

SCHOOL WIDE



Affirming diversity

Affirmation of diversity is a fundamental value that must underpin the culture of a school. Without it the school is not safe for LGBTIQA+ students and staff. Teachers need to explicitly model respect for diversity.

Below is a summary of initiatives identified by the PPTA Rainbow Taskforce to promote a culture of respect and affirmation for diverse school community members.

Role modelling

There is considerable evidence that a school that is safe and welcoming for LGBTIQA+ staff will also be a positive learning environment for LGBTIQA+ students.

Knowing there are LGBTIQA+ teachers can help students come to terms with their own sexuality or gender identity. It also helps other students to improve their attitudes to LGBTIQA+ people. All teachers need to take care about how much of their identity and personal life they share in class. However, it is important that the school culture is such that teachers can be open about their sexuality or gender identity. By enabling a safe space for this to occur students will see that being LGBTIQA+ is not something to be ashamed of.

Creating communities

“Coming out” as LGBTIQA+ is a complicated and continual process. Schools are encouraged to create an environment in which students can feel safe and supported to express their sexual and gender identities when they choose.

Helping students find a like-minded community can support students in resolving feelings of isolation and reaffirm the school as a place where they are valued. Providing a safe space for a diversity group (Rainbow Group/Queer-Straight Alliance) to meet means LGBTIQA+ students can connect with supportive peers.

Providing choice in school uniforms

Gendered uniforms reinforce gender stereotypes. The easiest way to remove uniform-based gender disparity is to allow all students to choose from a range of shorts, trousers and skirts of different lengths and styles. Students struggling with their gender identity and/or sexuality face a number of barriers to acceptance, and having to ask permission to wear the “opposite” uniform to their perceived gender can be a daunting prospect for young and vulnerable students.

Schools can play a supportive role by empowering students to choose their level of expression. Non-binary uniform options provide a safe space for transitioning students.

Safe changing rooms and toilets

The importance of gender neutral facilities has received a great deal of attention lately, with gender diverse students highlighting the prevalence of bullying and perceived threat of physical harm when using shared gender-specific facilities.

Schools are urged to create environments in which the safety and dignity of gender diverse staff and students can be maintained. Schools are encouraged to do so in a way that maximises opportunities for personal privacy. Individual toilet and shower units with lockable doors and floor to ceiling divisions are safe spaces.

Promoting active supervision and inclusive coaching practices

Supervising teachers, sports managers and coaches can play a role in ending homophobic, biphobic and transphobic behaviour. The best way to support LGBTIQA+ teammates is by facilitating ways in which teammates can become allies. Coaches and managers need to make it clear that LGBTIQA+ athletes are welcome and that homophobic, biphobic and transphobic humour and slurs are unacceptable. Coaches must be provided the support they need to feel confident affirming diversity.