

LGBTIQA+ Guide to Best Practice

Gender-affirming language and Glossary of Terms



Purpose of this Glossary

This glossary is a companion document to support resources that have been developed to help organisations embed inclusive practices for LGBTIQA+ children and young people (and their families) into organisational leadership, culture, and policies and procedures.

About the Glossary

This glossary provides explanations of commonly used terms relating to sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, and sex characteristics. It is intended to support staff working with children and young people to better understand language that may be used by LGBTIQA+ communities and to promote respectful, inclusive, and child-safe practices.

Language relating to identity continues to evolve and individuals may use different terms to describe themselves and their experiences. This glossary is not intended to be exhaustive. If a child or young person uses a term that is not included here, it is important to respect the language they use for themselves and seek further information where appropriate. Listening to and following the lead of children and young people is an important part of creating safe, respectful, and inclusive environments.

* Protected attributes

Terms marked with an asterisk (*) indicate attributes protected from discrimination under the *Discrimination Act 1991* (ACT) and/or the *Sex Discrimination Act 1984* (Cth).



Affirmed Gender – The gender a person identifies with and lives as, which may differ from the sex they were assigned at birth.

Agender – A person who does not identify with any gender.

Allosexual – A person who experiences sexual attraction to others; the term is often used in contrast to asexual.

Ally – A person who supports and advocates for the rights, inclusion, safety, and wellbeing of LGBTIQ+ people.

Androgynous – A gender expression that combines or does not strongly align with traditional masculine or feminine characteristics.

Asexual / Ace – A person who experiences little or no sexual attraction to others, though they may experience romantic attraction.



Binary – A system that classifies gender into two categories: male and female.

Biphobia – Prejudice, discrimination or hostility directed towards bisexual people.

BIPOC – An acronym meaning Black, Indigenous, and People of Colour.

Bisexual* – A sexual orientation describing a person who is emotionally, romantically, and/or sexually attracted to more than one gender.

Brotherboy and Sistergirl – Culturally specific terms used by some Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to describe gender diverse identities.

C

Chosen Name – The name a person uses in everyday life that reflects their identity and may differ from their legal name. See also *Name*

Cisgender – A person whose gender identity aligns with the sex they were assigned at birth.

Cisgenderism – Beliefs or systems that assume being cisgender is normal or superior, and that marginalise transgender and gender diverse people.

Cisnormativity – The assumption that everyone is cisgender and that cisgender identities are the norm.

Conversion Therapy / Conversion Practices – Practices that attempt to change or suppress a person’s sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression. These practices are widely recognised as harmful and unsupported by medical evidence. In the ACT, the *Sexuality and Gender Identity Conversion Practices Act 2020* prohibits practices that seek to change or suppress a person’s sexual orientation or gender identity.

D

Deadname – A former name used by a transgender or gender diverse person before affirming their current name.

Demisexual – A person who experiences sexual attraction only after forming a strong emotional connection with someone.

Discrimination – Unfair treatment of a person because of a protected attribute under laws such as the *Discrimination Act 1991* (ACT) or *Sex Discrimination Act 1984* (Cth).

E

Endosex – A person whose sex characteristics fit typical medical definitions of male or female bodies.



Gay* – A sexual orientation describing a person who is emotionally, romantically, or sexually attracted to people of the same gender.

Gender Affirmation – The social, legal, or medical processes through which a person's gender identity is recognised and supported.

Gender Affirming Care – Healthcare that supports and respects a person's gender identity and wellbeing.

Gender Binary – The idea that there are only two genders: male and female.

Gender Diverse – An umbrella term for people whose gender identity differs from the sex they were assigned at birth.

Gender Dysphoria – Distress that may occur when a person's gender identity does not align with the sex they were assigned at birth.

Gender Euphoria – Positive feelings experienced when a person's gender identity is recognised or affirmed.

Gender Expansive – A term describing gender identities or expressions that expand beyond traditional gender expectations.

Gender Experience – A person's internal and lived understanding of their gender.

Gender Expression – How a person communicates or expresses their gender through clothing, appearance, behaviour, and/or voice.

Gender Fluid – A gender identity that changes or shifts over time.

Gender Identity – A person's internal sense of their gender, such as being a man, woman, non-binary, or another gender.

Genderqueer – A gender identity outside traditional male and female categories.



H

Heterosexual – A sexual orientation describing a person who is emotionally, romantically, or sexually attracted to people of a different gender.

Heteronormativity – The assumption that heterosexual relationships and identities are the default or normal.

Homosexual* – A sexual orientation describing attraction to people of the same gender, though the term is now less commonly used.

Homophobia – Prejudice, discrimination, or hostility directed at people because of their sexuality.



I

Intersectionality – A framework recognising that different aspects of identity, such as gender, race, disability, or sexuality, can overlap and shape experiences of discrimination.

Intersex* – An umbrella term describing people born with natural variations in sex characteristics that do not fit typical definitions of male or female bodies.



L

Legal Name – A person's name as recorded on official legal documents.

Lesbian – A sexual orientation describing a woman who is emotionally, romantically, or sexually attracted to other women.

LGBTIQA+ – An umbrella acronym referring to Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex, Queer or Questioning, Asexual people, and other diverse sexualities and genders.



M

Minority Stress – Chronic stress experienced by people from marginalised groups due to stigma, discrimination, and social exclusion.

Misgendering – Using language or pronouns that do not reflect a person's gender identity.



N

Name – The name a person uses in everyday life, which may differ from their legal name.

Neopronouns – Pronouns used by some people that extend beyond commonly used pronouns such as he, she, or they. Examples include ze/zir/zirs, xe/xem/xyrs and many others. See also *Pronouns*

Non-Binary – A gender identity that sits outside the gender binary and does not identify as male or female.



O

Outing – Disclosing someone's sexual orientation, gender identity, or intersex status without their consent.



P

Pangender – A gender identity that includes many or all genders.

Passing – When a person is perceived by others as a particular gender, aligning with their gender identity.

PoC – An abbreviation for People of Colour.

Pronouns – Words used to refer to a person instead of their name, such as she/her, he/him, or they/them.



Q

Queer – An umbrella term used by some people to describe diverse sexual orientations and gender identities.

Queer Capitalism / Pink Washing – When organisations promote symbolic support for LGBTIQ+ communities without meaningful commitment to equality.

Questioning / Unsure – A person who is exploring or uncertain about their sexual orientation or gender identity.

QTIPoC – Queer, Trans, and Intersex People of Colour.



S

Sex Assigned or Assumed at Birth – The classification of a person as male, female, or intersex at birth based on physical characteristics.

Sex Characteristics – Physical features relating to sex, including chromosomes, hormones, reproductive organs, and secondary sex characteristics.

Sexual Identity – The way a person describes or labels their own sexuality.

Sexual Orientation – A person's enduring emotional, romantic, or sexual attraction to others.

Sexuality – A person's capacity for sexual feelings, attraction, or identity related to sexual orientation.

Slur – A derogatory term used to describe a person or groups of people. See Terms to Avoid after this Glossary

SOGIESC – An acronym for Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity and Expression, and Sex Characteristics.

Stereotyping – Making assumptions about a person's characteristics or behaviour based on their identity.



T

TGD / TGDNB* (Trans & Gender Diverse / Trans & Gender Diverse & Non-Binary) – An umbrella term for people whose gender identity differs from the sex they were assigned at birth.

Tokenism – Making a small gesture to promote your inclusivity without making meaningful change. For example, placing a rainbow sticker on your door and saying you are a safe place for LGBTIQ+ people, without changing your culture, policies, or practices.

Trans Feminine / Trans Masculine* – Terms describing transgender people whose identities align more closely with femininity or masculinity.

Transgender* – A person whose gender identity differs from the sex they were assigned at birth.

Transphobia – Prejudice, discrimination, or hostility directed at transgender and gender diverse people.

Two-Spirit – A cultural term used by some Indigenous peoples to describe individuals who embody diverse gender identities or roles within their communities.



V

Variations of Sex Characteristics (VSC)* – A term used in Australian law and policy to describe innate variations in sex characteristics and often used interchangeably with Intersex.

Inclusive language when addressing groups

Using gender-neutral language when addressing groups helps create environments where all children, young people, staff, and families feel respected and included. By modelling inclusive language, leadership sets the expectation for all staff and volunteers that the organisation is a place where children and young people can feel safe to express their identities. Below are 3 tips to help embed gender-neutral language in your organisation.

Use gender-neutral collective terms – Terms such as “ladies and gentlemen,” “boys and girls,” or “guys” may exclude some people. Simple terms such as those below are inclusive and work well in most settings.

Focus on roles rather than gender – When speaking to specific groups, using role-based language can be helpful, such as staff, participants, families, goalies, and scouts.

Follow the lead of the group or individuals – Language preferences vary across individuals and communities. If a child, young person, or group use a particular term to describe themselves, it is respectful to follow their lead and use the language they prefer.

Common inclusive options

 Everyone	 Folk/s
 Young people	 Staff
 Children	 Group
 All	 Participants
 Friends	 Students
 Team	 Colleagues

Inclusive language:

Tips for best practice



Terms and language to avoid vs best practice

Using respectful language is one part of creating inclusive environments. Equally important is maintaining confidentiality, avoiding assumptions and ensuring children and young people feel safe to express their identities. The following table provides guidance on terms to avoid, and language you can use to communicate in a gender-affirming manner.

Terms to avoid vs best practice

Avoid 'transgendered' / 'transsexual' – Instead use **'transgender' or 'transgender person'**

Avoid 'born a boy' / 'born a girl' – Instead use **'sex assigned at birth'**

Avoid 'biological male' / 'biological female' – Instead use **'sex assigned at birth' or refer to the person's gender identity'**

Avoid 'preferred name' / 'preferred pronouns' – Instead use **'Name and pronouns'**. By using the word preferred before these terms, it infers there is a choice and can therefore be used interchangeably

Avoid 'both genders' / 'opposite genders' – Instead use **'all genders' or 'different genders'**

Avoid 'Hermaphrodite' – Instead use **'intersex' or 'Variations of sex characteristics'**

Avoid 'Sex change' – Instead use **'gender affirmation' or 'gender-affirming care'**

Avoid 'Lifestyle' (to describe sexuality) – Instead use **'sexual orientation'**

Terms to avoid vs best practice

Avoid 'Normal' / 'real woman' or 'real man' – Instead use **'cisgender' or simply 'woman'/'man'**

Avoid 'Sexual preference' – Instead use **'sexual orientation'**

Avoid 'Ladies and gentlemen', 'boys and girls', 'men and women' – Instead use terms like **everyone, team, folks, colleagues, staff, all, friends, students, class, people, crew, scouts, choir, runners**, etc.

Avoid 'Gay lifestyle', 'LGBTIQA+ lifestyle', 'Homosexual lifestyle', or 'Transgender lifestyle'. **There is no single LGBTIQA+ 'lifestyle'**. LGBTIQA+ people are diverse in the ways they lead their lives and these phrases inaccurately suggest that sexual orientation and/or gender identity is a lifestyle choice and therefore can and should be cured or changed.

Avoid 'Gay rights' or 'special rights' – Instead use **'equality'**. LGBTIQA+ people are not asking for rights that are different from the rights everyone has. They are simply seeking full equality under the law and an end to discrimination based on sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression.

Avoid 'Fag', 'Faggot', 'Dyke', 'Homo', 'Hermaphrodite', 'Transsexual', 'Tranny' and similar epithets. **While some in the community have reclaimed and use these words to describe themselves, they should not be used by anyone to describe another person or groups of people.**

Avoid associating LGBTIQA+ people with paedophilia, child abuse, sexual abuse, and/or bestiality. **Being LGBTIQA+ is neither synonymous with, nor indicative of, any tendency toward paedophilia, child abuse, sexual abuse, or bestiality.** Such claims, innuendoes and associations are often used to insinuate that LGBTIQA+ people pose a threat to society, to families, and to children in particular. Such assertions and insinuations are defamatory. On the contrary, LGBTIQA+ people are often targeted for abuse by these cohorts.

Inclusive Language:

What staff and volunteers can do



Creating safe and inclusive environments for LGBTIQ+ children and young people involves everyday practices that respect identity, privacy, and wellbeing.

Use a child or young person's chosen name and pronouns

If a child or young person shares their name or pronouns, use them consistently and respectfully.

Avoid making assumptions about gender or sexuality

Do not assume a child or young person's gender identity, pronouns, or sexual orientation based on appearance, name, behaviour, or family structure.

Respect privacy and confidentiality

Do not disclose a child or young person's sexual orientation, gender identity, or intersex status to others (including family members) without their consent unless there is a clear safeguarding requirement.

Respond respectfully if you make a mistake

If you use the wrong name or pronoun, briefly apologise, correct yourself, and continue without drawing unnecessary attention.

Create inclusive environments

Use inclusive language, ensure policies are inclusive of diverse genders and sexualities, and challenge discriminatory behaviour or language when it occurs.

Recognise diversity and intersectionality

Children and young people may have multiple identities and experiences, including culture, disability, religion or family background, which may shape their experiences.

Listen to and centre the child or young person

Children and young people are the experts in their own identities and experiences, and their perspectives should be respected and supported.