

# LGBTIQ+ Diversity in the ACT Public Service

## Introduction

Under the ACTPS Respect, Equity and Diversity (RED) Framework, the principle of Diversity involves recognising the value of individual differences and integrating these into the workplace, including characteristics such as sex, gender, language, ethnicity, cultural background, age, religious belief, sexual orientation and family responsibilities, and other ways in which people are different from each other.

LGBTIQ+ is an acronym usually used to refer to people with diverse sex, sexualities, and gender identities; that is, the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex, and/or Queer community, as well as people who might use other terms. A person's bodily diversity, sexuality and gender identity are simply ways in which people are different from each other and another aspect of diversity in the workplace.

A person's gender identity and expression, and sexuality may be fluid and may change over time. Some people may have variations in sex characteristics. Rather than viewing concepts of sex and gender identity as 'one or the other', or categorising people into binary or rigid definitions, it can be useful to think of sex, sexuality and gender identity as concepts with a range of possibilities. Some of these possibilities (not all!) include:

**Diverse sex** – Sex refers to biological sex characteristics such as chromosomes, physical anatomy, and hormone systems. Most people have bodies that fit into medical and social norms for male or female bodies, but some people are born with variations in their sex characteristics. These people can be called intersex. Most intersex people identify as a man or a woman, but they might have bodies that are a little bit different or diverse because of their intersex variation.

**Diverse gender identity** – Gender identity is a sense of self that describes who we understand ourselves to be and how we want to interact with the world. Most people have a gender identity is aligned with the sex assigned, or presumed, for them at birth. These people are called cisgender. Some people have a gender identity that is different to sex that was assigned or presumed for them at birth and might use a term like transgender or trans to describe themselves. Some of these people might identify in a binary way as a trans woman or trans man, or some people might identify as non-binary or use another term to describe their gender identity.

**Diverse gender expression** – Gender expression refers to the way someone choose to publicly present or communicate their gender. For example, this might be through their dress and clothing, hair, make-up, body language and mannerisms, or through the language they ask other people to refer to them with - like pronouns. People who are trans or non-binary might change their gender expression to better align with who they are when they come out. Someone's gender expression might be different to their gender identity, and some people may have a fluid gender expression that changes or fluctuates over time.

**Diverse sexuality** – Sexuality refers to our romantic and sexual attraction to others. Many people are straight, which means they are exclusively romantically and sexually interested in the opposite gender. Some people who are not straight might use a range of terms to describe their sexuality, including (but not limited to) lesbian, gay, bisexual, pansexual, asexual, or queer. See the glossary resource for more information about these terms.

## Why is LGBTIQ+ Inclusion good for the ACTPS?

LGBTIQ+ Inclusion aligns with the ACTPS commitment to the principles of Respect, Equity and Diversity, and is a natural progression in our journey towards inclusivity of all employees from diverse backgrounds, cultures and experiences. LGBTIQ+ Inclusion also aligns with the Head of Service's commitment to building a flexible, agile and responsive ACTPS. Creating positive work cultures where diversity is the means by which we generate new ideas and improve upon previous efforts is essential in meeting this goal.

In addition, LGBTIQ+ Inclusion simply makes good business sense. In the case of the ACTPS, building a workforce that is truly reflective of the diverse community in which we serve will enable us to deliver an improved service to the diverse ACT community. Furthermore, with an increasing number of organisations committing to LGBTIQ+ inclusion, there's less and less need for people to work for organisations that are *not* inclusive. Promoting the ACTPS as a diverse and inclusive workforce is one way in which the ACTPS can improve its ability to attract and retain people from a wider pool of talent.

Studies have also shown that staff who feel they can be open about their sexuality, gender identity or intersex status are far more likely to enjoy going to work, feel free to be themselves, form honest relationships with their colleagues, be more confident and ultimately, *more engaged and more productive*<sup>1</sup>. Numerous studies show that a diverse workforce is also a more productive and innovative one. For example, a recent study found that diversity practices within organisations have a direct positive impact on levels engagement for all employees, not just those employees that belong to a minority group<sup>2</sup>. This highlights the benefits of an inclusive culture for all ACTPS employees, not just those that are LGBTIQ+.

Please refer to the *LGBTIQ+ Glossary* to further inform your understanding of sex and gender diversity.

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<sup>1</sup> A Manager's Guide to LGBTI Workplace Inclusion. Pride in Diversity. P.14

<sup>2</sup> Downey, S., van der Werff, L., Thomas, K. and Plaut, V. (2015). The role of diversity practices and inclusion in promoting trust and employee engagement. *Journal of Applied Social Psychology* 45, pp.35-44.