

ECG FACTSHEET CELEBRATING DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION: WHAT CAN YOU DO TO SUPPORT FELLOW LGBTI COLLEAGUES?



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THE ETHICAL CONSULTING GROUP

RECONSIDER YOUR ASSUMPTIONS

Think about how you frame personal questions and statements in the workplace. Asking someone if they have a 'partner' is a more open question than asking someone whether they are 'married'. If asking about someone's partner, you might also refer to the partner as 'they' until that person indicates whether their partner is a 'he' or 'she'. For example, ask 'what do they do for a living' rather than 'what does he/she do for a living'.

GET INVOLVED!

Consider celebrating LGBTI recognised days or events in the workplace, such as:

- **IDAHO Day (International Day Against Homophobia, Transphobia and Biphobia)**. Celebrated annually on 17th May across the globe.
- **SpringOUT**: Canberra's Annual Queer Cultural Festival.
- **Transgender Day of Remembrance**. Held annually in November, this day is an opportunity for communities to come together and remember transgender people, gender-variant individuals, and those perceived to be transgender, who have suffered acts of violence.
- **Intersex Awareness Day**. Held annually on 26 October, this day is intended to raise awareness regarding the challenges faced by intersex individuals, which can include shame, secrecy and unwanted genital surgeries on intersex children.
- **Human Rights Day**. An annual, international celebration to draw attention to, and celebrate, the fundamental proposition in the Universal Declaration that each one of us, everywhere, at all times is entitled to the full range of human rights, that human rights belong equally to each of us and bind us together as a global community with the same ideals and values.

- **Wear it Purple Day**. An annual day celebrated on 28th August, which promotes safety and support for young people in the LGBTI community.

CHAT WITH YOUR LOCAL RED CONTACT OFFICER

Contact your local REDCO to raise suggestions of ways to continue building a positive and inclusive work culture.

GET EDUCATED!

- If you want to know more about LGBTI Inclusion, refer to the links on the ECG LGBTI Inclusion homepage
- Contact the ECG HR Inbox hr@ethicalconsultinggroup.com if you are:
 - an employee seeking support or resources regarding coming out or transitioning in the workplace;
 - a manager seeking more information on LGBTI Inclusion; or
 - seeking additional training on LGBTI Inclusion.

REVIEW YOUR LOCAL POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

Could your policies and procedures directly or indirectly discriminate against LGBTI employees or LGBTI members of the community engaging with your directorate? What changes are needed to make your policies and procedures more inclusive?

Some practical examples of good practices, and less inclusive practices, are outlined below to help you with this process¹.

LGBTI INCLUSION – CASE STUDIES

BISEXUAL

✔ “My employer recently asked me to be the spokesperson for the LGBTI Network. I agreed and was able to inform others about what it means to be bisexual. My organisation has been very respectful and supportive towards me”.

✘ “My manager was aware of my sexual orientation and made jokes to me in passing. I ignored this, but when it came to organising the Christmas party, my manager commented that he would not be inviting me in because no one was safe around me – he laughed and said I might get drunk and hit on all the female and male employees. I felt humiliated”.

GAY

✔ “I hadn’t been explicit about my sexual orientation at work because I wasn’t sure what people would think. When my organisation started an LGBTI Network and implemented some other diversity initiatives, I began to be more open about my sexuality. It was great to see that nothing really changed; I’m still given the same opportunities as anyone else, but now I can chat comfortably to my colleagues about what I did on the weekend with my boyfriend instead of being evasive. It is great to feel safe to be me at work”.

✘ “A promotion opportunity came up in my team and I was not selected. When I asked my manager why, she told me the promotion would involve working with a client who was known to be conservative and that a gay person would put the client ‘offside’. I was shocked and reported this to my HR team, who said they could not do anything and that I had to resolve this issue with my manager directly”.

LESBIAN

✔ “My employer and colleagues have been very supportive of my sexual orientation. They have not excluded me from tasks or projects and include my partner in events where other partners are invited”.

✘ “My team were planning a lunch and didn’t invite me. I overheard a team member say it would be weird if I attended. I asked her about it and she said she didn’t mean anything by it; she didn’t think it would be “my thing” because it was going to be really girly”.

INTERSEX

✔ “Due to needing leave for medical issues, I had to tell my boss I was intersex. I was impressed when she kept that information private – even when the topic came up later in casual conversation with co-workers, she never once hinted that I was intersex. Her discretion and respect for my privacy made me feel safe and comfortable. By guarding my private information about being intersex, she gained my trust and I decided to stay in that job longer than I had planned. I wanted to put my best effort in for a manager whom I could trust and an organisation who was LGBTI inclusive”.

✘ “I was working for a company in another state and the manager heard from someone in the team that there was “something funny about me”. The manager called me into his office and demanded to know what this was about. I told him it was because I was intersex. He demanded that I then stand up in front of all the staff at a team meeting the next morning to explain what an intersex person was. I was so humiliated I called in sick the next day to avoid the team meeting”.

TRANSGENDER

✔ “I recently underwent a transition from female to male and needed to take some time off work. My employer was extremely understanding and supportive during my transition phase, including organising for some training for my team to raise their awareness about transgender, and helping me settle back in once I returned to work. My team was supportive and respected my decision. This was one less thing to be stressed and anxious about during a very important time in my life”.

✘ “I started with a new employer who did not know about me being transgender. I overheard my colleagues talking about me laughing and wondering whether I was a guy. I approached my manager for support, telling him that I was previously a male and now identify myself as a woman and that my colleagues’ behaviour was upsetting to me. From that point on, my manager refused to use my preferred pronouns such as ‘she’ or ‘her’, and asked me to use the disabled bathroom*”.

*Transgender and intersex people have the same rights to use bathroom, toilet and change-room facilities as anybody else. The most appropriate person to decide which facilities to use, is the individual themselves. There is no law that prevents transgender or intersex people from using the facilities of their choice, and it may be unlawful for you to attempt to stop them from doing so. It is not appropriate to ask transgender or intersex people to use disabled or any other particular bathroom/changing facilities.

¹ Some case studies have been adapted from material provided by Pride in Diversity. The ECG also acknowledges the contribution that Transformative Solutions has made to the development of this resource.