

A LANGUAGE GUIDE: TRANS AND GENDER DIVERSE INCLUSION

Trans and gender diverse communities are disproportionately affected by prejudice-motivated discrimination and violence.

The health and wellbeing outcomes of people with trans and gender diverse experience are directly related to transphobic stigma, prejudice, discrimination and abuse, including when incorrect language is used, often unknowingly.

The guide explains key terms and offers examples of language that can help us build safer, more inclusive environments for trans and gender diverse communities.

TRANS AND GENDER DIVERSE: These are umbrella terms that describe people whose gender is different to the legal sex that was assigned to them at birth.

Trans people may position 'being trans' as a history or experience, rather than an identity, and consider their gender identity as simply being female, male or a non-binary identity. Some trans people connect strongly with their trans experience, whereas others do not. The processes of transition may or may not be part of a trans or gender diverse person's life.

Terms such as 'cross dresser' and 'transvestite' aren't typically used by trans and gender diverse people to describe their gender experience.

NON-BINARY: Genders that sit within or outside of the spectrum of the male and female binary are non-binary.

A person might identify solely as non-binary, or relate to non-binary as an umbrella term and consider themselves genderfluid, genderqueer, trans masculine, trans feminine, agender, bigender, or something else.

TRANSITION/GENDER AFFIRMING: The personal process or processes a trans or gender diverse person determines is right for them in order to live as their defined gender and so that society recognises this. Transition may involve social, medical/surgical and/or legal steps that affirm a person's gender.

Affirming gender doesn't mean changing gender, 'having a sex change' or 'becoming a man or a woman', and transition isn't the same as being trans. A trans or gender diverse person who hasn't medically or legally affirmed their gender is no less the man, woman or non-binary person they've always been.

CISGENDER: A term used to describe people whose gender is the same as that assigned to them at birth (male or female). 'Cis' is a Latin term meaning 'on the same side as'.

GENDER EXPERIENCES: Trans, transgender, gender diverse, cis and cisgender are all experiences of gender and are distinct from male, female and non-binary gender identities.

AFAB/DFAB: Assigned female at birth/designated female at birth.

AMAB/DMAB: Assigned male at birth/designated male at birth.

GENDER DYSPHORIA: The distress or unease sometimes experienced from being misgendered and/or when someone's gender and body personally don't feel connected or congruent.

Gender dysphoria does not equal being trans or gender diverse, many trans and gender diverse people do not experience gender dysphoria. If they do, it may cease with access to gender affirming healthcare (if medical transition is desired). With or without the presence of gender dysphoria, being trans and/or gender diverse is not a mental illness.

LEGAL SEX: The marker or classification recorded when a child's birth is registered. In NSW, this is either M or F at birth and can later be amended to either M, F or X.

SEX CHARACTERISTICS: Physical parts of the body that are related to body development/regulation and reproductive systems. Primary sex characteristics are gonads, chromosomes, genitals and hormones. Secondary sex characteristics emerge at puberty and can include the development of breast tissue, voice pitch, facial and pubic hair etc.

The term 'sex characteristics' is more accurate than 'biological sex', 'biologically male' or 'biologically female'.

Physical organs and chromosomes should not be gendered as male or female, the gendering of body parts is a significant source of stigma, discrimination and pathologisation.

CISGENDERISM/CISSEXISM: Where something is based on a discriminatory social or structural view that positions (either intentionally or otherwise) the trans experience as either not existing or as something to be pathologised.

Cissexism believes that gender identity is determined at birth and is a fixed and innate identity that is based on sex characteristics (or 'biology') and that only binary (male or female) identities are valid and real.

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YAY: “LGBTI people when compared to the general population” Trans and gender diverse people have any sexual orientation including heterosexual, queer, lesbian, gay, bisexual, pansexual, asexual etc.

NAY: “LGBTI people when compared with their heterosexual peers”

YAY: Trans and gender diverse, transgender, trans person

NAY: Trans*, transgendered, transgenderism, tranny, pre-op/post-op, sex & gender diverse. ‘Transgender’ is an adjective, not a noun or verb. It shouldn’t be used on its own, e.g. ‘a trans’ or ‘the transgender’

YAY: Transitioning, affirming gender

NAY: Transing, transgendering, trans’d

YAY: Men, women and non-binary people

NAY: Men, women and trans

YAY: Gender-affirming healthcare, transition-related healthcare

NAY: Gender reassignment, sex change, sex reassignment

YAY: Gay and bi men (cis and trans)

NAY: Gay, bi and trans men

YAY: Man, man with a trans experience, trans man

NAY: Transman (as in tallman instead of tall man)

YAY: Sex characteristics include chromosomes, hormones, gonads and genitals. Body parts don’t have genders.

NAY: Biological sex is male, female or intersex, biologically male, biologically female

YAY: Ask: “What is your pronoun?”

NAY: “What is your preferred pronoun?”

YAY: Woman, woman with a trans experience, trans woman

NAY: Transwoman (as in tallwoman instead of tall woman)

YAY: Think: “Would I ask a cisgender person this?”

NAY: “Have you had the surgery?” / “Tell me more about your genitals?” / “What is your real name?”