

# LGBTI fact sheet - Glossary

Key terms relevant to the content of the eLearning module and these fact sheets are defined in *Fact sheet 2a Introduction*. Refer to this glossary for definitions of other terms.

**Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Sistergirl and Brotherboy** - describe the cultural, lived experience for some Indigenous Australians who do not sit within the binary gender or sexuality definitions of the dominant culture. The terms Brotherboy and Sistergirl do not fit western definitions of transgender and may incorporate an umbrella definition of concepts beyond western understanding.

**Affirmed gender** – is the gender by which one wishes to be known. The term replaces terms such as 'new gender' or 'chosen gender' which imply that the current gender was not always a person's gender or that their gender was chosen rather than simply in existence.

**Acquired immune deficiency syndrome (AIDS)** – is not a virus but a set of symptoms (or syndrome) caused by the HIV virus. A person is said to have AIDS when their immune system is too weak to fight infection, and they develop certain defining symptoms and illnesses. This is the last stage of HIV, when the infection is very advanced, and if left untreated will lead to death (also see HIV below).

**Androgynous** – a term used to describe a person whose gender expression and/or identity may be neither distinctly 'female' nor 'male,' usually based on appearance.

**Asexual** – is sexuality generally characterised by not feeling sexual attraction or desire for partnered sexuality although some asexual people do have sex. Asexuality is distinct

from celibacy which is the deliberate abstention from sexual activity.

**Assigned sex** – is the sex assigned to an infant at birth based on the child's visible sex organs, including genitalia and other physical characteristics.

**Binary** – refers to the traditional understanding of sex and gender as two distinct, opposite and disconnected forms of male/masculine and female/feminine. The gender binary is a social system that assumes gender is fixed and all individuals must identify as masculine or feminine, leaving no room for variation.

**Biphobia** – describes fear, hatred or intolerance of bisexual people.

**Cisgender** – is a term used to describe people who have a gender typically associated with their sex assigned at birth.

**Closeted/in the closet** – refers to undisclosed sexuality or gender identity. This is the opposite to being 'out' (see below). The person may hide their sexual orientation and gender identity from all others, or only in specific circumstances such as at work, from their parents, from health professionals or in certain social situations.

**Coming out/being out/out** – describes voluntarily acknowledging one's own sexuality or gender identity. A person's own acknowledgement may be referred to as coming out to yourself, preceding coming out to others. An individual may be out in some aspects of their life but not in others, e.g. with close friends but not with their family of origin. Publicly identifying one's orientation may or may not be part of coming out.

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**Community** – in the LGBTI context describes a subset of society composed of people who are not heterosexual. This could be any combination of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender or intersex people. A community can provide important support for LGBTI peoples however, isolated older LGBTI peoples and/or people living in rural and remote areas may not be part of a community.

**Crossdresser** – refers to a person who has an inescapable emotional need to express their alternate gender identity via clothing style and to be accepted in that role on a less permanent basis. Crossdressing is a form of gender diversity. Some crossdressers go on to medically transition to their self-identified gender while others may see crossdressing as an identity in and of itself.

**Drag queen/drag king** – is used by people who present socially in clothing, name, and/or pronouns that differ from their everyday gender, usually for enjoyment, entertainment and/or self-expression. Drag queens typically have everyday lives as men and drag kings typically live as women when not performing. Unless they are drag performers, most transgender people would be offended by being confused with drag queens or drag kings.

**Family of choice** – describes the core relationship links that LGBTI peoples may form with significant others possibly due to isolation or rejection from their biological families. A person's family of choice consists of those who are chosen to be part of their family such as same-sex partners or a community of trusted friends who provide support similar to that of many other people's biological family.

**Family of origin/biological family** – are people related by birth or marriage, including parents, siblings, aunt, uncles, nephews and nieces.

**Friend** – may be used to refer to a same-sex partner.

**Gender affirmation/gender validation** – refers to an interpersonal, interactive process whereby a person receives social recognition and support for their gender identity and expression.

**Gender-affirming surgery (GAS) or Gender-affirming healthcare** – refers to surgical procedures and/or treatment that support people to adjust their bodies in a way that more closely matches their innate gender identity. This can include hormone treatment and psychological assistance. Not every transgender person will desire or have resources for surgery or treatment. This term should be used in place of the older and offensive term 'sex change'. In clinical settings this process may be referred to as sexual reassignment surgery (SRS), genital reconstruction surgery or surgical transition.

**Gender dysphoria** – (previously known as Gender Identity Disorder) is a medical term used at times to explain transgender people and biological theories that result in a difference between the gender a person identifies with and the physical sex attributes of their body.

**Gender expression** – refers to how a person expresses their gender. This may refer to how an individual dresses, their general appearance, the way they speak, and/or the way they carry themselves. Gender expression is not always correlated with a person's gender identity or gender role.

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**Gender Identity Disorder (GID)** – a controversial DSM-IV diagnosis given to transgender and other gender-variant people. Because it labels people as 'disordered,' this outdated term is considered offensive and was replaced with gender dysphoria in the updated DSM-V.

**Gender neutral** – describes facilities that any person can use regardless of their gender such as gender neutral bathrooms. The term can also be used to describe an individual who does not subscribe to any socially constructed gender, sometimes referred to as 'gender queer' (see below).

**Gender queer** – describes a person who identifies as a gender that is not necessarily male, female or viewed in a binary manner. Gender queer people may identify as masculine, feminine, androgynous, bi-gendered or partially male or female in varied ratios. Gender queer people may be third gendered or reject gender roles altogether. Some gender queer people also access medical services to 'transition'.

**Gender role** – is a societal expectation of how an individual should act, think and/or feel based upon an assigned gender in relation to society's binary biological sex system.

**Gender non-conforming/gender-variant** – describes a person who is, or is perceived to have gender characteristics that do not conform to traditional or society's expectations.

**Heteronormative** – is a commonly held view that assumes heterosexuality (straight) is the only valid form of sexuality and therefore excludes other diverse identities and experiences, e.g. LGBTI.

**Homophobia** – describes a fear of lesbians and gay men. **Prejudice** is usually a more accurate description of hatred or antipathy toward LGBTI peoples.

**Human immunodeficiency virus (HIV)** – is a virus that attacks the immune system, which is our body's natural defence against illness. If HIV is left untreated, it may take up to 10 or 15 years for the immune system to be so severely damaged it can no longer defend itself at all. The symptoms and illnesses associated with advanced HIV infection or late-stage HIV is referred to as acquired immune deficiency syndrome (AIDS). Although there is currently no cure for HIV with the right treatment and support, people with HIV can live long and healthy lives.

**Lifestyle** – an inaccurate term used by anti-gay extremists to denigrate lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender lives. As there is no one straight lifestyle, there is no one lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender lifestyle.

**Men who have sex with men** – is used primarily in the health care field to classify men who identify as heterosexual, but engage in sexual activity with other men.

**Monosexism** – describes the belief that people can only be either heterosexual or gay/lesbian i.e., one or the other and that only monosexual identities are legitimate.

**Non-binary** – describes any gender identity which does not fit the traditional understanding of sex and gender as two distinct, opposite and disconnected forms of male/masculine and female/feminine.

**Openly gay** – describes people who self-identify as lesbian or gay in their personal, public and/or professional lives. Also *openly lesbian, openly bisexual, openly transgender*.

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**Outing** – publicly declaring (sometimes based on rumour and/or speculation) or revealing another person's sexual orientation or gender identity without their consent. This is considered inappropriate by a large portion of the LGBT community.

**Pansexual, omnisexual, pomosexual** – referring to attraction to all. These terms express acceptance of all gender possibilities including transgender and intersex people.

**Pronouns** – a person's pronouns are typically used in context instead of their name when talking to or about that person. In English, the singular pronouns that we use most frequently are gendered (e.g. she/he, her/him), which can create an issue for transgender and gender-nonconforming people, who may use gender neutral or gender-inclusive pronouns. Some people use 'they' and 'their' as gender-neutral singular pronouns and others use their names as their pronoun. Other commonly used singular gender-neutral pronouns are 'ze' (or 'zie') and 'hir'. The term 'preferred pronoun' can be offensive as it implies the person is making a gender choice.

**Queer** – an umbrella term that includes a range of alternative sexual and gender identities. The term queer has been used by some LGBTI people to describe themselves, however older people may find the term offensive, as it was traditionally a derogatory term. When a person uses this term to describe themselves or others, it is often helpful to speak with them about what 'queer' means for them, as it is not universally accepted even within the LGBTI community. It should be avoided unless a person self-identifies that way.

**Questioning** – describes the process of considering or exploring one's sexuality and/or gender identity. This includes those considering living as another gender and those who may wish to have no gender assigned to them at all.

**Sexual behaviour** – refers to an individual's sexual activities or actions. A person's sexual orientation is often in line with their sexual behaviour but not always.

**Sexual minority** – is an all-inclusive, politically oriented term referring to individuals who identify with a minority sexual orientation, sex identity, or gender expression/gender identity.

**Sexual preference** – refers to an individual's choice in regards to attraction. Sexual preference can be based on gender/sex, physical appearance (height, weight, race, ethnicity) or emotional connection. When referring to the LGBTI population, the term is considered offensive and should be avoided as it suggests that being gay, lesbian or bisexual is a 'choice' or 'preference'.

**Sex reassignment surgery (SRS)** – refers to surgical alteration and is only one small part of transition (see *Transition and Gender-affirming surgery*). Not all transgender people choose to or can afford to have SRS. This term is preferred to 'sex change operation'.

**Straight** – a pop culture term used to refer to people who identify as a heterosexual, meaning having a sexual, emotional, physical and relational attraction to individuals of the 'opposite' gender/sex. The term 'straight' often has a negative connotation within the LGBTI population,

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because it suggests that non-heterosexual individuals are 'crooked' or 'unnatural'.

**Transvestite** – an umbrella term which refers to people who wear the clothing of the 'opposite' gender. These people can be transgender, transsexual, cross dressers, drag performers or individuals who express their gender in a unique way. The term is often thought to be outdated, problematic, and offensive since it was historically used to diagnose medical/mental health disorders.

**Transition** – describes both a public act and a process. It involves the permanent and public adoption of the style and presentation of the gender opposite to that of a person's sex assigned at birth. It usually includes a change of name, chosen style of address and pronouns as well as adopting the dress and style of presentation of their innate gender. The term also describes the process of changing one's lived gender by permanently changing one's body. For transsexual people this is a process of cosmetic procedures as well as cross-sexed hormone replacement therapy (HRT) and surgical intervention, previously referred to as sex or gender reassignment surgery, now called gender affirmation surgery. The use of HRT, with or without surgical intervention, is usually referred to as medically assisted gender reassignment. Not all who transition undergo medically assisted gender reassignment. Some transgender people remove facial and body hair and take cross-sexed hormones only (also see *transgender*, *transsexual*).

**Transphobia** – describes fear, hatred or intolerance of transgender people.

**Transsexual person** – describes a person who identifies as a member of the 'opposite' sex, i.e. other than their birth sex. Transsexual people typically seek hormone therapy and often surgery to bring their body into line with their gender identity and transition from one sex to another. Some transgender people may identify as transsexual.

**Transman/transgender man** – refers to a person who has transitioned from a woman to a man. Some may prefer to be referred to as 'female to male' (FTM or F2M) or simply, a man.

**Transwoman/transgender woman** – refers to a person who has transitioned from a man to a woman. Some may prefer to be referred to as 'male to female' (MTF or M2F) or simply, a woman.

## References

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Consultation for all aspects of this project was undertaken with consumers, Government representatives, LGBTI peak bodies, researchers, experts and those experienced in providing services to LGBTI peoples with dementia. An advisory group was established to provide expert guidance throughout the project.

This project was funded by a grant from the DCRC Knowledge Translation Program. Additional benefactors from the LGBTI community are gratefully acknowledged.

See *Fact sheet 1 – Overview* for details.