. These are just some examples of privileges people can hold:

- Never worrying about where your next meal is coming from
- Always having your gender identity respected
- Living in cities with easier access to health services

Can you think of any privileges that may have affected your life?

“MANY OF US HAVE SOME FORM OF PRIVILEGE IN OUR LIVES. THIS DOESN'T MEAN WE ARE BAD PEOPLE, BUT IT'S SOMETHING WE NEED TO BE AWARE OF. FREQUENTLY, OUR PRIVILEGE GIVES US ACCESS TO PLATFORMS THAT WE CAN USE TO PROMOTE THE VOICES OF THOSE EXPERIENCING DISCRIMINATION. AS A RAINBOW ALLY, IT'S YOUR ROLE TO AMPLIFY QUEER VOICES WHEN QUEER ISSUES ARE DISCUSSED.”

Isabelle (they/them)

INSPIRING ACTIVISTS

Nathan and Chris

Nathan (he/they) and Chris (he/him) are members of SOGICE Survivors, a group founded by survivors of conversion practices. The SOGICE Survivor Statement calls on the Australian Government to intervene to stop conversion practices and the movement that drives them. Conversion ideology and practices are grounded in the idea that LGBTQA+ people are disordered or 'broken', and that their sexual orientation or gender identity should – and can – be changed or suppressed. Their years of campaigning alongside survivor



advocates and allies saw Victoria finally pass the world's most comprehensive ban on conversion practices in 2021. Now it's time for the rest of the country to follow suit to ensure the safety of all LGBTQA+ people.

Read the survivor statement here:
sogicesurvivors.com.au

The 78ers

The Mardi Gras celebrations that you see today began as a community-based political struggle for fundamental human and civil rights. In Australia, it was the 78ers who marched in the very first Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras of 1978 - many were brutally assaulted and unlawfully arrested by police. "The constant message from every quarter when we were young was that we had no right to be who we were. As survivors, we know we have an obligation to others who face the same challenges. The gains some of our communities have made over the decades can be taken for granted." In the 1980's and 1990's, a number of 78ers were instrumental



in establishing the Gay Immigration Task Force around Australia and have been active in advocating for the rights of queer people to seek asylum. Today the 78ers play an ongoing role advocating for the right to peaceful protest and ensuring LGBTQIA+ justice.

Learn more about the first Mardi Gras here: 78ers.org.au

INSPIRING ACTIVISTS

Morgan Carpenter (he/him)

Morgan Carpenter has changed the face of intersex advocacy with a globally-used intersex flag promoting bodily autonomy and bodily integrity. He has worked with institutions including the Australian Human Rights Commission, Australian Bureau of Statistics, UN, governments, and clinical institutions to promote the health and human rights of people with innate variations of sex characteristics. Morgan is also the co-executive director of Intersex Human Rights Australia (IHRA), a national body by and for people with intersex variations to promote the human rights, self-determination and bodily autonomy of intersex people in Australia. IHRA has made significant contributions to human rights policy and practice, not only in Australia but around



the world, by combining expertise in law, bioethics, healthcare, youth work and public administration. The work of IHRA has been vital in shaping federal anti-discrimination legislation, the application of international human rights law, academic research and debate, and human rights analysis.

Learn more about Morgan
morgancarpenter.com

Learn how can you act as an ally
to intersex people ihra.org.au



RIGHTS TO FIGHT FOR IN AUSTRALIA

LGBTQIA+ people have always existed. But over time, as historical, political, religious, cultural and other factors have influenced our societies, structural discrimination against LGBTQIA+ people has been created.

Structural discrimination refers to being treated unjustly at the institutional level like in government policies and laws, in the media, in health, or in education. This can look like:

- LGBTQIA+ students being expelled from school because of their gender or sexuality
- Legal barriers that prevent trans people from having the correct gender on their identity documents
- Intersex children suffering forced, coercive, and unnecessary medical interventions

Discrimination at the structural levels leads to violence and discrimination at the **interpersonal** level. This can look like:

- **Violence against a person because they are LGBTQIA+**
 - > Trans and gender diverse people have experienced sexual violence at almost four times the rate of the general population in Australia, according to research by the Kirby Institute in 2018 in Australia.
- **Bullying and harassment towards a person because they are LGBTQIA+**
 - > In a recent study almost 30% of LGBTQ high school students said they had either witnessed or been the victims of physical harassment.
- **Family rejection due to being LGBTQIA+**
 - > LGBT young people are at least twice as likely to experience homelessness than heterosexual youth as a result of increased discrimination, violence, family rejection and heightened stress.

It's important to remember that these outcomes are not a result of being part of the LGBTQIA+ community, but a result of discrimination.

WHAT CAN THE AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT DO TO BETTER

PROTECT LGBTQIA+ HUMAN RIGHTS?

- 1** Work with survivor groups to end conversion practices across Australia, which seek to suppress or change people's sexual orientation or gender identity.
- 2** In consultation with intersex people and organisations, end non-emergency, invasive and irreversible medical interventions on people with variations in sex characteristics.
- 3** Allow individuals to self-identify their sex or gender on identification documents, without need for surgery.
- 4** Ensure questions meaningfully capturing LGBTQIA+ identities are included in the next Census, and, in the meantime, support health and social services to understand and fulfil the needs of the LGBTQIA+ community.
- 5** Reform anti-discrimination laws to ensure that no laws privilege religious views to the detriment of LGBTQIA+ people, including by removing carve-outs that allow religious organisations to sack, expel or deny service to LGBTQIA+ people.
- 6** Ensure better access and funding for gender affirming healthcare, LGBTQIA+ suicide prevention, mental health services and community organisations.
- 7** Protect LGBTQIA+ kids by ensuring children are taught about sexual orientation and gender identity in schools and ensuring teachers, counsellors and other staff are able to provide support and fulfil their duty of care to students without fear of being disciplined or fired.



Lucy (she/they)

WHEN LGBTQIA+ RIGHTS ARE DEBATED IN PARLIAMENT, THEY SPILL OUT EVERYWHERE: ON THE NEWS, SOCIAL MEDIA, IN CASUAL CONVERSATIONS, IN THE WORKPLACE, AROUND DINNER TABLES AND IN SCHOOLS. WE BECOME SURROUNDED AS THEY INFILTRATE EVERY PART OF OUR LIVES. THE HATE, SHAME AND FEAR THESE DEBATES STOKES IS DANGEROUS AND CAUSE REAL HARM TO A COMMUNITY IN WHICH MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES ARE WELL ABOVE THE NATIONAL AVERAGE.

I AM FIERCELY PROUD OF BEING QUEER, BUT THESE DEBATES STILL AFFECT ME. I SHUDDER TO THINK ABOUT THE EFFECTS THEY WOULD HAVE HAD ON ME WHEN I WAS A TEENAGER. IT BOTH TERRIFIES AND INFURIATES ME TO THINK ABOUT THE HARM AND PAIN BEING INFLICTED ON PEOPLE, ESPECIALLY CHILDREN, WHO HAVE NOT YET COME TO TERMS WITH GENDER AND SEXUALITY.

WE ARE EXHAUSTED. WE ARE TIRED OF SPENDING OUR TIME AND ENERGY DEBATING OURSELVES. WE ARE WORN OUT FROM FEELING THE BURDEN OF RESPONSIBILITY TO STAND UP AND SPEAK OUT, TO PROTECT THOSE WHO ARE MORE VULNERABLE THAN US.

ALTHOUGH WE HAVE COME FAR IN AUSTRALIA, THERE ARE STILL LOTS OF RIGHTS THAT AREN'T PROTECTED FOR LGBTQIA+ PEOPLE. THAT'S WHY IT'S SO POWERFUL TO HAVE COMPASSIONATE ALLIES LIKE YOU STANDING UP FOR EQUALITY AND JUSTICE.





6 THINGS YOU CAN DO TO BE AN LGBTQIA+ ALLY



LOVE IS
LOVE



THEY
THEM

STEP 1 - USE INCLUSIVE LANGUAGE

Why is inclusive language important?



AS QUEER PEOPLE, WHEN WE MEET NEW PEOPLE OR ENTER NEW ENVIRONMENTS, WE ARE OFTEN LOOKING FOR SIGNS THAT WE ARE SAFE TO BE OURSELVES. AS AN ALLY, YOU CAN HELP US TO KNOW WE ARE SAFE AROUND YOU WITH SMALL GESTURES LIKE USING INCLUSIVE LANGUAGE.

Lucy (she/they)



Why does inclusive language change?

Language changes as our understanding of the world evolves.

For example, some LGBTQIA+ people use 'queer' - a word which has been used as a slur in the past - as a term of affection, empowerment or self-identification. However, reclaiming language can be very complex and for many, words like 'queer' are still considered a slur no matter who says it.

It's up to each individual what they feel comfortable using, and as an ally try to be aware of the nuances of language and to respect the terminology of those with lived experience.

The beauty of language is that it can change and help us build a safer and more compassionate society!

How do I keep up?

Listen to the language people around you use and if it's appropriate ask people what terms they use - make sure to do this only if it makes sense to ask, and is not out of the blue.

Use guides like this one and others from organisations which keep up to date with language as it changes.

Engage with language! Pick up and enjoy a range of different media and hear what and how language is being used.

Be critical. Think about and question the language you hear, who is saying it? What are they saying? When and where? How is it being used?

Not all language is appropriate for people outside the community to use. A blanket rule to follow is to not use any words that have been used as a slur unless explicitly given permission. If you're not sure about a word, you can Google it, or ask another person.

PRONOUN FAQ



What are pronouns?

Pronouns are how we refer to someone with language other than their name. This can include he/him, she/her, they/them, ze/zir, xe/xir, etc.

How do I know what someone's pronouns are?

People may list their pronouns on their online profiles or email signature. You can also listen to how people close to them refer to them.

What if someone would rather not share their pronouns?

There are many reasons why someone might not disclose their pronouns. They may not feel safe to do so, or they could be questioning their identity. In these cases, it's best to avoid pressure - you can always just use their name when referring to them. People may use different pronouns in different settings as well. If you're introducing someone you know well to a new group of people, check in first and ask what pronouns they'd feel comfortable with you using.

How can I help create a culture that is more inclusive?

Put your pronouns in your social media, email signature, or offer your pronouns when you first meet people!

What if someone uses multiple pronouns?

You might see some people using a combination of pronouns e.g. she/they, they/he, they/xie etc.

Using a combination of pronouns generally indicates someone is happy with either pronoun. In this case, using both pronouns is often the best way forward - but you can also ask which they would like used most.

I'm scared of getting it wrong.

That's okay, everyone starts somewhere! With a friend, practice talking about a fictional person using different pronouns. It can take a while to change the language you use, but in the end it is just a habit that you can easily train. It makes a massive difference to get someone's pronouns right and leading by example can teach others too.

I'm still unsure.

It can be a lot to understand if you've never come across it before. [ACON's TransHub](#) is an excellent in-depth resource with more information.

ASK ME MY
PRONOUNS

Referring to someone who is transgender or gender diverse

- Always use the pronouns and name they use now, even if you are referring to them when they were using a past name or past pronouns.
- Don't ask them about their birth name, or try to find it out. If they have not legally changed their name and you need to use it for a legal reason, ask them how they would like to proceed.

STEP 2 - LEARN HOW TO MAKE MISTAKES AND APOLOGISE MEANINGFULLY

Ha (she/her)

“

I'VE MADE MISTAKES ON MY ALLYSHIP JOURNEY, BUT I'VE ALSO LEARNT THAT WHAT MATTERS MORE IS WHAT I DO NEXT. IT'S AN OPPORTUNITY TO LISTEN, REFLECT, LEARN AND MAKE A CHANGE.

”

Accept that you might make mistakes and be open to feedback. As a caring person, it's natural to feel bad if someone corrects you. Remember, it's not a criticism of who you are, but guidance so you can create a safe and inclusive environment.

Listen to people with lived experience and acknowledge when they tell you they are affected by something you have said or done.

Apologise for any mistakes. Even unintentional mistakes can be harmful. It may bring back hurtful memories or make someone feel like they don't belong. Keep your apology short and don't dwell on it because this can make the other person uncomfortable and pressure them to console you.

Reflect on the experience in your own time and think about how you can do better next time.

Ask yourself:

- What biases, stereotypes or previous experiences led me to do or say that? (eg. assuming everyone is heterosexual)
- How might the other person have felt and why? How would they feel if this happened to them all the time?
- What did I learn and what would I do differently?

IF SOMEONE POINTS OUT A MISTAKE YOU HAVE MADE, YOU CAN SAY.....

“I'm sorry, I meant to say...”

“I'm really sorry I used the wrong pronouns for you earlier. I know you go by they/them and I'll make sure to get it right next time.”

“Thanks for letting me know, I'll make sure I use the correct (language/pronoun/word/name).”

“Thank you for bringing that up - I'd love to know more about that. Is there anything you'd like me to know? I can also do my own research later if you would rather not have to explain.”

STEP 3 - SHOW CARE WHEN SOMEONE SHARES THEIR LIVED EXPERIENCE

Ally (she/her)

When a person shares their experience with you it shows a great level of trust. It's always important to appreciate how much effort it takes for someone to be vulnerable.

Listen and be present

Part of active listening is keeping the focus on what the other person is saying and affirming their feelings. If someone shares a negative experience, it's best to avoid making a comparison. It may feel like you're showing empathy and understanding but inserting your story may feel like you are invalidating the person who is sharing theirs.

Ask questions

As long as you are being compassionate, respectful and non-judgemental. Think about what sort of questions you would feel uncomfortable answering. Respecting someone's decision to not answer is always the best way forward.

Offer support

Ask them how they would like to be supported. It's natural to want to offer solutions in the moment but it is more helpful to find out what the person wants first.

Be confidential

Don't assume the person has shared their experience or their identity with everyone. Even the most casual conversation is shared in confidence. Their privacy must be respected and protected.

Here are some things you can say:

"Thank you for telling me."

"I'm sorry that happened to you"

"I haven't heard that term before, what does it mean?"

"How did that make you feel?"

"Is there anything I can do to help?"

"I'm here for you."

You can also use this as a guide if you witness homophobia, transphobia, biphobia and discrimination and want to provide support to the person on the receiving end.

If someone you know is in distress or require assistance, encourage them to reach out to an LGBTQIA+ support service such as:

QLife on 1800 184 52

Rainbow Door on 1800 729 367

Beyond Blue on 1300 22 4636.

STEP 4 - CALL OUT DISCRIMINATION WHEN IT HAPPENS

Frances (she/her)



AS ALLIES, IT'S SO IMPORTANT THAT WE USE OUR VOICE TO CALL OUT DISCRIMINATION. BY SPEAKING OUT, YOU CAN GIVE OTHERS AN OPPORTUNITY TO LEARN AND REFLECT. YOU'RE ALSO STANDING UP FOR WHAT YOU BELIEVE IN - EMPATHY, COMPASSION AND FAIRNESS - AND SENDING A MESSAGE TO THE PEOPLE AROUND YOU THAT DISCRIMINATION ISN'T ACCEPTABLE



Calling out discrimination can be uncomfortable. Maybe it's the family reunion and you'd rather not rock the boat. Or you've just joined a new workplace and you don't want to come off as difficult. It can be tempting to let things go.

But it's these casual comments and jokes that keep harmful stereotypes and misconceptions alive. You never know who is listening - and who is being hurt.

There are different ways to respond depending on the situation and the people around you. Remember that speaking up is a skill you can practice and the more you know about inclusive language, the more you can help.

How to tell someone gently when they've made a mistake

A friend keeps misgendering an acquaintance

You can simply start your reply with the correct pronoun or jump in and say the correct one: ***"They. They said they were getting lunch at 1? Oh great, I'll join them!"***

A classmate uses words like 'gay' to describe things that are annoying.

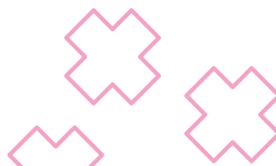
You can try saying, ***"I've realised it's pretty hurtful to say that"***.

Lecturing someone or making them feel guilty can result in defensiveness. A gentle reminder and the opportunity to correct themselves can be more effective.

Other ways of correcting language:

"I don't think that's the word to use."

"I've heard that people prefer to use the word [insert language]".



How to help someone reflect and learn

An acquaintance shares a comedy routine that uses anti-LGBTQIA+ language.

Try saying: *“I realise it’s supposed to be funny, but words like that can do a lot of harm. I know you probably didn’t mean to hurt anyone’s feelings, but I think I’d feel really upset if I was on the receiving end of that.”*

A family member shares false ideas about conversion practices being good for kids.

Try saying: *“Do you mind explaining what you mean by that? I know you care about the safety and wellbeing of kids, which is why I don’t think you would want any child to experience conversion practices.”*

A colleague brings his boyfriend to the work party and another colleague says, “I’m not homophobic but I think he should keep that part of his life private.”

You can say: *“I’m not sure I agree with that. Other people have brought their partners. He has a right to bring his partner, just as anyone else does.”*

It can help to use ‘I’ statements and to talk about how the statement makes you feel. It can also help to appeal to empathy and shared experiences by talking about people, rather than numbers or statistics. Ask people to clarify their stance and ask them what they would do if they were in the same situation.

TIPS



You don’t always have to respond in the moment. If you were in a group situation, it can be more effective to talk to someone in a private setting - “Hey, something you said earlier has been on my mind, can we have a chat about it?”

If the conversation gets heated or keeps escalating, remove yourself from the situation. It’s okay to pick your battles.

Remember that every conversation has an impact!



**YOUR SAFETY IS
iMPORTANT!**



STEP 5: AMPLIFY VOICES IN THE LGBTQIA+ COMMUNITY

Ally (she/her)

Step Up! Step Back!

At work or in your community, take a look around the room. Notice who is present and who is missing. Which voices are being heard and which voices are absent? Step up by inviting LGBTQIA+ voices to those spaces. Step back by creating and holding space for them.

Step up by supporting LGBTQIA+ communities and their calls to action.

You can:

- Attend a rally
- Sign and share petitions
- Organise a fundraiser for an LGBTQIA+ charity
- Send letters to your elected officials and demand they step up too! Your voice is powerful and politicians will listen to their constituents.



Step back by sharing your resources. Whether it's physical space, a virtual platform or networking opportunity, consider inviting or offering it to LGBTQIA+ educators, artists, business owners, musicians, and filmmakers.

SAVE THE DATES

LGBTQIA+ communities have many annual days of observance, remembrance and celebrations. We would love all our allies to come and support us for all those days!

You can research the significance of the date and display pride materials. If you do invite a guest speaker from any of the LGBTQIA+ communities, remember to reimburse them for their time, expertise and effort.

Here are some key dates to help you get started:

- **Mardi Gras Parade** - The first Saturday of March
- **Transgender Day of Visibility** - 31 March
- **IDAHOBIT** (International Day Against Homophobia, Biphobia, Interphobia and Transphobia) - 17 May
- **Pride Month** - June
- **Wear it Purple Day** - The final Friday of August
- **Intersex Awareness day** - 26 October

Always remember
- nothing about us,
without us.

▶ Check out theequalityproject.org.au/blog/lgbtiq-dates to learn about more important LGBTQIA+ dates, anniversaries and events.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Seeking out a diverse range of voices and experiences is important. Following and sharing social media content from LGBTQIA+ educators, activists and artists will amplify their voices.

READ

- **Growing Up Queer in Australia** by Benjamin Law (editor)
- **Trans Like Me: A Journey for All of Us** by C.N. Lester
- **Living and Loving in Diversity: Australian Multicultural Queer Adventures** by Maria Pallotta-Chiarolli (editor)
- **Stone Butch Blues** by Leslie Feinberg

WATCH

- **Disclosure** (Netflix) - Trans creatives and thinkers explore Hollywood's impact on the trans community
- **Brotherboys** (from Living Black series on SBS on Demand) Three Brotherboys share their experiences of coming out and transitioning
- **Transgender, Intersex, Drag, and Children of Same-Sex Parents** (from You Can't Ask That series on ABC iview)

FOLLOW

- **@RainbowHistoryClass** on Instagram
- **@ItGetsBetter** on Instagram
- **@ABCQueer** on Instagram

LISTEN

- **Making Gay History** - podcast bringing the voices of LGBTQ history to life
- **The Beyond Gender Podcast** - interviews with trans and gender non-conforming individuals
- **Qmmunity** - shares stories on what it means to be queer in modern times

DO

- Organise LGBTQIA+ inclusion training in your school or workplace: minus18.org.au
- Check out the research of Black Rainbow, a national volunteer Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander LGBTQIA+SB social enterprise: blackrainbow.org.au



STEP 6: PRACTICE ALLYSHIP DAILY

Being an ally is something you should take pride in doing but it does take practice.

One of the best ways to be an ally is to continue educating yourself beyond this guide about LGBTQIA+ communities. Keep challenging your beliefs and actively reflect on your privileges, biases, behaviour and language.

Continue being an ally even when there is no one from LGBTQIA+ communities in the room. Call out discrimination when it's safe to do so. Share what you have learned and recommend LGBTQIA+ films, music, books and this guide! Try to move beyond your comfort zone but not into your panic zone. Remember, your wellbeing is important. Be patient and compassionate towards yourself as you continue your allyship journey.



Ally (she/her)

“ EVERY EFFORT MATTERS AND IT CAN REALLY HELP TO CREATE A WORLD WHERE WE ALL FEEL SAFE, ACCEPTED AND FREE TO BE OURSELVES. FOR SOMEONE WHO IS QUESTIONING THEIR IDENTITY, SHOWING THAT THEY WILL BE ACCEPTED AND LOVED NO MATTER WHAT CAN HELP THEM EXPLORE WHO THEY ARE WITHOUT SHAME. FOR COWORKERS IN THE WORKPLACE, ADVOCATING FOR SUPPORTIVE POLICY CHANGE TAKES THE BURDEN OFF THEIR SHOULDERS TO ASK FOR CHANGE. FOR FAMILY AND FRIENDS, YOU CAN SHOW OTHERS HOW THEY DESERVE TO BE TREATED. ”

““

I WISH I HAD UNDERSTOOD EARLIER HOW MUCH HAPPINESS, FREEDOM, FRIENDSHIP, CONNECTION AND LOVE MY QUEERNESS WOULD BRING INTO MY LIFE. NO MATTER THE CHALLENGES, I LOVE BEING GAY AND I WOULD NEVER CHANGE IT EVEN IF I COULD.

Lucy (she/they)

””

““

I AM WHO I AM.

Nancy (she/her)

””

““

DON'T UNDERESTIMATE THE POWER YOUR ALLYSHIP CAN HAVE. SOMEONE STANDING BY YOU AND CALLING OUT THE WRONG USAGE OF YOUR PRONOUNS, OR MAKING AN EFFORT TO USE INCLUSIVE LANGUAGE MAKES ME FEEL SEEN, VALIDATED, AND WELCOMED. SMALL ACTIONS CAN HAVE A BIG IMPACT.

Isabelle (they/them)

””

““

I HAVE FOUND GREAT STRENGTH, CONTENTMENT AND CAMARADERIE IN COMING TO TERMS WITH AND BEING OPEN ABOUT WHO I AM. THE MOMENTS OF CONNECTION I GET TO EXPERIENCE WITH OTHER LGBTQIA+ FOLKS WHERE WE PROVIDE A SPACE FOR EACH OTHER TO BE SEEN, HEARD, VALIDATED AND CELEBRATED ARE A REALLY SPECIAL AND CHERISHED PART OF BEING QUEER TO ME. I AM FIERCELY PROUD TO BE QUEER.

Nina (they/them)

””



THANK YOU

From all of us at Amnesty International Australia, thank you so much for taking the time to learn more about allyship and the LGBTQIA+ community.

Thank you for showing how compassionate you are, and that you care about equality and justice, not just for some but for all. Just like you, we are always learning and reflecting on our own allyship and we've created a space to share that with you. We're excited to keep in touch with you at the link below:

amnesty.org.au/lgbtqia-ally

That's where we'll add the latest information and opportunities for action, as well as books, movies, podcasts, events and more. We're always adding to it, so we'll be sure to let you know when updates are available.

Now that you've got to know us, we'd like to hear from you as well. If you'd like to share any feedback on this guide, or tips and stories of your own, please get in touch with us at supporter@amnesty.org.au.

Thank you again for your kindness. Caring people like you are making the future brighter for everyone.



Published February 2023

Amnesty International Australia — defending human rights

ABN 64 002 806 233 | Locked Bag 23, Eora Nation, Broadway NSW 2007

supporter@amnesty.org.au | 1300 300 920 | amnesty.org.au

