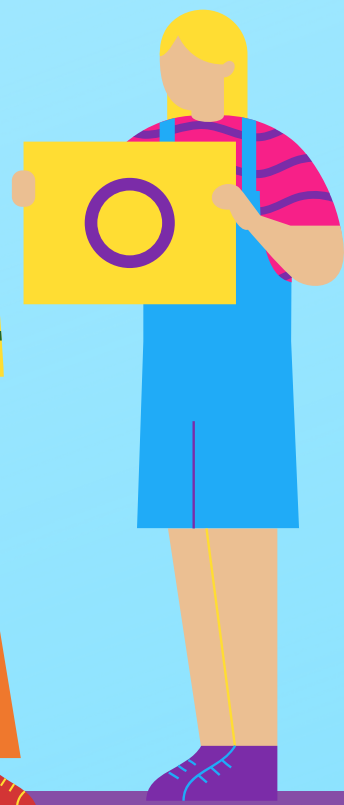
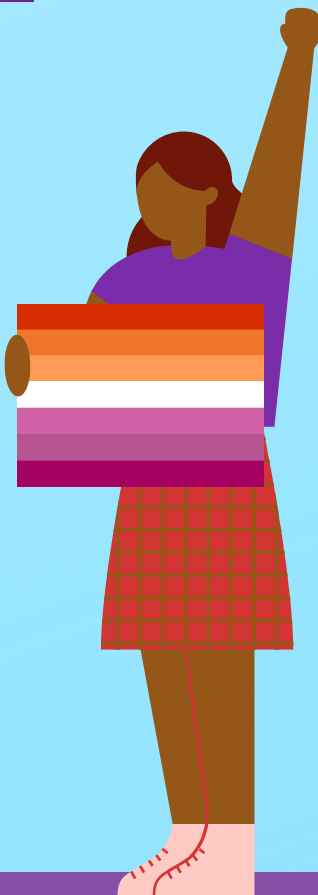
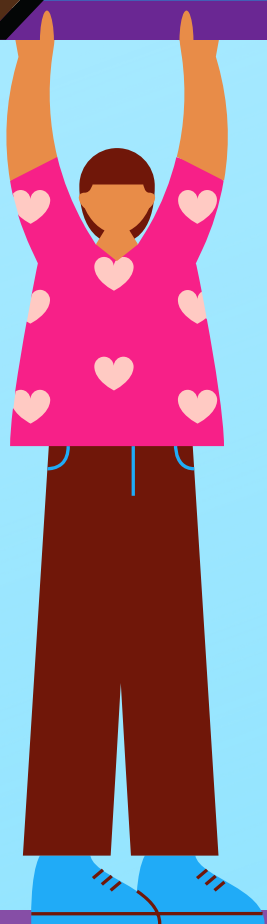
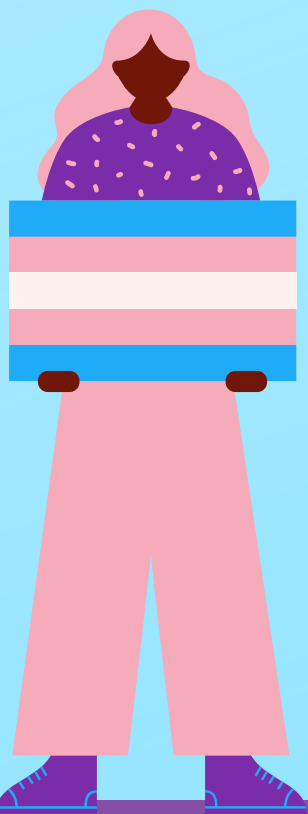
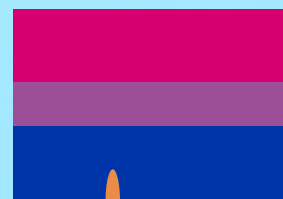
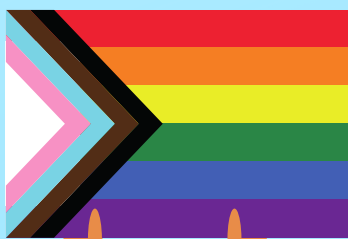


Supporting LGBTIQ+ Volunteers

Creating welcoming, safe and positive
volunteer experiences



Introduction

Volunteering is a valuable source of community connection, where people can come together to benefit others. It is important that the act of volunteering itself is accessible and inclusive, to ensure that all those who would like to volunteer feel able and safe to do so.

While there are many different people who may benefit from a more inclusive and accessible approach to volunteer management, this resource will focus on those who identify as a person within the LGBTIQ+ community.

A significant proportion of the Australian population have a diverse gender or sexual identity. These individuals can be at increased risk of facing discrimination, mistreatment, exclusion and barriers to participation. All organisations must be aware of these concerns related to the LGBTIQ+ community, and be prepared to make meaningful changes to create positive and equitable volunteering experiences.

Volunteer Managers play an important role in this process, and can help make their volunteer programs safe and supportive for all volunteers. This resource will explore how LGBTIQ+ inclusivity can be incorporated at every stage of the volunteer-engagement process.



Terms

There are a lot of different terms and definitions that are significant and important to know. Below is a list of some of these terms*, but note that this is not a complete list, and this terminology is constantly evolving. [Click here](#) to see a more comprehensive glossary.

LGBTIQA+ An acronym that stands for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex, Queer, and Asexual. The plus sign represents those who identify in a way that does not fit within these terms. Note that some individuals may use variations of this acronym.

Asexual a complete or partial lack of sexual attraction or lack of interest in sexual activity with others.

Bisexual sexual and/or romantic attraction to people of the same gender and people of another gender.

Cisgender/Cis a term used to describe people whose gender corresponds to what they were assigned at birth.

Gay an individual who identifies as a man and is sexually and/or romantically attracted to other people who identify as men. This term is sometimes used in more general terms (similar to use of queer).

Heterosexual an individual who is sexually and/or romantically attracted to the opposite gender.

Intersex an umbrella term that refers to individuals who have anatomical, chromosomal and hormonal characteristics that differ from medical and conventional understandings of male and female bodies.

Lesbian an individual who identifies as a woman and is sexually and/or romantically attracted to other people who identify as women.

Non-binary/Gender Diverse umbrella terms for gender identities that sit within, outside of, across, or between the spectrum of the male and female gender binary.

Pansexual an individual whose sexual and/or romantic attraction to others is not restricted by gender.

Queer a term used to describe a range of sexual orientations and gender identities. Previously used as a derogatory term, some people have now reclaimed the word to describe the full range of LGBTIQA+ identities. Note, recognition of this term varies, and some individuals may still find it offensive.

Trans/Transgender umbrella terms used to refer to people whose assigned sex at birth does not match their gender identity.

Recruitment

To incorporate inclusivity into each stage of volunteer engagement, we need to start at the beginning. By making the advertising, application and recruitment process open and accessible, we can help more people feel comfortable to apply.

When recruiting new volunteers, you can be more inclusive by:

Using gender-neutral language in your advertisements:

"We're looking for a new chairman" → "We're looking for a new chairperson"

"Our centre needs a handyman" → "Our centre needs a maintenance person"

If asking about gender include options for people who don't identify as male or female:

Please circle: Male - Female - Non-binary/Gender-Diverse

Please describe your gender: _____

Ask for people's pronouns so you will know how they should be addressed when you meet in person

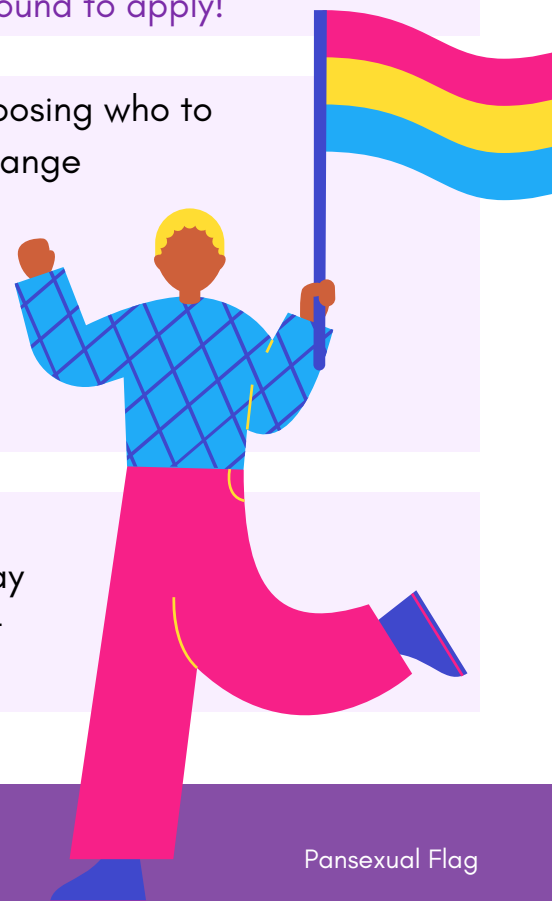
What are your pronouns?: _____

Include a short statement to encourage a diverse range of individuals to apply (it's important that you only include this once you feel that you will be able to provide a positive experience for all volunteers)

We strive to create inclusive and positive volunteer experiences. We encourage anyone of any age, gender, identity or background to apply!

When volunteers apply be aware of implicit bias when choosing who to onboard. It's important to remember that there is a wide range of people in your community, with an even wider range of skills, interests, knowledge and experience. Look to see if there's any patterns or similarities in your recruitment, and try and diversify to become more representative of your community.

Connect with your local LGBTIQ+ network and share information about your volunteering opportunities. This may be contacting a social group or club, a LGBTIQ+ support service provider, or your local pride network.



Pansexual Flag

Onboarding

When first meeting a new volunteer, it's important to help them feel welcome and comfortable in your program. Successful onboarding can be crucial in setting up a long-term positive volunteer experience.

There are a few things to consider to make sure your onboarding process is inclusive:

When meeting someone for the first time, avoid assumptions about their gender or sexual identity based on their name, appearance, clothing, or mannerisms. There is no one way to be/look male, female, gay, straight etc.

In most cases it isn't necessary to ask about a person's gender or sexual orientation, and it will come up naturally in casual conversation. Sometimes asking outright can make people feel judged or uncomfortable.

Never "out" someone i.e. share their identity with other people without their permission. If someone has disclosed their gender or sexual identity to you, you cannot assume they're comfortable with that information being shared with others. You may wish to ask them whether they feel comfortable with other people knowing their gender or sexual identity, or if they would prefer to share it at their own discretion.

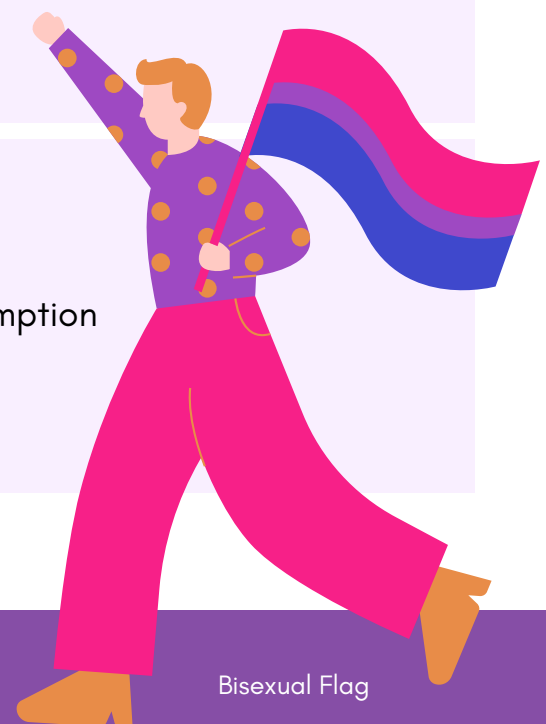
If you need to talk about someone's gender or sexuality, use the same terms that a person uses to describe themselves. While some identities have similarities, different terms cannot be used interchangeably.

Some people change their name to better align with their identity. Use their current name wherever possible, as a person's "dead name" (previous name) may cause them distress/discomfort. Be mindful that a person's name may differ from the name shown on official documentation. If they haven't legally changed their name, you may need to use their dead name for things like police checks. However, make sure to use the person's current name in all of your other processes.

It may be useful to include a small note that their dead name may appear in some records.

When enquiring about potential support needs, ask your new volunteer generalised questions such as:

"how can we best support you?" or "how can I help you to enjoy your volunteer experience?". This avoids the assumption that they will require support as an LGBTIQ+ identified person, and creates space for them to raise any potential concerns or suggestions.



Bisexual Flag

Ongoing support

Ensuring your volunteers enjoy their experience is an ongoing process. To encourage long-term and positive engagement, it's important to create an enjoyable volunteering environment, offer support and make sure everyone feels like part of the team.

As a volunteer manager, you can lead by example. Your behaviour can help to set the standard for how other staff and volunteers should treat others with respect.

Stay informed about LGBTIQ+ terminology, news, and issues, as these change and develop over time.

Make sure your organisation offers inclusive facilities:

[Allow volunteers to use the restroom that aligns with their gender identity](#)

Create a friendly, comfortable and safe volunteering environment. If the space itself is inviting, volunteers will look forward to coming in and spending time there.

[Have spaces where people can easily chat \(e.g. a coffee and tea station\), play some music, or have your volunteers help to decorate!](#)

Ask questions, and make sure all volunteers are included in conversations. Most of the time you won't need to think about their gender or sexual identity, you'll just be chatting about everyday things.

Use neutral language whenever possible.

[You may ask if someone has a "partner" rather than assume that they would have a boyfriend/girlfriend.](#)

If you're unsure/hesitant about what you can ask about in regards to their gender or sexual identity, just make sure you're asking things that you would also ask a cis-gender or heterosexual person.

["How's your partner going at their new job?", "How long have you two been together?"](#)

Acknowledge and celebrate LGBTIQ+ events and celebrations

[Pride Month](#), [Wear it Purple Day](#), [Transgender Awareness Week](#)

Raise money for LGBTIQ+ charities and causes

[Pride Foundation Australia](#), [Equality Australia](#), [Minus 18](#), [BlaQ](#)



If an issue arises

While you can take steps to create a safe and positive environment, you must also be prepared for what to do if something goes wrong. Having a plan of how to respond to issues, conflict, or discrimination is a vital part of creating a safe volunteering experience for LGBTIQ+ volunteers.

If you make a mistake when referring an LGBTIQ+ person, promptly apologise, correct yourself, and move on. Don't make a big deal out of it, but acknowledge your error.

"I've ask Sammi to help tomorrow. She, sorry I mean they, will arrive at 8am"

If someone else makes a mistake, correct them in a prompt, polite and firm manner. Be sure to allow time for the person to correct themselves, or for the LGBTIQ+ individual to correct them.

"Will Sarah bring her husband to the dinner?", "Sarah has a wife, and I think she is bringing her along to the dinner".

Make sure volunteers know which staff member to talk to if they have a concern

If one of your volunteers tells you that they have experienced mistreatment/discrimination, give them space to share, take their comments seriously, and assure them that you will follow the issue up promptly.

Check in with your volunteer if they have experienced mistreatment. Offer support (help them to get home, call a trusted person, talk it out, or give them space to process). Ask them how they would like the situation to be remedied. Some people appreciate direct apologies, others may want some time away from the perpetrator. Let them be involved in the remediation to the level they feel comfortable with.

When speaking with someone who has behaved inappropriately, let them know that their behaviour is not acceptable, explain the effects of their behaviour, tell them what they must do to remedy their behaviour and to improve in future, and inform them of the consequences if they don't change their actions.

"The comment you made towards Tash was not appropriate. They have come here to enjoy themselves, and what you said made them feel unsafe. You need to apologise for your actions, and ensure that you do not make any comments like that again. If you continue to say things of that nature, you will not be able to volunteer here".



Policies and procedures

It's important the gender and sexual diversity is appropriately covered in your organisations policies and procedures. This ensures that fair treatment of people who identify within the LGBTQIA+ community is embedded in your organisation, and actions can be guided by a clear framework.

Have a clear diversity and inclusion policy that specifically references individuals who identify within the LGBTQIA+ community.

Protect employees and volunteers right to gender and sexual identity and expression.

Ensure diversity and inclusion are embedded into all organisational policy and procedures, such as HR, recruitment, training, and communication.

Specifically outline that any discrimination on the ground of gender or sexual identity will not be tolerated. You may wish to outline what qualifies as discrimination, and/or refer to legislation such as the Equal Opportunity Act 1984.

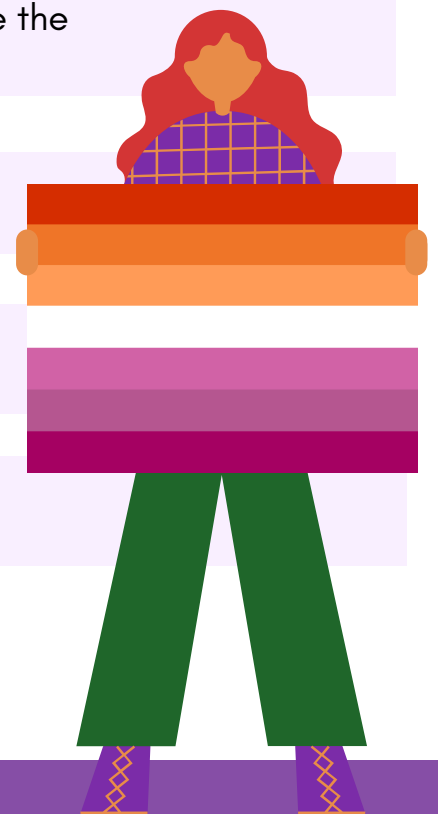
Formalise fair treatment of LGBTQIA+ individuals by outlining expected practice in organisational procedures (e.g. avoiding bias in recruitment, using correct terminology, not disclosing another person's gender or sexual identity without express permission).

When conducting research of your workforce or client base, include optional questions about gender and sexual identity. This can help to demonstrate the necessity of LGBTQIA-specific policies and practice.

Consider creating a procedure so an employee or volunteer can take time off for gender-affirming procedures.

Consider a policy for how to change documentation to reflect an employee or volunteer's change in name.

A more detailed guide to LGBTQIA+ policy created by The Equality Project Australia can be found [here](#).



Lesbian Flag

Training for staff and volunteers

There are many training options to help you, your organisation, staff and volunteers become more informed about the LGBTIQ+ community. Organisation-wide training (including volunteers) is a good way to create an inclusive, informed and positive environment.

Workplace training - Bfriend, Uniting Communities

LGBTIQ+ people may find it difficult to be open about their sexuality or gender identity, often fearful of receiving poor or discriminatory treatment because of it. Our free, comprehensive workplace training encourages a better understanding of the needs of LGBTIQ+ people.

www.unitingcommunities.org/service/community-support/lgbtiqa-support

Foundations of LGBTI Inclusion, ShineSA

This course covers topics such as gender diversity, inclusive language and anti-discrimination laws. We look at key areas of focus for increasing awareness and cultural sensitivity, creating a safe and inclusive environment and where to access further resources and support.

www.shinesa.org.au/activity/foundations-of-lgbti-inclusion/

LGBTIQ+ Understanding and Awareness - Catalyst Foundation

An introductory workplace training aimed to increase understanding of language relevant to working with LGBTIQ+ communities, and increase awareness of issues facing LGBTIQ+ people in accessing services and support

www.catalystfoundation.com.au/lgbtiqa/lgbtiqa-professional-training/

Silver Rainbow LGBTI Aged Care Awareness training - COTA SA

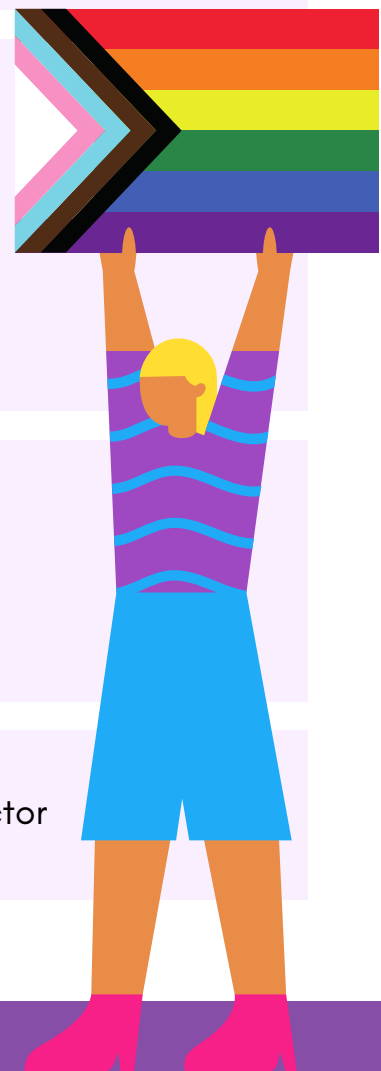
Assists organisations to meet new requirements to provide safe and inclusive care for older LGBTIQ+ people.

www.cotasa.org.au/programs-and-services/rainbow-hub/silver-rainbow

LGBTIQ+ Disability Inclusion Training - ColourFull Abilities

Learn about LGBTIQ+ inclusive practice specific to the disability sector

www.sites.google.com/view/colourfullabilities/inclusive-training



Rainbow Tick accreditation



The Rainbow Tick is a quality framework that helps health and human services organisations show that they are safe, inclusive and affirming services and employers for the LGBTIQ+ community. The Rainbow Tick standards, owned and developed by Rainbow Health Australia, are designed to build lasting LGBTIQ+ inclusion.

Accreditation is provided through independent assessment, provided by Quality Innovation Performance and Australian Council on Healthcare Standards.

Accreditation is structured by the following six standards:

- **Organisational capability** An organisation must be able to demonstrate that it has embedded LGBTIQ+ inclusive practices across all of its systems and continuously seeks out opportunities for improvements.
- **Workforce development** All staff and volunteers understand their responsibilities to LGBTIQ+ consumers and are trained and able to deliver LGBTIQ+ inclusive services.
- **Consumer participation** LGBTIQ+ consumers are consulted and participate in the planning, development, and review of the organisation's services.
- **A welcoming and accessible organisation** LGBTIQ+ consumers can easily and confidently access services as the physical and virtual environments including information, structures, resources and processes, are welcoming.
- **Disclosure and documentation** LGBTIQ+ consumers, staff and volunteers feel safe providing personal information, including their sexual orientation, gender identity and/or intersex status, because they know information will be treated respectfully and that there are systems in place to ensure their privacy.
- **Culturally safe and acceptable services** Services and programs identify, assess, and manage risks to ensure the cultural safety of LGBTIQ+ consumers.

To find out more, or to begin the process of becoming accredited, visit

www.rainbowhealthaustralia.org.au/rainbow-tick



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