

# LGBTIQA+

## Gender Diversity/Transgender



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### What is Gender?

From a young age, most of us are taught the idea that there are two genders (Gender Binary) that someone can be born as; a boy or a girl and this often comes with expectations around how a person should act and feel based on their sex assigned at birth. However, not everyone fits into the male or female 'box' to which they are assigned.

Gender refers to a person's internalised sense of self (the way someone feels inside) which may be feminine, masculine, neither, both or moving around freely. This is different to someone's sex which is a person's physical characteristics at birth.

### What is Gender Diversity or Transgender?

When someone is assigned a gender at birth and grows up exclusively identifying with this gender and feels comfortable with this, it is called Cisgender. For example, if someone was assigned a male gender at birth, identifies exclusively as a male throughout their life and feels comfortable with this, they would be a cismale.

When someone is Transgender (sometimes shortened to trans) or gender diverse, it means they do not exclusively identify with the gender they were assigned to at birth. For example, if someone was assigned a male gender at birth but grew up with an internal sense of self that feels more feminine or like a woman, they may decide to affirm their gender (also known as transition) so that they are referred to and perceived as a woman.

Gender identity can be fluid. Sometimes, people may not identify with either a male or female gender or may move between genders. This is called gender diverse, gender fluid or non-binary.

It's important to remember that over time, someone's relationship with their gender may also change. The terms that we use are fluid, may evolve or mean different things to different people.

### What is gender affirmation?

Gender affirmation (also known as transitioning) is when someone makes some changes socially, psychologically, or physically so that they feel more aligned with their gender identity. There are lots of ways someone might affirm their gender, and each are as equally as valid as the other. For example, some people might change the pronouns they use to something different, or they might change their name or dress differently.

It's important to remember that each person's gender affirmation journey is unique and is about doing what feels right for the person. For some people, this might be a gradual process, and for others, it might happen quite quickly. Someone may change genders frequently or decide not to make any changes. It is all about the person doing what is right for them.

## What is Gender Dysphoria?

Gender Dysphoria is an intense discomfort a trans person may feel about physical attributes, or the way other people gender them. Dysphoria can be really overwhelming at times, and can occur on a social, physical or emotional level.

Not all trans and gender diverse people experience dysphoria and whether people do experience it or not doesn't make them any more or less trans or gender diverse.

It's important that if a trans or gender diverse person who is experiencing gender dysphoria that they seek help from their support network or service providers so that they aren't alone in dealing with it.

## Coming out as Trans or Gender Diverse

For some people, part of the gender affirmation journey is coming out socially as trans or gender diverse. There are lots of ways someone might come out as trans and coming out will look different for everyone. Some people may choose not to come out at all.

If someone is considering coming out to the people around them, it can be a good idea to make sure they have some good supports around them. This could be a friend or family member that the person really trusts, or a service or professional support person to whom the person is linked.

If someone is considering coming out, it's important that they remember that this is their journey and what it looks like is up to them. Gender affirmation is a unique process and people should do what feels right for them.

## Where can I go for more information?

If you would like information or resources to support you on this journey, please speak to your case manager or a VACCA staff member, who can follow this up with VACCA's LGBTIQ+ Team.

If you would like more information on developing your identity or want to know what services are available to support you, you can visit <https://www.deadlystory.com/page/identity/LGBTQIA>

If you would like to connect with VACCA's Senior Quality Advisor, LGBTIQ+, you can do so by emailing [rainbow@vacca.org](mailto:rainbow@vacca.org)

