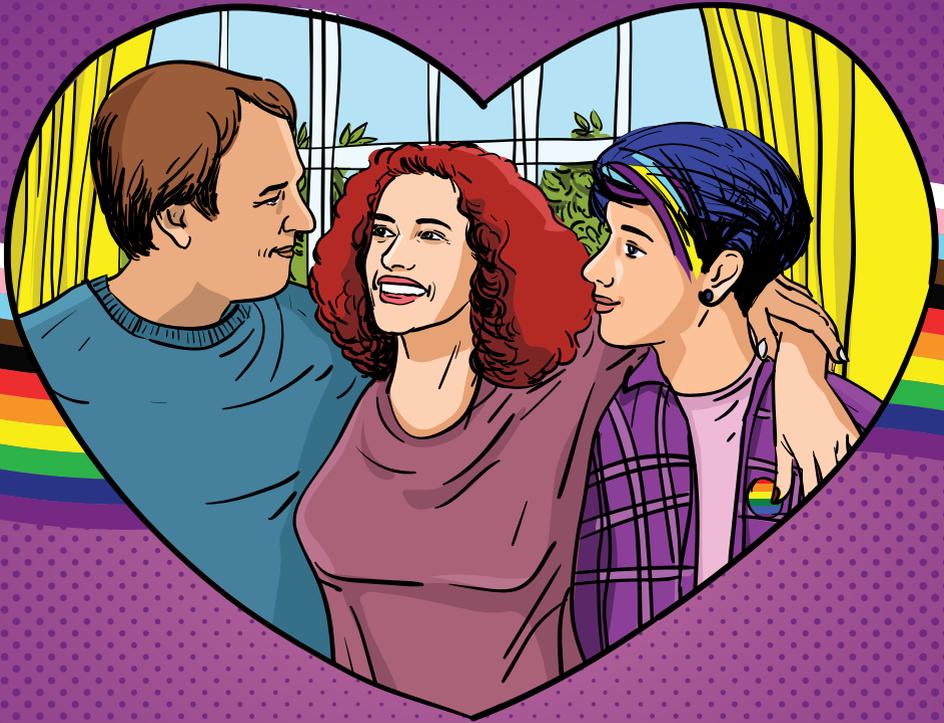


WEAR IT
PURPLE

Capgemini



PROUD PARENT

A COLLECTION OF REFERENCES TO
HELP IN CREATING SAFE SPACES AT
HOME AND SCHOOL

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION.....	3
WHO IS THIS GUIDE FOR?.....	4
THE ROLE OF A PARENT, COMING OUT AND CREATING A SAFE AND EMPOWERING RAINBOW HOME.....	6
ENSURING SCHOOL IS A SAFE ENVIRONMENT.....	15
HETERONORMATIVITY AND DEALING WITH EVERYONE ELSE.....	22
LEARNING ABOUT TRANSGENDER YOUTH.....	25
WHAT ARE PRONOUNS AND WHY ARE THEY IMPORTANT?.....	29
UNDERSTANDING LGBTQIA+ TERMINOLOGY.....	32
LGBTQIA+ RESOURCES AND GROUPS.....	36



INTRODUCTION ON BEHALF OF WEAR IT PURPLE

LGBTQIA+ youth across Australia are imploring our nation to take note of their experiences, their lives and the issues that are important to them. As we know, whilst great strides have been made in the fight for equality and acceptance for the broader community, there is still significant change needed to combat statistics like 40.8% of participants in the La Trobe 'Writing themselves In 4' study said they had experience verbal harassment, 22.8% sexual harassment or assault, 9.7% physical harassment or assault in an educational setting.

At Wear It Purple our aim is to bring visibility to the experiences, stories and perspectives of LGBTQIA+ youth so that we can help to raise awareness and generate a wider discussion.

We get countless emails and direct messages from parents and kids asking how they can start conversations. How they reach out to support their child, whilst navigating a landscape they themselves may be uncertain about. Or how they can help their parents and loved ones understand the experience they are having and why they so desperately need their support.

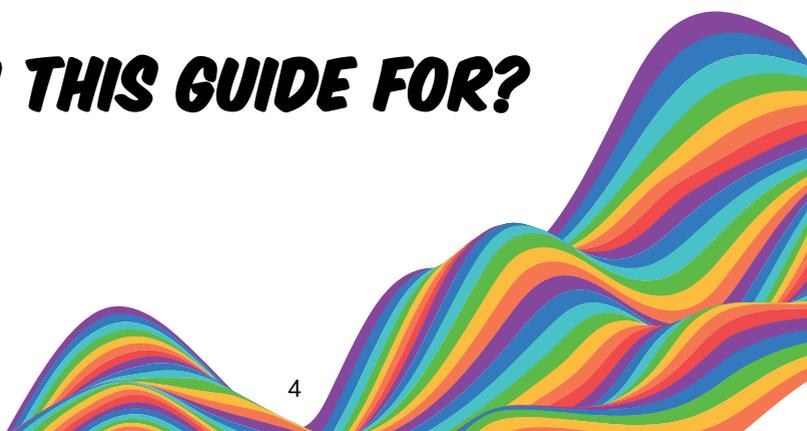
Resources like Proud Parent are crucial in continuing courageous, intimate and authentic conversations of acceptance. Resources like this can help create a more inclusive and accepting world that celebrates difference. Wear it Purple is honoured to have partnered with Capgemini to bring this project to life.

From this point on, it is the conversations you with your child, that will make change in this world - for all minorities.

For more guides and resources visit: www.wearitpurple.org



WHO IS THIS GUIDE FOR?



Proud Parent is a helpful resource for parents of LGBTQIA+ youth. It provides guidance on various topics, such as creating a safe and empowering home, understanding LGBTQIA+ terminology, and ensuring that school is a safe environment. This resource also offers information on LGBTQIA+ friendly schools and resources for support. It's a great tool to help parents better support their LGBTQIA+ children.

WHY IT MATTERS?

As youth, especially trans youth, across Australia, are facing discrimination and uncertainty, this resource, co-created with Capgemini, Salesforce and Wear It Purple, is aimed at being a shining light of information guidance and support for parents who may be unfamiliar with or unsure of how to support their LGBTQIA+ child.

WHY IS IT OF SERVICE?

- **Provides information on LGBTQIA+ terminology:** For parents who may not be familiar with LGBTQIA+ terminology, our resource helps explain the meaning of terms like “gender identity”, “sexual orientation,” and “pronouns.” This can help parents better understand their child’s experiences and identity.
- **Offers guidance on creating a safe and affirming home environment:** Our resource provides parents with tips and strategies for creating a supportive and inclusive home environment. This includes advice on how to talk to their child about their identity, how to handle reactions from family members or friends, and how to find LGBTQIA+ affirming resources in their community.
- **Helps parents understand the challenges their child may face:** Our resource provides parents with information on the unique challenges that LGBTQIA+ youth may face, such as discrimination, bullying, or mental health issues. Understanding these challenges can help parents better support their child through difficult times.

Offers resources and support networks: Our resource also provides information on resources and support networks for parents and their LGBTQIA+ child. This includes information on LGBTQIA+ friendly healthcare providers, schools, community organisations, and online support groups.





***THE ROLE OF A PARENT,
COMING OUT AND CREATING
A SAFE AND EMPOWERING
RAINBOW HOME***

It is important to create spaces for LGBTQIA+ youth where they can feel safe, accepted and heard. Unfortunately, for many LGBTQIA+ youth, the home environment will not be this space, with many of them forced out of their family homes at a young age due to discrimination and prejudice exhibited by their parents or carers. Indeed, homelessness rates among LGBTQIA+ youth are exceedingly high, with roughly 20-40% of young people who are experiencing homelessness identifying as LGBTQIA+¹.



LGBTQIA+ YOUTH NEED A HOME ENVIRONMENT THAT IS VALIDATING, AFFIRMING AND WILL ALLOW THEM TO EXPRESS AND EXPERIMENT WITH THEIR IDENTITIES WITHOUT FEAR OF REPRIMAND.

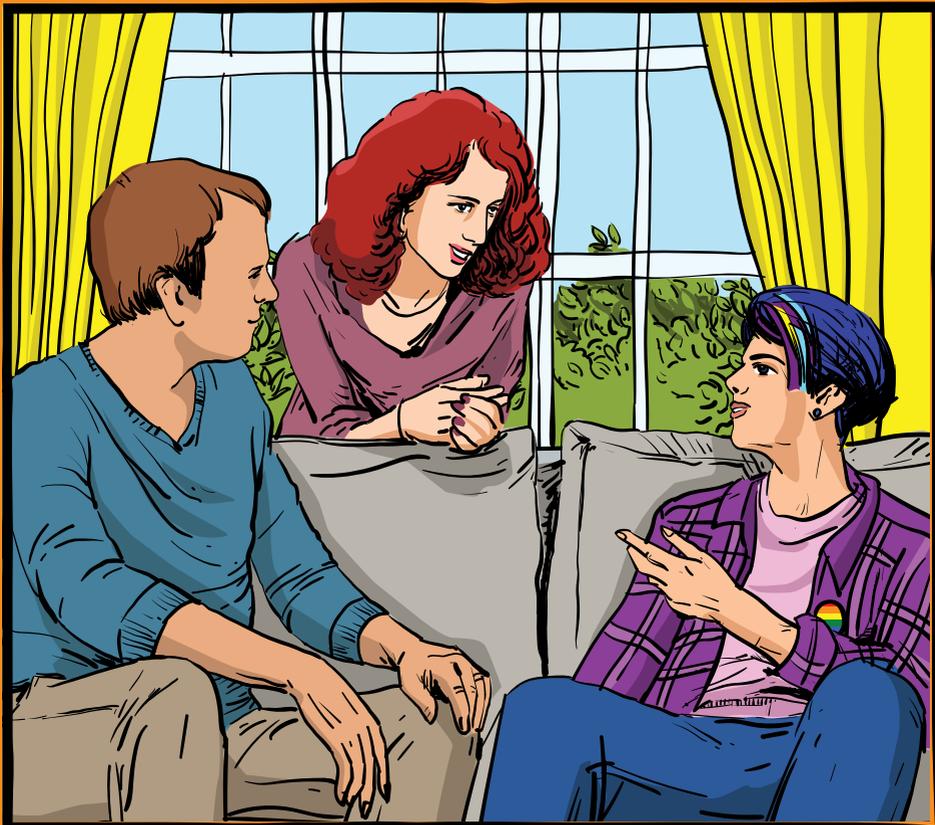
The following section covers three topics of interest for parents and carers of LGBTQIA+ youth, alongside some strategies to manage these experiences.

COMING OUT

Coming out is a formative time in many LGBTQIA+ people's lives. It represents an acceptance and understanding of one's sexual orientation and/or gender identity, and a desire to share and be affirmed in this identity by others.

¹ (2021). Snapshot of Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Statistics for LGBTIQ+ People. LGBTIQ+ Health Australia. Retrieved from <https://www.lgbtiqhealth.org.au/statistics>

The process of coming out is not linear and is highly specific to an individual's circumstances. Not all LGBTQIA+ people come out, and not all coming out experiences are the same. Fortunately, as acceptance of LGBTQIA+ people has become more commonplace, more and more young people are feeling comfortable to come out to their parents or carers.



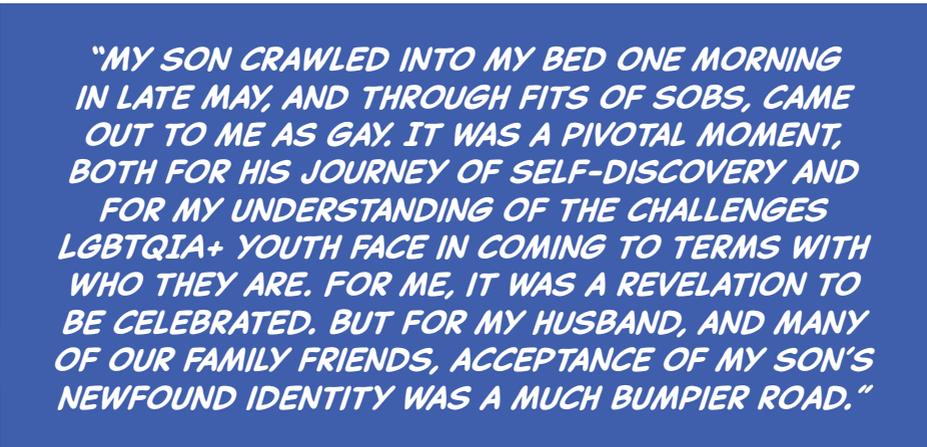
IF YOUR CHILD CHOOSES TO COME OUT TO YOU ABOUT THEIR SEXUAL ORIENTATION AND/OR GENDER IDENTITY, YOUR REACTION AS A PARENT OR CARER IS CRUCIAL.

The lead up to coming out to a parent or carer is often an emotionally turbulent and challenging time for a young LGBTQIA+ person, as they grapple with their desire for acceptance among their nearest and dearest and the very real possibility that this

acceptance may not come immediately, or at all. Although you may be surprised, confronted or unsure how to respond when your child comes out, it is important to acknowledge, at the very least, that your child choosing to come out is an act of courage, vulnerability and self-love.

Here are some top tips on how best to support your child through the process of coming out, collected by parents and carers who have navigated it themselves:

- **Prioritise listening over reacting or judging.** Your child has taken a brave step. They are likely hyper-aware and hyper-anxious of how you might react and have potentially already foreseen a negative or mixed reaction. The best thing you can do in the moment is listen with an open mind and give them space to fully express what they want to share.
- **It's ok to take time to digest the news.** Your child coming out may be surprising or unexpected, it is entirely normal to need time to process this news. In the moment, be as affirming as possible, while acknowledging and communicating with your child that you may need time to let the news settle.
- **Don't be afraid to ask questions.** If your child has chosen to come out to you, it is normal to want to ask questions about how they have come to this discovery. Though they may not be able to answer everything with clarity - they are on a journey too! Try to avoid questions like "Are you sure?" which call into question and minimise their decision to be vulnerable with you.
- **Maintain their privacy and confidentiality.** Ask your child how comfortable they feel with you sharing what they have told you and co-create a strategy for telling relatives or friends. In some instances, your child may want to do this themselves, in other instances they may want you to take the lead. Or they may not be ready to share with anyone beyond immediate family. Make sure everyone agrees on who can and should know - don't make assumptions.



"MY SON CRAWLED INTO MY BED ONE MORNING IN LATE MAY, AND THROUGH FITS OF SOBS, CAME OUT TO ME AS GAY. IT WAS A PIVOTAL MOMENT, BOTH FOR HIS JOURNEY OF SELF-DISCOVERY AND FOR MY UNDERSTANDING OF THE CHALLENGES LGBTQIA+ YOUTH FACE IN COMING TO TERMS WITH WHO THEY ARE. FOR ME, IT WAS A REVELATION TO BE CELEBRATED. BUT FOR MY HUSBAND, AND MANY OF OUR FAMILY FRIENDS, ACCEPTANCE OF MY SON'S NEWFOUND IDENTITY WAS A MUCH BUMPIER ROAD."



CREATING A SAFE AND AFFIRMING ENVIRONMENT

In many ways, coming out represents the first step of your child's journey to self-acceptance. But it isn't where their journey ends. Indeed, many LGBTQIA+ people will say that coming out is a continuous process, that they end up coming out over and over in their lives, to teachers, colleagues, friends, and strangers.



Creating a home which is safe and affirming while your child goes through this process of self-discovery is paramount. Giving them space to express themselves, to experiment, to be heard, and to be affirmed can make a remarkable difference in their journey towards adulthood.

Some strategies you can employ to create a safe and affirming environment for your child include:

- **Welcoming other LGBTQIA+ friends of your child into your home.** Your child may be seeking community and may have connected with other LGBTQIA+ young people their age. Allowing and encouraging your child to bring these friends over illustrates to them that their home environment is safe and welcoming to other LGBTQIA+ people too. Also, you have an opportunity to listen and talk to them, broadening your own understanding as a parent.
- **Encouraging open conversation.** Your child may have internalised the idea that talking about being LGBTQIA+ is taboo, or unwelcome. Take an interest in your

child's identity and encourage them to talk about their identity with you, if they feel comfortable.

- **Creating an environment of respect.** Try to use inclusive language. Make an effort to get names, acronyms and pronouns right. Getting your language right illustrates to your child that you respect their newfound identity and decision to come out. See our LGBTQIA+ Resources and Groups for resources and community groups.
- **Getting involved in the community!** Getting involved in community events can help LGBTQIA+ young people to see just how expansive and diverse their community is. There are many events throughout the year, including Pride and Wear It Purple day, in which families are welcomed and encouraged to participate.

PARENT'S STORY: THE POWER OF ACCEPTANCE IN THE HOME

Denise, mother and active ally, reflects on the power of accepting her daughter and opening her home to other rainbow youth.



"I am the mother of a beautiful rainbow child Malia; she came out at about 15. I have been part of her journey and seen many other rainbow people and their experiences. It's close to my heart.

When Malia came out, we wanted to normalise the experience to create a home where she could just be herself. For us, that involved being supportive of her and her friends. Sometime, that was just being beside her and sometimes being in front of her.

A big thing has been welcoming her friends from the LGBTQIA+ community and making this a safe place. We often had kids who didn't feel safe at home – we had a friend who would leave her money here for a while because of the intrusiveness at home. We aimed to welcome them, to normalise the use of pronouns, letting them be who they are, somewhere safe.

These experiences led me to become more involved in the community, which Malia was very supportive about. In March, I put my hat into the ring to march at the Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras, showing active allyship for the community she is part of.

Today, I have such a fantastic relationship with my daughter and friends. She has a home where she can feel safe and be who she is."

BEING AN ALLY

Although remarkable progress has been made when it comes to LGBTQIA+ rights over the last few decades, being part of the LGBTQIA+ community still means weathering discrimination, prejudice, and ignorance, often as part of daily life. If your child has come out as LGBTQIA+, they too will be exposed to people and media that seek to diminish their existence or at worst seek to harm them.



This can of course be distressing for any parent or carer of an LGBTQIA+ young person, who wants nothing more than their child to be safe. This is, in part, why allyship can be such an important and empowering tool for parents.

To be an ally to a marginalised group means to be actively educating yourself on their individual and community struggles, working with them to achieve equality and justice, and calling out discriminatory or prejudiced behaviour. Allyship requires listening, learning, and an acknowledgement that you won't have all the answers.

Being an ally to your child and their community means you are contributing to creating a world where LGBTQIA+ people are free to express themselves, love who they love, and have full access to their rights. Some ways of beginning your allyship journey are:

- **Educating yourself.** Whether it's reading books on LGBTQIA+ issues, reaching out to support groups at work or in your community, or watching TV or movies with LGBTQIA+ characters and storylines. Educating yourself on the history and contemporary issues of the community is a great first place to start.
- **Extending that education to the entire family.** Why not make it a family affair? It's important that everyone in the family feels safe and empowered to talk about your child being part of the LGBTQIA+ community. Finding ways to include LGBTQIA+ content in your family activities is a great place to start. This could be finding accessible reading materials, or even organising an LGBTQIA+ movie night.
- **Talking to other parents.** You are not the first person to ever have their child come out to them. A great place to find ideas of how best to be an ally to your LGBTQIA+ child is to understand how other parents have approached it - what worked for them and what didn't.
- **Participation in LGBTQIA+ events.** There are many local and national events such as Sydney's Gay & Lesbian Mardi Gras, Fair Day, Pride Festivals etc. that offer the opportunity to experience the community. Attending these with your child, your family and friends is a powerful way to show your allyship, while learning and having fun at the same time.
- **Donating your time or money to LGBTQIA+ charities.** It is often up to charities and not-for-profits to support the parts of the community who are not covered by government services. Consider how you can donate your time or money to these causes to better your child's community.





"...SHE WALKED OUT 10 FEET TALL, KNOWING THAT SHE HAD THE SUPPORT AND KNOWING THAT SHE COULD GO TO SOMEONE FOR HELP WHEN SHE WAS DEALING WITH ISSUES - THAT MADE A BIG DIFFERENCE"



ENSURING SCHOOL IS A SAFE ENVIRONMENT



EARLY YEARS (K-6)

Though many associate LGBTQIA+ identities in young people with the onset of puberty, many LGBTQIA+ people realise they are different from a much younger age, including during primary school.

For many LGBTQIA+ children in the K-6 range, their gender and sexual orientation play out in the same way as it does for other kids their age, which tends to be innocent and harmless. Schoolyard crushes being a primary example. Additionally, many LGBTQIA+ people can often pinpoint feeling that they were different from a young age, often because of their relationship to their gender, rather than any awareness that they may be attracted to the same sex. Some LGBTQIA+ kids can be made to feel different by behaving in ways that do not conform to the traditional expectations of their gender. For example, a six-year-old boy who likes to play with dolls can be aware that his behaviour is more typical of girls his age, which can in turn make him feel different.

For many transgender kids, their total refutation of their gender assigned at birth can manifest from as young as three years old, often to the shock of their parents.

Either way, it is important for parents to know that their child may be be grappling with being LGBTQIA+ while enrolled in primary school, and that their school environment can have a huge impact on their ability to flourish as their authentic selves.

YOUNG TEEN STORY: THE POWER OF ALLIES: FOSTERING SUPPORTIVE SPACES FOR LGBTQIA+ YOUTH IN SCHOOLS

I am fifteen, passionate about human rights, helping others, positive change and providing supportive and caring environments to make people feel valid and seen. As someone who is so passionate about equality I speak up, this is often met with backlash. My school is one of the places where I have experienced this, I openly show my support for the LGBTQIA+ community and speak up when I notice injustice, this is where I have experienced the most homophobia. Being called slurs and having part of who I am used as an insult hasn't been a pleasant experience to say the least. Seeing most staff members almost always overlook or disregard homophobia from my peers was definitely a negative experience. I was left feeling unsupported and unseen during a time which was already challenging as I was questioning my sexuality and coming to the realisation that I'm not straight. In a school environment during this time, I needed to know discrimination would not be tolerated, something my school didn't do. I am grateful I was in a situation where there were people I could talk to about what was happening at school, a form of support which may seem simple but one many LGBTQIA+ people don't have. Being able to access online resources about the LGBTQIA+ community and resources for people questioning their sexuality also helped. There have been many negative experiences but also such positive ones. Towards the end of 2021 and beginning of 2022 new staff members joined my school. I am incredibly grateful for two of them as they speak up if they notice homophobia, openly show support for the LGBTQIA+ community, and act as a support system for young LGBTQIA+ people at the school. In an environment where almost no one speaks up, the actions of these staff members normalise the community and show acceptance and a safe space for LGBTQIA+ people. I have been fortunate enough to build relationships with them, they have had a major positive impact. Seeing them standing up for LGBTQIA+ people's rights, proudly wearing rainbow badges, or adding their pronouns to emails or talking about who they are openly and without shame has created such a safe and accepting environment, one where I know I am seen, and I know I can be myself without being shamed or judged. Words and actions can be powerful, things that may seem small can be significant. Take time to open your mind and try to understand, you may not realise the impact it can have.

Either way, it is important for parents to know that their child may be be grappling with being LGBTQ+ while enrolled in primary school, and that their school environment can have a huge impact on their ability to flourish as their authentic selves.”

PRONOUNS: SHE/THEY. AGE: 15

Schools are varied and diverse and will themselves exist on a spectrum of proficiency when it comes to their ability to provide adequate care for LGBTQIA+ children. If appropriate, a school's principal or vice-principal are often the go-to figures to communicate when discussing what care they may offer for LGBTQIA+ pupils.

When speaking to school representatives, some questions to keep in mind would be:

- **How does the school communicate to parents and children about LGBTQIA+ matters?**
 - **Is it brushed under the rug or does the school proactively talk about and engage with the LGBTQIA+ community?**
- **How does the school handle anti-LGBTQIA+ bullying?**
- **Are teachers trained and enabled to understand the nuances of caring for LGBTQIA+ children?**
- **Is the school involved in any community activities which actively include the LGBTQIA+ community?**
- **What is the school's stance on accommodating transgender children's preferred name and pronouns?**
- **Does the school provide gender neutral bathrooms and uniforms?**
- **What is the school's stance on transgender children partaking in sporting activities of their chosen gender?**
- **Does the school support Pride events and engage with LGBTQIA+ non-profits?**

OPENING HEARTS: EMBRACING CHILDREN'S AUTHENTIC IDENTITIES

"I see a lot of parents or carers who don't fully 'get it' when it comes to their children identifying as something different than what was expected, and it seems that a lot of parents start looking for reasons why ... I want parents and carers to rethink this. You've raised a young person who has gained the confidence to let you into their world, full well knowing that you may not understand it because once upon a time they may not have understood it themselves.

Schools should have a regularly updated or revised anti-bullying policy. If you're looking for ways to know the school is LGBTQIA+ Friendly but unsure of how to broach the topic, look for any Welcome Here rainbow signs or explore their social media for

references to days of LGBTIQ+ significance such as Wear It Purple Day. Doing this is one way you can make sure you are your child's biggest cheerleader and advocate."

- **Special Education**, English and Human Society teacher based in the Hunter and Newcastle region. 7 years in the teaching profession.

HIGH SCHOOL (YEARS 7-12)

Adolescence and the high school environment are where most children begin to grapple with various aspects of their identity - and being LGBTIQ+ is no exception. Most people realise they are LGBTIQ+ when they are a teenager, with the average age of self-discovery being 18.



Being a teenager brings with it a whole host of other challenges, and so when talking to high school representatives, the following questions, in addition to the above, are useful prompts:

- How does the school support a student coming out?
- Does the school run classes or sessions on diversity and inclusion?
- Does the school have an LGBTIQ+ inclusive curriculum? Does this extend to sex education?
- Does the school have a diversity policy for their teachers and staff?
- Does the school allow LGBTIQ+ support groups, social clubs or activities?
- What is the school's stance on a child's right to privacy?
- Does the school provide counselling and support that can cater to LGBTIQ+ students' needs?

CONSIDER LGBTQIA+ FRIENDLY SCHOOLS

It is safe to say that not all school environments will be safe for LGBTQIA+ students. If your child has come out to you and their school is not able to confidently answer the above questions positively, it may be worth looking into whether there are other, more accommodating schools for your child.

In the case of specialist and religious schools, it may be less likely that your child will be in an environment which is affirming. In the first instance, it is important not to make assumptions and to engage the school in direct dialogue.

Furthermore, certain states have programs that support schools to become more LGBTQIA+ inclusive - such as Safe Schools in Victoria.

MOM'S MISSION: CHAMPIONING AUTHENTICITY IN THE SCHOOL SYSTEM

Angela, mother and business leader, talks about dealing with schools and the importance of conversations.

"I have a 7-year-old son who will set the world on fire. Andrew has identified as a boy and just wants to be who they are. It was a huge wake-up call for us and a wonderful journey to figure out and support him the best we can.

For us, some of the most challenging aspects was dealing with schools because you can control what happens in the home and make it safe and welcoming, but school is a whole different world. One thing that changed a lot for Andrew was getting into the conversation. It was really hard for him but so important.

Moving back from Hong Kong, I knew Andrew wouldn't want to wear dresses, so we did the prep work in advance and spoke to schools to ensure they had unisex uniforms.

We were lucky as we found a school principal who was understanding. One thing we wish we had done earlier is getting Andrew to speak with the Principle directly. It was really fantastic. Andrew walked out 10 feet tall, knowing he had support and someone to go to for help, which made a huge difference.

The other learning was that teachers also don't know and don't see everything; they are learning as well – so being present for the small moments and picking up on what is going on. The little moments can be quite dangerous if you aren't on top of it.

Having a conversation is important. Making sure you don't rush to put someone in another box. This is a journey; don't rush to make sense of it, and don't simplify and assume. Listen, but don't rush to find an answer."

HIDDEN IDENTITIES: WHEN TEACHERS PRIORITIZE CONCEALMENT OVER ACCEPTANCE

"I came out as a queer person when I was in Year 7 [5 years ago]. Being at an all-girls Catholic school, this has always been a part of my identity that has been ostracized and frowned upon. While a large portion of my peers are accepting and educated on LGBTQ matters, there has always been a homophobic undertone prevalent in my school environment. I've had students shove their crucifix necklaces in my face, quote Bible verses that 'prove' gay relationships are unnatural, and called slurs throughout my years at school. I am in a lucky position that I have a lot of friends at school who identify as LGBTQ, which was relieving for me as I knew I wasn't going through this alone.

In Year 9 PDHPE, we were assigned a project in which we had to address sexual education in order for teenagers to make informed decisions and pitch these to teachers and the cohort. My group focused on the importance of LGBTQ sex-ed. In promotion of this project, we wore rainbow pins on our blazers. Teachers came around telling us to take off the pins, just in case the principal were to walk by. This experience was obviously harmful and upsetting to me and many other queer people in our school. Knowing that we were hidden and our voices didn't matter, I felt further out of place. I am so grateful that some of the more accepting teachers encouraged us to put the pins back on, to be proud of who we are regardless of what others say. This moment has always stuck with me throughout the course of my schooling as it made me feel insignificant and that I didn't belong.

I have even had a meeting with my school principal, trying to workshop solutions to make the school more accepting and friendly to LGBTQ students. She was unable to put her beliefs aside in order to make the school the welcoming community she so frequently refers to. Some of my teachers and my parents became so important to me in order for me to be at peace with my identity, and they assured me I was never alone. While school was a toxic environment, they allowed me to confide in them, and they acted as makeshift therapists during my time at school. They were able to put their prejudices aside and be completely present and understanding to my feelings, which I found so important to helping me feel seen and heard."

- **She/Her**, Queer, Currently aged 17.



HETERONORMATIVITY AND DEALING WITH EVERYONE ELSE

So, your child has come out, you're actively creating a safe environment for them and are in the process of educating yourself on LGBTQIA+ issues. What more is there for you to do?

Though you have taken the plunge and are doing the work to be a great ally and carer, your friends, your extended family and your wider community - indeed, the world - are likely still catching up.

Although you will now have a better understanding of what it means to be LGBTQIA+, you and many other people in your life may well have grown up having subconsciously held the idea that there are certain norms, certain default ways of being, from which it is taboo to deviate. For example, you may have held the idea that a family consists of a mother, a father, and their biological children. Or you may have an underlying belief that it is inappropriate to talk about your sexual orientation in the workplace. Or that being gay is "just a phase".

These ideas are all examples of **heteronormativity**. Heteronormativity is the belief (often held subconsciously) that heterosexuality is the default, and therefore the preferred, expression of sexuality. If you, for example, always believed that your child would marry a partner of the opposite sex, this is an example of a heteronormative belief.

Unpacking your own heteronormative assumptions and reframing how you see LGBTQIA+ identities can take time and it will also take time for the people around you. While you might be able to control and manage the reactions of people close to you, and arm them with the appropriate information, you won't always be able to step in for your child as they navigate the world. As such, it's important to help them understand that being LGBTQIA+ isn't a deviation from the norm, but simply another aspect of it - and a beautiful one at that! Here's some strategies for how to approach this topic with your child:

- **Emphasising that your child is more than their gender or sexual orientation.** Though these are important aspects of your child, they may find that people around them begin to use their LGBTQIA+ identity as their sole signifier. Make sure your child knows that being LGBTQIA+ isn't the only thing that defines them - it's one of many great aspects of who they are.



- **Encouraging open conversations about what is ‘normal’.** Having open conversations with your child about what a future relationship, or family, or work life looks for them is already part of a healthy family discussion. Help expand their definition of “normal” by talking through what this might look like for them as someone who is LGBTQIA+ and be ready to validate and affirm them as they navigate this.
- **Reminding them how special LGBTQIA+ children are.** Many LGBTQIA+ people think of their gender or sexual orientation as their superpower - but this takes time. Remind your child that being different is what makes them special and that being LGBTQIA+ is its own gift.

“IT’S NOT ABOUT YOU, IT’S ABOUT THEM. THINK ABOUT IT FROM THEIR PERSPECTIVE AND NOT BE JUDGY”



LEARNING ABOUT TRANSGENDER YOUTH



TRANSGENDER, NON-BINARY AND GENDER DIVERSE PEOPLE ARE OUR COLLEAGUES, OUR CO-WORKERS, OUR NEIGHBOURS AND OUR FRIENDS

The term **transgender** (often shortened to trans) describes people whose gender identity differs from the sex to which they were assigned at birth. For example, someone who was assigned male at birth, but now identifies as female.

There is no single way to be trans - the transgender experience is diverse and nuanced. Trans people may **transition socially**, which includes coming out, asking to be referred to by a different name or different pronouns, and dressing and/or presenting in a way which aligns with their gender identity. Other trans people may also **transition medically**, which can involve hormone replacement therapy and gender-affirming surgeries. Just as there is no single way to be trans, there is also no single way to transition!

Another term which you may have heard is the term **non-binary**. Non-binary describes someone who does not identify as exclusively a man or a woman. Some people who are non-binary consider themselves to be transgender, while others do not.

A term which is sometimes used to describe both trans people and non-binary people is **gender diverse**. It is an umbrella term that encompasses a range of different gender identities, that also might include genderqueer, genderfluid, and many others.

With 1-2% of the global population, or around 79 million people, estimated to be transgender, chances are that you've met at least one transgender person in your lifetime, you just might not know it².

Trans individuals still face disproportionately higher rates of discrimination, both in Australia and abroad. In many cases, this has a knock-on effect on their mental health and wellbeing.

IN AUSTRALIA 79.7% OF TRANSGENDER AND GENDER DIVERSE PEOPLE AGED 14 TO 25 REPORTED HAVING SELF-HARMED IN THEIR LIFETIME³

As you can see, there are significant challenges for trans and non-binary people in our society. This makes it even more important for us to all become active allies and create a more accepting and inclusive society.

"BE PATIENT AND KIND TO EVERYONE IN THE PROCESS, THEY ARE BEAUTIFUL, AND THE MAGIC WILL HAPPEN"

THE PATH TO SELF-DISCOVERY: A FATHER'S PERSPECTIVE ON HIS SON'S GENDER IDENTITY

Let's hear how Peter learned to love his transgender son while creating a safe home for him and his friends.

"I have a transgender son, who came out probably about 6 years ago, and I'm very proud and happy to be part of his life. I know our struggles with what happens in Australia's legal system and other areas.

My advice for parents in a similar situation is to create a safe environment.

That's what we did for Sam. We created a sanctuary for him and his friends because the world isn't there yet. Given that safe environment, that safe home, he has blossomed and is so much happier."



“Coming out was a bit of a struggle. Sam attended an all-girls religious school, and in year 11, he sat his mother and me down and said they were gay. For us, it wasn’t a big deal. We contacted a counsellor who said to be careful in a religious school setting. Despite this, Sam still struggled. He is a very soft person and struggles with depression and self-harm. It’s been there for a long time.

After finishing school, Sam got a job at JB Hi-Fi. Then came the tattoos, and he sat us down again one day and said: “I’m not being true to everyone – I feel like a male, I feel I am a male”.

I didn’t really understand to begin with, but I sat down with my wife to understand. Then sitting down with Sam again to go through what we needed to do – get through the doctors, and the psychologists, change names etc.

He is now happy being him and has dated another transgender individual. Still, he is now happy, and it just took time for me to get to know him and use the correct pronouns. Mine was how do you deal with the past – one thing that happened, they don’t like the photos of the past, you know wearing dresses etc. If I had in my toolbox knowing how to rationalise that in my head and dealing with it as a parent and as a child.

It was just around that time; you’d had 17 years of Emily, and then moving to Sam was hard.

I just rationalised it in my head as that’s what you feel you want to be, and Sam is comfortable being Sam and aligns himself with being male – he is happy being that, the happiest I’ve seen in his life. Seeing him that happy was all that mattered. Whatever he wants to be, I will support him.”

²Varrella, S. (2021). Share of people identifying as transgender, gender fluid, non-binary, or other ways worldwide as of 2021, by country. Retrieved June 17, 2022, from <https://www.statista.com/statistics/1269778/gender-identity-worldwide-country/>

³(2021). Snapshot of Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Statistics for LGBTIQ+ People. LGBTIQ+ Health Australia. Retrieved from <https://www.lgbtiqhealth.org.au/statistics>



WHAT ARE PRONOUNS AND WHY ARE THEY IMPORTANT?

A pronoun is a word that refers to either the people talking (I or you) or someone/ something that is being talked about (like she, it, them, and this). Pronouns like he, she and they specifically refer to the people that you are talking about.

It is important to respect people's pronouns. You can't always know what someone's pronouns are by looking at them. Asking and correctly using someone's pronouns is one of the most basic ways to show your respect for gender identity.

WHAT ARE PRONOUNS?

Third-person singular pronouns e.g., she/he/they/ze refer to a specific individual for example "**she** has an apple" instead of "Amber has an apple." Someone's chosen third-person singular pronoun/s (commonly referred to as just pronouns) are tied to their identity and how they would like to be referred to by others.

For many people, their pronouns are associated with their gender. There are gendered pronouns such as '**she/her**' for someone who identifies as female and '**he/him**' for someone who identifies as male. There is also gender-neutral pronouns such as '**they/them**' for someone who may identify as gender diverse or non-binary. There are also neo-pronouns, such as '**ze/zir**,' though these are much less common.

Neo-pronouns are a category of new pronouns that someone may use in favour of **he/she/they** and are sometimes used by trans or gender diverse people. There are people who prefer not to be identified by their pronouns and people who use different combinations of pronouns.

They/them is a special case because **they/them** is both a third-person singular pronoun and a plural pronoun. This means that **they/them** can refer to an individual or group e.g., "they went to the shops" could mean one person or a group of people went to the shops. This dual usage of **they/them** has been a part of the English language since the 14th century! Language changes over time and it is up to us to adapt to new ways of using words particularly when those words are core to someone's identity.

"I JUST RATIONALISED IT IN MY HEAD AS THAT'S WHAT YOU FEEL YOU WANT TO BE, AND SAM IS COMFORTABLE BEING SAM AND ALIGNS HIMSELF WITH BEING MALE - HE IS HAPPY BEING THAT, THE HAPPIEST I'VE SEEN IN HIS LIFE. SEEING HIM THAT HAPPY WAS ALL THAT MATTERED. WHATEVER HE WANTED TO BE I WILL SUPPORT HIM. HE DIDN'T CHOOSE TO BE BORN WE MADE THAT HAPPEN AND IT IS OUR JOB TO LOVE HIM FOREVER."

WHAT CAN I DO?

Understanding how to correctly use people's pronouns as well as encouraging open conversations about them is a great way to actively include transgender and gender diverse people. It is an easy way to make someone feel accepted and included. A good way to start is when you meet someone introduce yourself with your pronouns and ask about theirs. For example:

Person A: "HI, MY NAME IS JAMES, MY PRONOUNS ARE THEY/THEM. HOW ABOUT YOU?"

Person B: "NICE TO MEET YOU, JAMES. I'M POLLY, I USE SHE/HER".

It might seem awkward or strange at first but using someone's correct pronouns affirms their identity and creates a positive environment for rainbow youth. It is a small act with a big impact.

When using pronouns, the key is to have care and to ask if you are unsure. If you get it wrong, apologise and thank the person for correcting you. **Do not let the fear of saying the wrong thing stop you from being an ally.**

WHERE CAN I GO FOR MORE INFORMATION?

There are some great resources available to help you understand how to use pronouns correctly and why they are important. Check out these sites for further information and learning.

- [Wear It Purple - Pronouns & Misgendering](#)
- [Minus18 - what are pronouns and why are they important](#)
- [My Pronouns .Org - pronouns matter](#)
- [GLSEN - Pronouns Guide](#)
- [Minus18](#)



UNDERSTANDING LGBTQIA+ TERMINOLOGY

The LGBTQIA+ community is full of terminology that may not be familiar to all. Indeed, as our understanding of how people relate to their sexual orientation and gender develops and evolves, so does our language.

The term “LGBT+”, from which LGBTQIA+ derives, has only been around since the 1980s, when it was used as an organising tool for protestors in the United States who were trying to achieve equality for their community of gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender people. Of course, LGBTQIA+ people have existed since humans have existed, but the terms used to describe us were usually culturally or regionally specific. Think of “LGBTQIA+” and its various iterations as being the most recent Western iteration of this. It is worth noting that the term “LGBTQIA+” is itself not universally applicable, and that in many non-Western cultures, other terminology is sometimes preferred.

So, starting with the term LGBTQIA+ itself - which iteration is the right one? Well, there is no one correct answer. Different people will use different versions of the initialism depending on various factors: what they are accustomed to, who their audience is, and which is most prevalent in their community. For this guide, the term LGBTQIA+ has been used, however, it could have just as easily been LGBT+ I, LGBTQ+ I+, LGBTQA+ , LGBTQA+, LGBT or many other iterations.

There is no definitive list of LGBTQIA+ terminology. Listed below are the most prevalent terms with simple language definitions to support you and your child to be as informed and articulate as possible on this topic.

LGBTQIA+ IDENTIFYING TERMS

Asexual: A person who experiences an absence of sexual attraction or desire for other people. The term “aromantic” also exists which describes the same experience but in terms of romantic attraction.

Bisexual: A person emotionally, romantically, or sexually attracted to more than one sex, gender, or gender identity though not necessarily simultaneously, in the same way or to the same degree. Sometimes used interchangeably with pansexual.

Gay: A person who is emotionally, romantically, or sexually attracted to members of the same gender. Men, women, and non-binary people may use this term to describe themselves.

Gender-fluid: A person who does not identify with a single fixed gender or has a fluid or unfixed gender identity.

Lesbian: A woman who is emotionally, romantically, or sexually attracted to other women. Women and non-binary people may use this term to describe themselves.

LGBTQIA+: An initialism for “lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer.” The “+” is used to denote the existence of other people in the community who may identify under alternate labels but are still encapsulated within it.



Genderqueer: Genderqueer people typically reject notions of static categories of gender and embrace a fluidity of gender identity and often, though not always, sexual orientation. People who identify as “genderqueer” may see themselves as being both male and female, neither male nor female or as falling completely outside these categories.

Intersex: Intersex people are born with a variety of differences in their sex traits and reproductive anatomy. There is a wide variety of difference among intersex variations, including differences in genitalia, chromosomes, gonads, internal sex organs, hormone production, hormone response, and/or secondary sex traits.

Non-binary: An adjective describing a person who does not identify exclusively as a man or a woman. Non-binary people may identify as being both a man and a woman, somewhere in between, or as falling completely outside these categories. While many also identify as transgender, not all non-binary people do. Non-binary can also be used as an umbrella term encompassing identities such as agender, bigender, genderqueer or gender-fluid. Some non-binary people also use the term “enby”, pronounced “NB”, which is an abbreviation for non-binary.

Pansexual: Describes someone who has the potential for emotional, romantic, or sexual attraction to people of any gender though not necessarily simultaneously, in the same way or to the same degree. Sometimes used interchangeably with bisexual.

Queer: A term people often use to express a spectrum of identities and orientations that are counter to the mainstream. Queer is often used as a catch-all to include many people, including those who do not identify as exclusively straight and/or folks who have non-binary or gender-expansive identities. This term was previously used as a slur but has been reclaimed by many parts of the LGBTQIA+ movement.

Questioning: A term used to describe people who are in the process of exploring their sexual orientation or gender identity.

Transgender: An umbrella term for people whose gender identity and/or expression is different from cultural expectations based on the sex they were assigned at birth. Being transgender does not imply any specific sexual orientation. Therefore, transgender people may identify as straight, gay, lesbian, bisexual, etc. Transgender may also be abbreviated to “trans”.

COMMON TERMS ASSOCIATED WITH THE LGBTQIA+ COMMUNITY

Ally: A term used to describe someone who is actively supportive of LGBTQIA+ people. It encompasses straight and cisgender allies, as well as those within the LGBTQIA+ community who support each other (e.g., a lesbian who is an ally to the transgender community).

Cisgender: A term used to describe a person whose gender identity aligns with those typically associated with the sex assigned to them at birth.

Coming Out: The process in which a person first acknowledges, accepts and appreciates their sexual orientation or gender identity and begins to share that with others.

Gender binary: A system in which gender is constructed into two strict categories of male or female. Gender identity is expected to align with the sex assigned at birth and gender expressions and roles fit traditional expectations.

Gender dysphoria: Clinically significant distress caused when a person's assigned birth gender is different from the one with which they identify.

Gender-expansive: A person with a wider, more flexible range of gender identity and/or expression than typically associated with the binary gender system. Often used as an umbrella term when referring to young people still exploring the possibilities of their gender expression and/or gender identity.

Gender expression: External appearance of one's gender identity, usually expressed through behaviour, clothing, body characteristics or voice, and which may or may not conform to socially defined behaviours and characteristics typically associated with being either masculine or feminine.

Gender identity: One's innermost concept of self as male, female, a blend of both or neither – how individuals perceive themselves and what they call themselves. One's gender identity can be the same or different from their sex assigned at birth.

Gender non-conforming: A broad term referring to people who do not behave in a way that conforms to the traditional expectations of their gender, or whose gender expression does not fit neatly into a category. While many also identify as transgender, not all gender non-conforming people do.

Sex assigned at birth: The sex, male, female, or intersex, that a doctor or midwife uses to describe a child at birth based on their external anatomy.

Sexual orientation: An inherent or immutable enduring emotional, romantic, or sexual attraction to other people. Note: an individual's sexual orientation is independent of their gender identity.

Cisgender: Refers to those individuals whose internal sense of gender identity matches their sex assigned at birth.

Transitioning: A series of processes that some transgender people may undergo to live more fully as their true gender. This typically includes social transition, such as changing name and pronouns, medical transition, which may include hormone therapy or gender affirming surgeries, and legal transition, which may include changing legal name and sex on government identity documents. Transgender people may choose to undergo some, all, or none of these processes.

Sexual fluidity: Embraces the notion that sexuality is something that grows and changes with every person. Everyone's experience of sexual fluidity is different from others.





LGBTQIA+ RESOURCES AND GROUPS

We would like to acknowledge Wear It Purple and Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras who helped contribute to this list.

Below is a collection of LGBTQIA+ resources and groups, many of which will have services specifically for young people. Please note that this is not an exhaustive list, and that many other community groups and nonprofits exist who can support your child.

AUSTRALIA WIDE



WEAR IT PURPLE | <https://www.wearitpurple.org/>

Wear it Purple strives to foster supportive, safe, empowering and inclusive environments for rainbow young people.

AUSTRALIA & NEW ZEALAND TONGZHI RAINBOW ALLIANCE | <https://www.antra.org.au/>

ANTRA is a community-led organisation, founded to become a point-of-contact and support for Mandarin- and Cantonese-speaking LGBTQIA+ community members in Australia and New Zealand, particularly migrants, international students and other newly arrived diasporas.

AUSTRALIAN ASEXUALS | <http://australianasexuals.com/>

Asexuality is a sexual orientation defined by a lack of sexual attraction to any person of any gender. The Australian Asexuals group hopes to connect the wider Australian asexual community together and link communication within the smaller groups around the country.



BLACK RAINBOW | <https://blackrainbow.org.au/>

Black Rainbow Australia is an online presence as a platform for national voices of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander lesbian, gay, bisexual, sistergirl & brotherboy (transgender) and queer people.

HEADSPACE | <https://headspace.org.au/>

Headspace centres and services operate across Australia, in metro, regional and rural areas, supporting young Australians and their families to be mentally healthy and engaged in their communities.

PARENTS AND FRIENDS OF LESBIANS AND GAYS |

<https://pflagaustralia.org.au/about>

A non-profit voluntary organisation whose members have a common goal of keeping families together. PFLAG is here to give help, support and information to families, friends of all gay people.

QUEERS IN SCIENCE | <https://queersinscience.org.au/>

Queers In Science aims to build community and improve support for LGBTQIA+ people working in STEMM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics, and Medicine) in Australia.

INTERSEX HUMAN RIGHTS AUSTRALIA | <https://ihra.org.au/>

Intersex people are born with physical sex characteristics that do not fit medical norms for female or male bodies. Intersex Human Rights Australia is a national body by and for people with intersex variations. They promote human rights and bodily autonomy for intersex people, and provide information, education, and peer support.

TRANS PRIDE AUSTRALIA | <https://transprideaustralia.org.au/>

Trans Pride Australia's vision is for all trans and gender diverse people to live their best life. They create a safe and supporting space to connect with other trans and gender diverse people, act as a channel for support/services, and promote visibility/awareness of trans/gender diverse matters in the general community.

TRANSCEND AUSTRALIA | <https://transcendaus.org/>

Transcend was founded in 2012 as the first parent-led peer support network for the families of transgender children in Australia. Transcend is working towards a world where trans, gender diverse and non-binary children are embraced and given every opportunity thrive and flourish.

TRIKONE AUSTRALIA | <https://trikone.org.au/>

Trikone is a community group for people of South Asian descent who identify as LBGT living in Australia. South Asians affiliated with Trikone Australia trace their ethnicities to one of the following nations: Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Fiji, India, Maldives, Mauritius, Myanmar (Burma), Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, and Tibet.

NEW SOUTH WALES (NSW)



ACON | <https://www.acon.org.au/>

ACON is Australia's largest HIV and sexuality and gender diverse health organisation. ACON's head office is in Sydney, and they also have offices in regional centres across New South Wales, providing services and programs locally, state-wide and nationally.

BOBBY GOLDSMITH FOUNDATION | <https://www.bgf.org.au/>

The Bobby Goldsmith Foundation is Australia's oldest HIV charity, established in 1984 by a dedicated group of Bobby's friends, delivering services that meet the current, changing and future needs of people living with HIV.

DAYENU | <http://dayenu.org.au/>

Dayenu exists to support the needs of Jewish gays, lesbians, bisexual, transgender and intersex people as well as their friends, family, partners and other supporters.

GENDER CENTRE | <https://gendercentre.org.au/contact>

The Gender Centre is committed to developing and providing services and activities, which enhance the ability of the transgender, gender questioning and gender diverse community to make informed choices.

SYDNEY QUEER MUSLIMS | <https://sydneyqueermuslims.org.au/>

A non-profit organisation for LGBTQIA+ Muslims by LGBTQIA+ Muslims, dedicated to providing social support, education and resources to individuals and families in NSW.

TWENTY10 INCL. GLCS | <https://www.twenty10.org.au/>

Twenty10 works across New South Wales providing a broad range of specialised services for young people 12-25 including housing, mental health, counselling and social support. The Gay & Lesbian Counselling Service provides social support and for people of all ages. Telephone support and webchat is available as the NSW provider for the national QLife project.



VICTORIA



MINUS18 | <https://www.minus18.org.au/>

Minus18 is Australia's leading LGBTQIA+ youth organisation that leads change, builds social inclusion, and advocates for an Australia where all young people are safe, empowered, and surrounded by people that support them.

TRANSGENDER VICTORIA | <https://tgvt.org.au/>

Transgender Victoria is Victoria's leading body for trans and gender diverse advocacy. They work to achieve justice, equity, and inclusive service provision for trans and gender diverse people, their partners, families, and friends.

VICTORIAN PRIDE CENTER | <https://pridecentre.org.au/>

The Victorian Pride Centre is the first purpose-built centre for Australia's LGBTQIA+ communities. It is a place to pave new directions for LGBTQIA+ communities, while honouring and celebrating their brave – and at times difficult – past. It is home to practical and supportive services and will grow into a destination for visitors from across Australia, and beyond.

AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY (ACT)



A GENDER AGENDA | <https://genderrights.org.au/>

A Gender Agenda aims to support the goals and needs of the intersex, transgender and gender diverse communities of Canberra and the surrounding region.

ACTQueer | actqueer-owner@yahoogroups.com

A confidential, free email list for LGBTQ people in the ACT and region. It encourages and supports access to, and participation in, the diverse range of social and community activities available in Canberra

SPRINGOUT | www.springout.com.au

Canberra's queer pride festival celebrates the diversity of the local LGBTI community.

MERIDIAN | <https://www.meridianact.org.au/>

Meridian provides sexual health education and prevention, targeted health promotion activities, community events, education and training. Meridian Wellbeing Services provide low and no cost counselling and mental health support including psychologists, mental health social workers and peer-led support services.



QUEENSLAND



DIVERSE VOICES | <https://www.diversevoices.org.au/>

Diverse Voices Works alongside QLife who provides Australia-wide anonymous, LGBTI peer support and referral for people wanting to talk about a range of issues including sexuality, identity, gender, bodies, feelings or relationships.

OPEN DOORS YOUTH SERVICE | <https://www.opendoors.net.au/>

Provides support services to LGBTIQAP+ Sistergirl and Brotherboy young people aged 12 to 24 and their families who live in Southeast Queensland.

LGBTI LEGAL SERVICE INC | <https://lgbtilegalservice.org.au/>

Offers free and confidential legal advice to Queensland residents who identify as members of the diverse lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans and intersex community.

NORTHERN TERRITORY



RAINBOW TERRITORY | <http://www.outnt.info/>

Rainbow Territory is an unfunded Northern Territory community group that advocates for the human rights of Northern Territorians who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex and queer ('LGBTIQ').

SISTERS & BROTHERS NT | <http://sistersandbrothersnt.com/>

Advocacy group for Sistergirls, Brotherboys, Indigenous and Non-Indigenous GLBTI people from the Northern Territory

SOUTH AUSTRALIA



Bfriend | <https://www.facebook.com/BfriendUC>

A free information and social support service of Uniting Communities for people newly identifying as LGBTQIA+ IQ or for those questioning their sexuality and gender identity. They also support their friends and families.

Moolagoo Mob & Blak Lemons | www.facebook.com/groups/192121764142222/

Moolagoo Mob & Blak Lemons is an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander group which offers a social and support network for those who identify as gay, lesbian, sistergirl or brotherboy. They meet every month in a friendly, safe and confidential environment.

Feast Queer Youth Drop In | <https://www.facebook.com/feastdropin>

A regular bi-monthly Drop In space for queer young people aged 15-25 to meet, feel comfortable and take part in activities planned by and for queer young people.

WESTERN AUSTRALIA



Living Proud | <https://www.livingproud.org.au/>

Living Proud has provided support to LGBTQIA+ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, queer and other sexuality, gender, and bodily diverse) people and communities in WA for over 40 years.

TRANSFOLK OF WA | <https://www.transfolkofwa.org/>

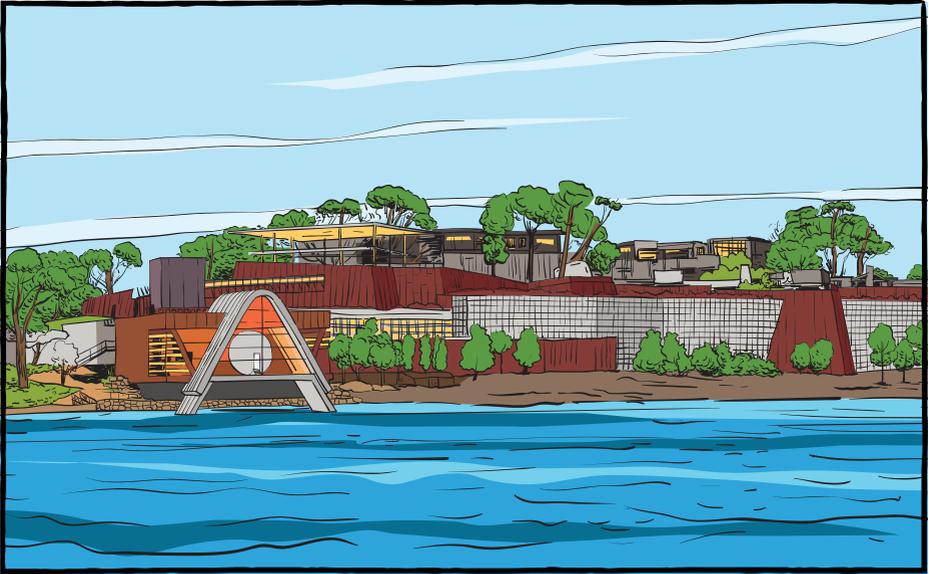
TransFolk of WA is a support service for all transgender people and their loved ones in Western Australia.

YOUTH PRIDE NETWORK | <https://www.facebook.com/youthpridenetwork/>

The YPN is a network for young people who identify as LGBTQIA+ QIA+ to work together to improve the rights and wellbeing of LGBTQIA+ QIA+ West Australians.



TASMANIA



Tasmanian Gender Service | <https://www.health.tas.gov.au/health-topics/sexual-and-reproductive-health/tasmanian-gender-service-tgs>

Tasmanian Gender Service is for children and young people under 18, and their families, who are experiencing gender related issues and treatment. The Tasmanian Gender Service provides advice, assessment, and treatment as appropriate.

Equality Tasmania | <https://equalopportunity.tas.gov.au/>

Equality Tasmania is a community-based organisation campaigning for LGBTQIA+ human rights in Tasmania.

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Capgemini and Wear It Purple believe the information in this document is correct at the time of issue, but make no representation or warranty as to its accuracy or reliability and will have no liability however arising for any errors or omissions. This guidebook is aimed at building awareness about issues affecting the LGBTQIA+ Community.