

ALLin ally guide





Background

Our Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex and Queer plus (**LGBTIQ+**) network, ALLin, focuses on providing an inclusive workplace where diversity, including identifying as LGBTIQ+, is celebrated. ALLin is for all employees who identify as LGBTIQ+, as well as those employees who are supporters of the LGBTIQ+ community. ALLin provides opportunities for members to build relationships with each other, our clients and the wider LGBTIQ+ community through events, meetings and pro bono legal work.

Allens was the first law firm to become a member of Pride in Diversity, Australia's first and only not-for-profit workplace program designed specifically to assist Australian employers with the inclusion of LGBTIQ+ employees. Allens has also entered into a multi-year partnership with the Pinnacle Foundation, offering a scholarship to young adults who identify as LGBTIQ+. Additionally, Allens was Australia's first major law firm to publicly state its support for marriage equality and has been a gold award AWEI recipient.

We are committed to providing an inclusive workplace, where diversity is celebrated and the contribution that different backgrounds and life experiences bring to our firm is valued. Allens is a signatory to the Australian Law Council's Diversity and Equality Charter, and LGBTIQ+ inclusion is a segment of our firm-wide diversity strategy.

What is an Ally?

An Ally is someone who supports the LGBTIQ+ community, regardless of whether that person identifies as LGBTIQ+ themselves.

Why be an Ally?

Being a visible and vocal Ally is important to building an LGBTIQ+ inclusive culture and supporting LGBTIQ+ colleagues.

While Allens already benefits from fully inclusive workplace policies, you can help actively promote an inclusive workplace. An inclusive environment has been shown to increase firm performance, productivity, engagement and our ability to retain talent. It also makes our workplace a more friendly and enjoyable place to be.

An LGBTIQ+ person is unlikely to disclose sexual orientation or gender identity unless they believe colleagues actively support LGBTIQ+ inclusion. Attempting to avoid disclosure can be an unpleasant and tiring exercise, and can impede the development of positive, authentic and lasting relationships in the workplace and beyond. An inclusive culture is one where, without putting pressure on individuals to 'come out', no one feels the need to hide.

Below are some tips you can follow to help ensure that everyone feels included at Allens.

How to spot an Ally

Anyone can be an Ally. Allies are not necessarily always experts in LGBTIQ+ issues; an Ally is not a counsellor, or someone with ready-made answers or perfect responses. You can be an Ally just by being a friend who is open-minded, is ready to listen and believes that everyone should be treated equally and with respect.

Allies challenge behaviour that is disrespectful or harmful towards LGBTIQ+ people. This includes jokes, assumptions, stereotypes and myths about LGBTIQ+ culture: these comments are harmful. Taking the time to explain that someone's behaviour is inappropriate and why, can be a good way to get people to start thinking about equality and diversity.

Allies use inclusive language. Don't be afraid to learn and use terminology to refer to certain sections of the LGBTIQ+ community – if you're not sure, you can ask 'how do you identify?'; otherwise, you can ask an ALLin member or Ally for help or have a look at the Inclusive Language Guide in this document.

- Consider using non-gender-specific terms like partner or spouse instead of wife, husband etc, when asking colleagues about their personal life if they have not volunteered information about their partner's gender.
- If a person uses a particular pronoun or name, respect their information and address them in this way. If you're not sure what name or pronoun to use, either use gender neutral pronouns such as 'they / them' or politely ask and encourage others to do the same.

Allies create a culture of respect. Allies are clear and consistent in their expectations of everyone's behaviour. If issues arise, LGBTIQ+ employees should feel confident, encouraged and supported to report problems.

Allies are a role model. Allies are authentic when promoting LGBTIQ+ inclusion and set a clear message about championing equality. Trying your best to follow the tips above makes you a great role model for others.

Allies listen and learn. Being actively engaged makes you a better Ally. Continue to keep asking colleagues about their insights and experiences. Take it upon yourself to learn more.

Participation in inclusion activities. Allies actively contribute to building an inclusive workplace by participating in firm-wide and community initiatives that support LGBTIQ+ inclusion. This may include attending and supporting ALLin events and events, encouraging colleagues to engage in inclusion efforts, and contributing to initiatives such as mentoring, pro bono work or community partnerships.





What an Ally avoids

- **Don't make assumptions about someone's sexual orientation or gender identity.** A colleague could be looking for support in their coming-out process. Not making assumptions about them will give them the space they need.
- **Don't 'out' someone without their permission.** Someone's sexual orientation, gender identity or intersex status is very personal information and it is up to them to share it with others. You should not casually share this information or gossip about a person you know or think identifies as LGBTIQ+.
- **Don't tolerate negative LGBTIQ+ remarks or jokes.** If you feel uncomfortable challenging someone in a public space, ask if you can talk to them in private later and explain why their comments are hurtful to other people. Follow up with any of your LGBTIQ+ colleagues who may also have heard the comments to let them know it has been addressed privately – otherwise they may think those kinds of comments reflect the culture at Allens.
- **Don't tell a person what 'category' or 'identity' they fit into.** Do not apply labels or an identity to a person that they have not chosen for themselves. If a person has not decided which identity fits them best, give them time, space and support to decide.
- **Don't ask inappropriate questions.** If it's a question you feel would be inappropriate for a non-identifying colleague, then it is also a question inappropriate for an LGBTIQ+ colleague.
- **Questions to avoid.** Do not ask intrusive or inappropriate questions about a person's identity or history (for example, 'what is the name you were born with?' or questions about a person's gender history), as these are personal and may cause discomfort.
- **Don't expect an LGBTIQA+ person to speak for the community.** Many LGBTIQA+ people get asked a lot of questions about LGBTIQA+ experiences, issues or terminology. While it's good to check in with a person's individual terms, they shouldn't be expected to speak for diverse communities.

Inclusive language guide

What is LGBTIQ+ inclusive language?

The Inclusive language guide is for all Allens employees. It explains how to use language respectfully and inclusively when working with and referring to LGBTIQ+ colleagues and clients. Using inclusive language is imperative in demonstrating respect in our workplace and community by acknowledging the diversity of the people we work with.

How to foster inclusive language

1. Don't assume everyone is heterosexual or cisgender

Don't assume that everyone is heterosexual (straight), or that this is the norm. Avoid using language such as 'wife' or 'husband' that assumes all relationships are heterosexual, as this excludes non-heterosexual people and devalues their relationships. Words and phrases such as 'partner', 'parents', 'relationship', 'in a relationship' are examples of LGBTIQ+ inclusive language.

2. Avoid language that assumes all people are women or men

Whether you are addressing a meeting, writing a letter or greeting someone on the phone, there are various ways you can use language which is welcoming to everyone. For example, you can use terms such as:

- Welcome everyone
- Good morning folks
- Hello all

When addressing people in email or letters, where possible, copy the title the person uses for themselves in their correspondence (i.e. in their email signature). If the person doesn't use a title, don't apply one, and simply address the person by their first and last name.

When speaking to people on the phone, it is important to remember that the sound of a person's voice isn't a reliable indicator of their gender, particularly over the phone. Do not address someone on the phone by gendered terms such as 'madam' or 'sir' if you don't know their gender. Ask and call them by their name.

3. Accept and respect how people identify and define their gender and sexuality

It is important to remember that, no matter what the descriptions below say, you should always use the terms someone uses to describe themselves, rather than making an assumption.

4. Don't use language that suggests being LGBTIQ+ is a choice

Avoid asking people what terms they 'prefer'. Having a 'preference' can sound as if it's a choice and most people do not feel as if they have a choice in these matters. If you need to, you can simply ask people what terms they use.

5. Don't ask if you don't have to

We all have a right to privacy. We should only have to bring as much of our private selves to work as we want to and feel safe doing. Allow yourself to be led by how someone talks about themselves, their family and their relationships. Ask or be guided by them about who to share this information with.

Pronouns

Pronouns are one way people refer to each other and themselves. Most but not all men (including trans men) use the pronoun 'he'. Likewise, most but not all women (including trans women) use the pronoun 'she'. Some people use a gender-neutral pronoun such as 'they' (e.g., 'Pip drives their car to work. They don't like walking because it takes them too long').

If you're unsure what someone's pronoun is, you can ask them respectfully, and preferably privately. Use a question like 'Can I ask what pronoun you use?'. Do not ask 'What pronoun do you prefer?'. A person's pronoun and identity are not a preference. Instead, just ask what pronoun they use.

Some people's pronouns may be context-specific. For example, someone might not use their pronoun in a particular environment or around particular people because they do not feel safe or comfortable to do so.

Understanding terminology can support respectful and inclusive interactions. Terms relating to sexual orientation and gender identity continue to evolve, and individuals may use different language to describe themselves. It is important to be guided by a person's own terminology and avoid assumptions, recognising that identities such as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex and non-binary reflect diverse experiences (see Minus18 guide)

What if I make a mistake?

No one will get the language right 100 percent of the time for 100 per cent of people. People may worry that they will offend or be embarrassed if they use the wrong term, name or pronoun, particularly for trans and gender diverse people.

It's important to try to use respectful language and some mistakes are understandable, particularly when you are learning. If you make a mistake, apologise promptly and move on. Don't dwell on it, and don't give up – keep trying to get it right.

However, repeated mistakes indicate a lack of respect, and can be very distressing. If the use of incorrect terms, names or pronouns continues or is deliberate, it could constitute bullying or discrimination which is unlawful.

Respecting Boundaries

Respecting boundaries and privacy Allies respect personal boundaries and recognise that a person's sexual orientation, gender identity or intersex status is private. Do not 'out' someone or disclose this information without their explicit permission. Be guided by what a person chooses to share, and with whom, and avoid asking questions that may pressure them to disclose personal information. Creating a respectful environment ensures individuals feel safe to be open on their own terms.

Extracted and adapted from:

- GLAAD and MAP's Ally's Guide to Terminology: www.glaad.org/sites/default/files/allys-guide-to-terminology_1.pdf
- The Victorian Government's LGBTIQ Inclusive Language Guide: www.vic.gov.au/sites/default/files/2019-06/LGBTIQ-Inclusive-Language-Guide.pdf
- Minus 18 - Your guide to word and definitions in the LGBTQIA+ community www.minus18.org.au/articles/your-guide-to-words-and-definitions-in-the-lgbtqia+-community/

Commonly used terms

Terms to use	Terms to avoid	Why?
Gay	Homosexual 'Gay' (pejorative or adjective) eg 'that's so gay'.	Gay is an adjective, not a noun. A gay person is romantically and/or sexually attracted to people of the same sex and/or gender as themselves. This term is often used to describe men who are attracted to other men, but some women and gender diverse people may describe themselves as gay. It is important to recognise that many people who identify as bisexual or lesbian do not appreciate being referred to as gay. It is therefore best to avoid using gay as an all-encompassing term, and instead if you need to use a term, use whichever term the person you are speaking with uses to identify themselves.
Lesbian	Gay Homosexual	A lesbian woman is romantically and/or sexually attracted to other women. As mentioned above, many people who identify as lesbian do not appreciate being referred to as gay. It is therefore best to avoid using gay as an all-encompassing term, and instead if you need to use a term, use whichever term the person you are speaking with uses to identify themselves.
Bisexual	Gay Lesbian	A bisexual person is romantically and/or sexually attracted to people of their own gender and other genders. As mentioned above, many people who identify as bisexual do not appreciate being referred to as gay or lesbian. It is therefore best to avoid using gay as an all-encompassing term, and instead if you need to use a term, use whichever term the person you are speaking with uses to identify themselves. It is also inappropriate to suggest to a bisexual person that their sexuality is 'just a phase' and they'll eventually choose to be gay or straight, or to ask what percentage they are attracted to men versus women.
Asexual		An asexual person does not experience sexual attraction, but may experience romantic attraction towards others. It is inappropriate to suggest that an asexual person 'just hasn't found the right person yet'.
Pansexual	Using 'pansexual' as a joke or in a trivialising way'	A pansexual person is romantically and/or sexually attracted to people regardless of gender.
Queer	Queer as used as a slur	Queer is often used as an umbrella term for diverse genders or sexualities. Some people use queer to describe their own gender and/or sexuality if other terms do not fit. However, for some people, especially older LGBTIQ+ people, 'queer' has negative connotations, because in the past it was used as a derogatory term. Queer is not usually a term Allies should use, but is rather a term which is used by LGBTIQ+ people in an empowering way or to describe themselves.

Terms to use	Terms to avoid	Why?
Orientation Sexual orientation	'sexual preference', 'gay lifestyle', 'homosexual lifestyle', 'same-sex attractions', 'sexual identity'	The term 'sexual preference' is used by anti-gay activists to suggest that having a diverse sexual orientation is a choice, and therefore something that can be changed or 'cured'. Similarly, the term 'gay lifestyle' is used to stigmatise gay people and suggest that their lives should be viewed only through a sexual lens. Just as one would not talk about a 'straight lifestyle', don't talk about a 'gay lifestyle'.
Openly gay/bi/trans	'admitted he was gay/bi/trans'	The term 'admitted' suggests prior deception or that being LGBTIQ+ is shameful.
Gender Sex	'gender' and 'sex' are not interchangeable	Although 'gender' and 'sex' are sometimes used interchangeably, this is incorrect. Sex is usually categorized as female or male but there is variation in the biological attributes that comprise sex and how those attributes are expressed. Gender refers to the socially constructed roles, behaviours, expressions and identities of girls, women, boys, men, and gender diverse people.
Sex recorded at birth (or sex assigned at birth)	'assigned x at birth', 'biological sex', 'born a man/woman', 'real sex'	'Sex recorded at birth' recognises that sex is assigned based on physical characteristics at birth and may not reflect a person's gender identity. Terms such as 'biological sex' or 'real sex' can be inaccurate or invalidate a person's identity, and should be avoided in favour of more respectful and precise language.
Intersex	'hermaphrodite'	An intersex person is born with atypical natural variations to physical or biological sex characteristics such as variations in chromosomes, hormones or anatomy. Intersex traits are a natural part of human bodily diversity. Not all intersex people use the term.
Transgender/trans	'transgendered', 'a transgender' (n.), 'transgenders' (n.), 'transexual', 'transvestite', 'tranny'	Transgender is an adjective, not a noun. Be careful not to call someone 'a transgender.' Do not add an unnecessary '-ed' to the term ('transgendered'), which connotes a condition of some kind. Never use the term 'transvestite' or 'transexual' to describe a transgender person. These are historical and outdated terms that are considered offensive today.
Sistergirl Brotherboy	misusing these terms outside of their cultural context or as interchangeable with Western terminology	Sistergirl and Brotherboy are culturally specific terms used by some Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to describe gender diverse identities. These terms reflect distinct cultural understandings of gender, community roles and relationships. They may also be used more broadly in some communities as terms of familiarity or endearment, and not always to describe gender identity. Not all First Nations people who are transgender use these terms, and they should only be used respectfully and where appropriate.

Terms to use	Terms to avoid	Why?
Gender affirmation	‘sex change’, ‘sex-change operation’, ‘pre-operative’/ ‘post-operative’, ‘pre-op’/‘post-op’, ‘transition’	Gender affirmation is the process where a trans or gender diverse person takes steps to socially and/or physically feel more aligned with their gender. For people affirming their gender, having their gender recognised at work can be an integral part of this process. Gender affirmation is the accurate term that does not fixate on surgeries, which many transgender people do not or cannot undergo. Terms like ‘pre-op’ or ‘post-op’ unnecessarily fixate on a person’s anatomy and should be avoided. If you are specifically discussing surgery in an appropriate context, the appropriate terminology is ‘gender affirmation surgery’. Although ‘transition’ is often used, ‘gender affirmation’ is the more accurate term as it doesn’t necessarily mean changing gender, ‘having a sex change’ or ‘becoming a man or a woman’, and transition isn’t synonymous with being trans.
Non-binary Gender fluid	‘androgynous’, ‘hermaphrodite’, ‘unisex’	Non-binary is an umbrella term for people whose gender identity doesn’t sit wholly within the binary of ‘man’ or ‘woman’. Non-binary identities are varied and can include people who identify with some aspects of binary identities, while others reject them entirely. ‘Androgynous’ and ‘unisex’ refer to the outward gender appearance of a person, rather than their gender identity. While some non-binary people may appear androgynous, others may not. ‘Hermaphrodite’ refers to a person having both male and female reproductive organs.
Gender diverse		Gender diverse generally refers to a range of genders expressed in different ways. As outlined above, there are many terms used by gender diverse people to describe themselves. Gender diverse can be used to describe gender identities that demonstrate a diversity of expression beyond the binary, for example trans, non-binary, gender fluid.
Marriage	‘gay marriage’	Just as it would be inappropriate to call the marriage of two older people ‘elder marriage’, it is inappropriate to call the marriage of a samegender couple ‘gay marriage’.
Intolerance Rejection Exclusion Unfairness Hurtfulness	‘hate’/‘hatred’, ‘bigot’/‘bigots’/‘bigotry’, ‘prejudice’	Avoid highly charged, argumentative terms like ‘hate’ and ‘bigotry’, which are likely to alienate people. Instead, use language that is measured and relatable to create empathy and a sense of how rejecting attitudes and actions hurt LGBTIQ+ people.

