



How to be an active ally for LGBTIQ+ people

Equality for LGBTIQ+ Victorians can be achieved if we all do our bit

Everyone, regardless of sexual orientation, gender identity or sex characteristics, can be an ally by supporting and advocating for the equal treatment of lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans and gender diverse, intersex and queer (LGBTIQ+) people.

Being a good ally means championing LGBTIQ+ communities, being aware of inequality and calling it out where it exists and creating safe and inclusive spaces. Above all, it means listening to the communities' experiences, and affirming and elevating their voices.

It's important to know that our LGBTIQ+ communities are diverse and have varied experiences. LGBTIQ+ people may also face different layers and types of discrimination or disadvantage based on the many intersecting parts of their identities, including ethnicity, language, faith, class, socioeconomic status, ability, and age.

The journey to become an ally can be uncomfortable, as it involves being willing to confront and regularly check-in on your own assumptions, prejudices, and biases. Be okay with that, and keep trying, as by doing your part to become the best ally you can be, you help create a stronger and more inclusive Victoria.

Research

A good starting point is understanding the history and challenges faced by LGBTIQ+ people through your own research, which will help you work out how you can be more supportive. Seek to learn what has been done before, what has worked, and what still needs to change so everyone is safe, supported, and equal.

Taking the time to do this research yourself can remove some of the emotional labour of LGBTIQ+ communities, which can be energy consuming for LGBTIQ+ communities to educate others on their lives.

Major shifts towards equality for LGBTIQ+ Victorians in recent years include same-sex couples being able to adopt children (2016) and get married (2017); and trans and gender diverse Victorians being able to change the record of sex shown on their birth certificates without the need for gender reassignment surgery (2019).

Reading the strategy – *Pride in our future: Victoria's LGBTIQ+ strategy 2022-32* – is a great place to start. Read the strategy at **Pride in our future: Victoria's LGBTIQ+ strategy 2022-32**
<<https://www.vic.gov.au/pride-our-future-victorias-lgbtqi-strategy-2022-32>>



Listen

If LGBTIQ+ people are comfortable to share their stories, listen with an open mind to their voices and experiences – they're the experts on their own lives. Be sure to create safe and comfortable spaces to allow their voices to be heard and affirmed. It's also good to remember that the experiences of the individual can vary from others within LGBTIQ+ communities, which are very diverse.

Call out inappropriate behaviour

If you feel safe to, speak up when you encounter hurtful language, harmful stereotyping, jokes or inappropriate behaviour. If someone else is already calling it out, add your voice in support. You don't need to tolerate disrespect.

Respect people's pronouns

It's okay to not know which pronouns someone uses, if you're unsure, just ask! Try not to assume based on their appearance. Use those pronouns and encourage others to do so too. It's okay if you make a mistake – just be sure to correct yourself and move on.

Don't ask if you don't have to

We all have a right to privacy. We should only have to reveal as much of ourselves as we want to and feel safe doing. Take your cues from how someone talks about themselves, their family, and their relationships. If someone wants you to know, they will tell you.

Use gender neutral language

Our everyday words and phrases are often gendered unnecessarily and it's easy to use an alternative. For example, addressing a group with 'welcome ladies and gentlemen', assumes genders and may exclude people.

A simple switch to 'hi everyone' or 'welcome friends' includes everyone.

Keep trying

No one will get the language right 100 per cent of the time for 100 per cent of people. The important thing is to keep doing your best to get it right. If you get it wrong, acknowledge your mistake, apologise and try to avoid the same error again.

Make your workplace more inclusive

There are many ways to help everyone feel safe and comfortable at work. Simple moves such as encouraging staff to include their pronouns in their email signature block and celebrating diversity days are a good place to start.

To receive this document in another format, **email the Equality Unit** <equality@dffh.vic.gov.au>.

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Available at **VIC.GOV.AU How to be an active ally for LGBTIQ+ people**
<vic.gov.au/how-be-active-ally-lgbtq-people>