

# LGBTQIA+ INCLUSIVE LANGUAGE GUIDE



Care  
Education  
Advocacy

## SEXUALITY & GENDER KEY TERMS

**A lesbian** woman is romantically and/or sexually attracted to women. Some gender diverse people also identify as lesbian.

**A gay person** is romantically and/or sexually attracted to another person of the same sex and/or gender.

**A bisexual** person is romantically and/or sexually attracted to people of the same gender, and other genders.

**An asexual** person does not experience sexual attraction to others, although they may experience romantic attraction.

**A pansexual** person is romantically and/or sexually attracted to people regardless of gender.

**A heterosexual** or straight person is a person who is attracted to people of the opposite gender.

**Queer** is often used as an umbrella term to describe diverse genders and sexualities.

**Transgender, trans and gender diverse** are used as umbrella terms to describe people whose gender identity is different from that assumed to them at birth.

This brochure refers to language in the context of LGBTQIA+ inclusion. This means language that recognises the diversity of sexuality, gender, bodies and relationships.

This resource was developed in consultation with members of the LGBTQIA+ community. We thank them for their time and ongoing commitment to education.

As society's understanding of sex, sexuality and gender expand, language will evolve. This document is intended for use as a general guide, and not as a definitive resource. It will require updating, and we encourage you to approach Sexual Health Victoria with any suggestions.

## **LGBTQIA + INCLUSIVE LANGUAGE**

The way we communicate within our community is imperative to building a more inclusive society. A way to do this is by using language that is respectful, accurate and relevant to all. LGBTQIA+ identity is just one facet of people's lives. People may have words to describe their sex, sexuality and gender identity and expressions that don't fit within the scope of this resource.

Prejudice and exclusion can negatively affect the health and wellbeing outcomes of people of diverse genders, sexualities, and sex. Language, often unknowingly, is one of the forms this discrimination can take place.

## **FIVE STEPS**

The following steps may be used as a guide to properly incorporate inclusive language into conversations.

### **Step 1 – Open**

Keep an open mind. Try to approach new ways of thinking about language with curiosity and empathy.

### **Step 2 – Focus**

Remember to focus on the person you are referring to and not the demographic group they may belong to.

### **Step 3 – Context**

Think about the context. Sometimes the informal language you use isn't inclusive of others.

### **Step 4 – Ask**

Sometimes, you may be unsure of the correct terminology. So, if relevant, ask respectfully.

### **Step 5 – Calm**

We may use language that is not inclusive. Keep calm, respond appropriately and understand the other person's perspective.

# **INCLUSIVE LANGUAGE 101**

## **Pronouns**

Pronouns are words that we use to refer to a person when talking about them, without using their name.

### **Common pronouns:**

- She/her
- He/him

Neo pronouns:

- They/them
- Xe/Xir
- Ze/Zir

### **Example of how we use pronouns:**

“Hey everyone, I’d like you all to meet our new staff member Stevie. They are going to be working on our IT project for the next six months, please make them feel welcome.”

### **Why are pronouns important?**

No matter who we are, we all feel respected and affirmed when our correct pronouns are used, and this is particularly true for trans and gender diverse people.

**Non-binary** may describe people whose gender is not exclusively male or female.

**Cisgender** is a term used to describe people for whom their gender identity aligns with the sex assigned for them at birth.

**Brotherboy** is a word used by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to describe a gender diverse person who has a male spirit and takes on male roles within the community. How the word is used may differ among First Nations countries, communities, and individuals.

**Sistergirl** is a word used by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to describe a gender diverse person who has a female spirit and takes on female roles within the community. How the word is used may differ among First Nations countries, communities, and individuals.

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