

**ITEM-8 LMM 23/03/21 - TRANSform NEWY**

**MOTION**

**That City of Newcastle:**

1. Notes that Newcastle has a reputation as a welcoming and inclusive city, including the highest 'Yes' vote for marriage equality outside a capital city. City of Newcastle has been part of ACON's Welcome Here project since 2015.
2. Notes that Hunter New England Health recently established a multi-disciplinary health clinic to better support trans and gender diverse people. This clinic, located in Hamilton, will support young people from across Northern NSW.
3. Notes that Hunter Gender Alliance were successful in receiving a Boost Your Place Grant as a part of our placemaking initiative aimed at maintaining connections amongst our community and within our public spaces, with a round of funding aimed at innovative and ways of maintaining social cohesion during the COVID-19 global pandemic;
4. Congratulates Hunter Gender Alliance, who were successful in receiving a Boost Your Place Grant for their TRANSform Newy initiative, aimed at improving the rights, health and live of trans and gender diverse (TGD) people, with a resource booklet (attachment A) with personal experiences and practical tips to help organisations TRANSform their places into a welcoming and safe environment for all;
5. Notes that Hunter Gender Alliance have asked that we take the TRANSform Newy Pledge, which reads: *"Transgender, gender diverse and non binary people are, and have always been, part of our communities. We pledge to recognise the equality of all genders. We pledge to improve our places so that they are equal. We pledge to use correct pronouns, have gender neutral forms, and consider gender neutral bathrooms. If we don't have lived experience, we pledge to speak not for, but with, those who do. We pledge to make our places better, and safer, for people of all genders."*
6. Takes the TRANSform Newy Pledge, and commits to work with the Hunter Gender Alliance to implement positive changes for TGD people in Newcastle
7. Publishes the pledge on our website, with a copy of the TRANSform Newy resource booklet.

**BACKGROUND:**

**BOOST YOUR PLACE GRANT**

The City of Newcastle allocated funding to support an innovative grant program to help turn 16 community ideas into worthy actions and projects.

The aim of the Boost Your Place - Placemaking grant was to encourage and support community members to stay socially connected or reconnect, on-line or in real places, considering COVID-19 health advice and physical distancing restrictions.

We received a wonderful variety of Boost Your Place grant applications. The community were able to vote for their favourite ideas and the Placemaking Assessment Panel made their final decisions.

The list and details of the 16 projects that were successfully funded under the Boost Your Place Grant program, visit: <https://newcastle.nsw.gov.au/community/grants-and-sponsorships/placemaking-grants>

## **TRANSFORM NEWY**

As part of the “Boost Your Place” grant awarded by the City of Newcastle, Hunter Gender Alliance have developed, TRANSform Newy. It provides you with valuable information and tips on how you can make your business or service welcoming and supportive for gender diverse people.

Gender diversity in the Hunter Region is part of what makes our community vibrant. It is important to ensure we make our gender diverse clients/customers feel safe at all stages of life and in all environments. However, about 70% of gender diverse people aged 14-25 experience discrimination. Under federal law, gender diverse people are protected from discrimination. So, why is it that discrimination is still so common? Studies have shown that when organisations have accurate information about diverse people, they can drastically increase their inclusiveness.

We're also encouraging businesses to take our pledge to support trans and gender diverse people on our website. This is an excellent way to show your support and also may have a flow-on effect of increasing patronage amongst the LGBTIQ+ community. Trans people need safe, welcoming places to go with appropriate facilities, and feel more comfortable attending businesses that support our community.

This resource has practical information and examples which may help you to understand how to handle situations involving gender diverse staff and clients/customers. Transform Newy includes highly relevant information from local writers, plus links to resources we know you'll find interesting and useful. We welcome you to share these resources within your network.

## **TRANSFORM NEWY PLEDGE**

*"Transgender, gender diverse and non binary people are, and have always been, part of our communities. We pledge to recognise the equality of all genders. We pledge to improve our places so that they are equal. We pledge to use correct pronouns, have gender neutral forms, and consider gender neutral bathrooms. If we don't have lived experience, we pledge to speak not for, but with, those who do. We pledge to make our places better, and safer, for people of all genders."*

## **ATTACHMENTS:**

- TRANSform Newy Booklet
- Correspondence from the Hunter Gender Alliance



TRANSFORM

NEWY

# Acknowledgement of Country

Hunter Gender Alliance acknowledges the traditional custodians and rightful owners across all the lands on which we work and gather. We pay our particular respects to the Awabakal people, on whose land we are based. We pay respects to Elders past, present, and emerging. We acknowledge the long history of gender diversity amongst First Nations Peoples. We join our Indigenous brothers, sisters and siblings in calling for a Treaty. Always was, always will be, Aboriginal land.

## About the Boost Your Place Grant

*Text from City of Newcastle*

COVID-19 has brought with it many challenges. Maintaining connections amongst our community and within our public places has never been more important to our wellbeing. There are many worthy ideas out there in our creative and caring Newcastle community. The City of Newcastle (CN) has allocated funding of \$60,000 to support an innovative grant program to help turn your ideas into worthy actions.

The aim of the Boost Your Place - Placemaking grant is to encourage and support community members to stay socially connected or reconnect, on-line or in real places, considering COVID-19 health advice and physical distancing.

This grant seeks to provide opportunity, especially for younger people, to stay connected, create and innovate, to help connect with others and to make a difference in your local place, encouraging:

- social connection and/or re-connection
- innovation, creativity and collaboration amongst - young people, community, and business
- business confidence and capacity-building
- activation, enhanced amenity, and liveability of publicly accessible place
- enhanced physical and mental wellbeing



# Hi there!

We're Hunter Gender Alliance, a small, volunteer-led charity and the team behind TRANSform Newy. We work to improve the rights, health and lives of trans and gender diverse (TGD) people in the Hunter and beyond.

TRANSform Newy started for a pretty simple reason:

**We want TGD people to be able to buy a coffee, use the bathroom and fill in a form without having any issues.**

So, we hired nine fantastic authors to help us create this booklet. All our writers are TGD, and all have lived experience of their topic.

TGD people are your friends, acquaintances, colleagues, neighbours, customers, and more.

We're brothers, sisters, siblings, parents, grandparents, children and partners. We're firefighters, teachers, retail workers, doctors, students, aged care workers and counsellors; we are everywhere!

Our community includes people who are transgender, non-binary, genderfluid, agender, Brotherboys, Sistergirls, and many, many more identities. As you'll see in the booklet, we're a diverse bunch and come from all walks of life, across all age groups.

We hope you find this resource to be useful, and that the personal experiences and practical tips help you TRANSform your place into a welcoming, safe environment for all. More resources (and accessible versions) are listed on the inside back cover.

**Thanks!**

*Hunter Gender Alliance*



# Transgender 101

*by Bryson Charles (he/him)*

When you come across a new idea, it can be confusing about how to approach it. An idea that is new to many people is the idea of being transgender. This seems new, because it's being talked about a lot now, but trans people have actually been around for as long as all people have been around!

*So what does it mean? When we're born, almost all of us are put into the category of 'male' or 'female', based on what our bodies look like. For most people, this ends up fitting how they feel about themselves, but for some people, it doesn't.*

*A person whose gender matches what they were labelled, or 'assigned' at birth is called 'cisgender', or 'cis'. 'Cis' means 'on the same side of'.*

*A person whose gender doesn't match what they were assigned at birth is called 'transgender', or 'trans'. 'Trans' means 'across'. Transgender people can be male, female, or non-binary.*

For example:

When Bob was born, he was assigned 'male' - his doctors and caregivers called him a boy. Growing up, he felt like a boy. Bob is a cisgender man.

When Rashida was born, she was also assigned 'male'. Growing up, that didn't fit, and she felt like a girl. Rashida is a transgender woman.

When Ali was born, they were assigned 'female', but that didn't fit. Ali doesn't feel like a boy, either. Ali is non-binary.

## **Gay and Trans: What's the difference?**

Transgender people fall into the LGBTQA+ community, so it can be easy to think that they are the same thing, but being trans is different to being gay or bisexual. Being straight, gay, lesbian, bisexual, or asexual is a person's sexuality. Being a man or woman (cis or trans) is a person's gender identity.

For example: A lesbian woman is a woman who is attracted to women. A straight man is a man attracted to women. Who someone is attracted to does not affect their gender. A good way to think of it is that sexuality is who you go to bed with, and gender is who you go to bed as.

## **So how do you talk to a trans person?**

A lot of people feel worried about talking to a trans person. They're worried about offending them. This is totally normal. None of us are born knowing any of this stuff, and we are all learning all the time. We all mess up. You will mess up. Even trans people mess up. That's ok. The most important thing is to have good intentions, correct yourself quickly, and move on.

## The most important thing is using correct names and correct pronouns.

Pronouns are words we use instead of a person's name. For example:

Bob and Rashida went out. It was Rashida's birthday, so Bob bought *her* lunch, and Rashida thanked *him*.

'He', 'she', and 'they' are gendered pronouns. For trans people, these are a really important way of acknowledging gender. If you don't know someone's pronouns, it's always better to ask than to assume. Even better still is to introduce yourself with the pronouns you use.

For example: My name is Charlie, and my pronouns are he/him. Nice to meet you!

This is a really great way to make talking about pronouns normal. If you find out, or know, a person uses a name different from their original name, it is very important not to ask about their 'real name'. As with anyone else, you should always call someone the name they give you, even if you know they have, or used to have, a different name. You wouldn't insist on referring to a Nick as Nicholas because it was the name on their birth certificate.

If you knew a person before they affirmed their gender, you should always use the person's current name and pronouns, unless you have the knowledge that the person is ok with you using their old name and pronouns.

## Asking questions, surgery, and medicine

A lot of talk in the media around trans people is about medical and surgical changes they have made. The thing is, not all trans people have, want, or need, hormones or surgery, and even for those who do, it often is very uncomfortable to be asked.

Unless there is a medical reason for you to be asking about what a person's body looks like, or you are about to have sex with someone, and you want to know how to be respectful, it is not appropriate to ask about a person's medical or surgical history, especially if you don't know them!

The same as for everyone - it's not considered polite to ask about a person's private medical history, their genitals, or their sex life, in everyday conversation.

It's normal to be curious, but it is also very important to respect a person's privacy. If you want to know about the medical side of being transgender, there are some great resources on the internet!

This is a very, very short introduction to a lot of complicated information. It is a starting point. All trans people are different, and one person cannot speak for all, but our desire to be respected and seen for who we are is something we all feel.



# Non Binary 101

*by Liam York (he or they)*

## Foundations

To understand non-binary experiences of gender, let's first review the concept of gender itself. Gender captures a wide range of traits, including social roles, expression and our sense of self. When a person's sense of self isn't able to be expressed through femaleness or maleness alone, the person may feel discomfort and seek to express their experience of gender as non-binary. Non-binary people, simply put, are people who experience gender in a way which is not exclusively male or female.

While there are many ways to be a woman or a man, it is also true that being a man is not the opposite of being a woman. If someone's experience of gender doesn't fit with being a man, it does not automatically make them a woman (and visa-versa). Over the past few decades, non-binary people have become more visible in our community.

With many people coming to hear about non-binary people for the first time, it isn't hard to mistake this identity as too far beyond typical human experiences. While most people experience gender as male or female, it is important we don't neglect those who experience gender in a way the words male or female can't describe.

## An umbrella for the rest of us

Non-binary people can look like anyone and there is no one description to explain all non-binary people. It is helpful to know, that similar to the way experiences of gender as a man or as a woman are different, being both male and female is different to being neither. For some people, affirming a non-binary gender provides freedom of expression and healthier sense of self. These words don't capture all non-binary experiences, but what does tie non-binary people together are the shared experiences we are now beginning to recognise.

**"While the term 'non-binary' is a relatively recent term, people that experience gender diversity have existed throughout history. Various words have been used to describe these identities across many languages. When we look back, we find many cultures and individuals who have experienced and accepted such gender diverse people. "**





For example, We'wha, who was a Native American of the Zuni tribe who lived in the late 1800's. We'wha's gender was referred to as lhamana. We'wha also used both 'she' and 'he' pronouns and was seen as both male and female by others. We'wha was a renowned ambassador, craftsperson and mediator and was highly respected both within his tribe, by other tribes and by the white colonisers she knew. The reason non-binary identities seem so new is that our world has become more connected. The new technologies and spaces have allowed people to feel safe to share, express their true selves and find others who are like them.

## **Pronouns: they/them/theirs**

Many people are used to the pronouns they/them/theirs referring to a group of people. However, consider the example of a person standing some distance from you in a field, so far away you are not certain which pronoun to use. You might say to someone nearby "Do you know who they are?" Using they/them/theirs to refer to a single person has been common for centuries and is used by media outlets as a gender-neutral pronoun. Not every non-binary person uses 'they' pronouns, there other gender-neutral pronouns too. Asking non-binary people which pronoun to use shows respect and support.

## **Showing what you know**

Non-binary people are protected from discrimination under federal law. With knowledge of gender diverse people comes the task of ensuring they feel accepted and can live free from discrimination. It is easy to make a start in expressing acceptance by respecting people's pronouns and using gender neutral language.

Acknowledging non-binary people's presence, instead of only women's and men's is another simple way to show courtesy. Speaking up for non-binary people in our community is another way to support and validate them. Ensuring forms have inclusive gender options, designating a bathroom as all gender, and ensuring uniform policies are supportive makes life safer for gender diverse people.

## **Celebrating diversity**

July 14th is international Non-Binary day. This day is perfect for showing support for Non-Binary people you know by acknowledging your support or learning about gender diversity across the world.



# A Guide To Forms

by Max Tran (he or they)

Filling out a form or going to the bathroom may feel like second nature to most people. Yet, these activities are often distressing for the transgender and gender diverse community. I hope this article will help local businesses make their forms and bathrooms more inclusive and alleviate some of the stress felt by trans people.

**Unfortunately, there is no one-size-fits-all approach to forms - it will depend on the information you need to collect. But, these points provide a general guide and suggest some things to think about.**

## 1. Gender and Sex

Gender and sex are different, so it is important to not use them interchangeably.

Think and consider:

- Do I need to know the person's gender or sex? Make sure you aren't asking out of habit!
- Do I need to know their sex AND gender? Or, will simply their gender be enough?
- If you need to know the person's gender, be sure to include options other than male and female (e.g., non-binary, agender, genderfluid).
- Including an open-ended response option is great (there are lots of genders!). Simply having an 'X' or 'other' option is not ideal, despite these being the only options in many places (e.g., Medicare, Centrelink, etc.).
- Don't forget to consider non-western genders (e.g., Brotherboys, Sistersgirls, Two-Spirit, and more). Remember, the gender binary is a western ideal that has been enforced around the world through colonisation.
- If you really need to know a person's sex (very uncommon), avoid using "biological sex" and instead use terms like "sex assigned at birth".

## 2. Names

Many trans people start using a new name before they can change it legally.

If you legitimately need to know someone's legal name, you should include a "preferred name" option.

## 3. Titles (e.g., Mr, Mrs, Miss)

Navigating titles can also be difficult for trans people, especially when available options are very gendered.

Ideally, remove titles from the form altogether. If you can't remove them, you can try to include gender-inclusive varieties (e.g., Mx, pronounced "mix").

## 4. Pronouns (e.g., she/her, he/him, they/them).

Using correct pronouns is a great way to support trans people! Forms can include a section for people's pronouns. This is particularly useful when there is lots of communication between various people.

**Pronouns can change over time, and it is okay to ask people if you are unsure!**



# A Guide To Bathrooms

*by Max Tran (he or they)*

**We all use the bathroom. However, this seemingly simple task can be difficult and distressing for trans and gender diverse people thanks to binary (male or female) bathrooms.**

Firstly, requiring trans and gender diverse people to use a toilet that does not align with their gender is discrimination, as stated in the Sex Discrimination Act (2013).

Individuals should be able to use the bathroom that best affirms their gender regardless of where they are at in their legal, medical or social transition. (I.e: bathroom usage should not be restricted based on how people look, what their legal gender marker is, or whether or not they've had gender affirming surgery or hormones.)

Below, I will cover how you can best make your bathrooms inclusive to trans and gender diverse people:

## 1. Signage

- Signs are the first thing we look for when going to the bathroom. Trans people may not feel safe or appropriate using either the men's or women's bathroom.
- It's best to keep it simple and remove gender from the sign altogether. This can be done by just saying what facilities are inside (e.g., stalls and urinals, or just stalls).
- There are regulations around what signage can look like and how many bathrooms are required in a building, so be sure everything is in line with building code regulations.
- The word "unisex" is used a lot. This means 'suitable for both sexes', and the term 'all-gender' is preferred.

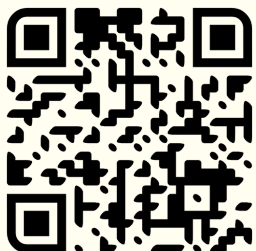
## 2. Sanitary Bins

If possible, have sanitary bins in all cubicles; or mark the stalls containing bins. People using traditionally 'male' bathrooms may need to dispose of sanitary items too!

## 3. Can trans people just use accessible bathrooms (without signage)?

No! Whilst many trans people opt into this as the least distressing bathroom option, it is not preferred.

- Not all trans people are disabled, or have disabilities, and it is unfair to take these bathrooms away from people with accessibility needs.
- Plus, trans people may receive unwanted attention and questioning, or even harassment, for using these bathrooms.



**To download your own bathroom signs, use the QR Code on the left, or go to our website: [huntergenderalliance.org/signs](https://huntergenderalliance.org/signs).**

# Gender Diversity and Multiculturalism

*by Rey Vargas (they/them)*

## My Experiences

Since English is practically a second first language for me, I had little trouble communicating with others when I first came to Australia. However, slang and regional expressions would sometimes confuse me, and I'd need help from a friend. In fact, I didn't realise the phrase was "see you this arvo" and not "see you at the Salvo" until a few years ago!

My native language, Filipino, does not distinguish gender when it comes to third-person pronouns. That means 'he' and 'she' share a single word, *siya*. So, coming here, I would get pronouns mixed up. I saw it as a small, honest mistake, but the people around me would make such a big deal, and that made me feel conscious. I never had to be so careful around such small words before.

Growing up, I never experienced the feeling of being misgendered because there was nothing to misgender me. So much of the Filipino language is gender neutral (many familial terms are gender neutral e.g. 'niece' and 'nephew' share a single word, 'brother' and 'sister' share a single word, 'son' and 'daughter' share a single word) that I was shielded from the gender binary for most of my developmental life.

## Gender Diversity in the Philippines

I had a feeling I was trans since I was young, but I didn't have the words for my feelings nor the time to do that kind of introspection. When you live in a developing country that deals with constant natural disasters, your priorities lie elsewhere.

But I was also aware that gender diversity existed. In the Philippines, there is an unofficial third gender, the *bakla*. They are folks assigned male at birth, but they adopt feminine mannerisms and dress in a way that is perceived to be feminine. However, they do not always self-identify as women. They also have their own secret language, called *swardspeak*, that they use with each other or to identify themselves as being *bakla*. It is a constantly changing language and a person's fluency in *swardspeak* is an indication of their connection to the *bakla* community.

*Bakla's* are considered part of the LGBTQ+ community in the Philippines.

*Bakla's* are a totally integrated demographic in the Philippines, even though they are not legally recognised. They get heaps of representation in media like television and film, with the comedian Vice Ganda being the main example of a *bakla* that is widely recognised in the country. Records of the *bakla* go as far back as pre-colonial Philippines, where they are treated with high regard and often take on the role of shamans. Spanish colonisation stigmatised the existence of the *bakla*, and the community had to work on reclaiming pride in their identities.

## Challenging Gender Norms

The trans community has always existed in some shape or form for a long time and in different parts of the world. Native Americans have two-spirit people, Maori culture has the wakawahine and the wakatane, and Aboriginal cultures have brotherboys and sistergirls. Taking the time to learn about the different cultures and perspectives on gender can be a rewarding experience. The Eurocentric and Western ideas about gender that most people grow up with are often limiting and/or only recently invented.

Up until the 1900's, all babies and toddlers, regardless of gender, wore white dresses because they were easy to clean and more practical. High heels go as far back as the 15th century and were originally invented so that soldiers could secure their feet in stirrups. Crop tops were once popularised in the male bodybuilding community in the 80s as a workaround from the ban of being bare-chested in public gyms.

When you realise that gender norms are arbitrary and ever changing, it will be much easier to empathise with the trans community. It will also lead to better introspection about your own gender. I'm not necessarily implying that you might be trans, but taking the time to think about whether your gender identity is genuine or a result of conditioning from a young age is a beneficial way of developing a better relationship with yourself and to enhance your insight into the world.



# Supporting TGD Customers

by Ivy Scurr (she/her)

People within the TGD community have a wide variety of identities (who they are), presentations (how they look), and experiences (stories and feelings).

While it can be affirming for some people who are binary trans women or men who 'pass' visually (are read/seen as) their gender to have strangers correctly guess the right pronouns for them, a whole lot of the time folks will get it wrong.

Expecting that you can guess the gender of a person you don't know relies on a lot of culturally coded assumptions about what genders look like. These assumptions often erase the wide variety of ways people can experience and present their gender.

This is even worse for non-binary people whose gender does not fit into the assumed two categories of 'man' or 'woman'. There is no way to 'pass' as non-binary and have people reliably guess the correct pronouns. There are a whole lot of genders outside the two our society assumes, and there are equally many ways for people to look. This is even a problem for a lot of cis people who are gender non-conforming and/or have unconventional or different fashion styles.

**"All of this means that it is impossible to tell at a glance, or from briefly hearing someone's voice, what their gender identity or pronouns are. "**

Using the wrong pronouns for someone can cause discomfort and even substantial harm. This is not how you want to treat customers and members of your wider community.



# SUPPORTING TGD CUSTOMERS

If you are friendly, non-judgmental, and affirming, people will remember. People are likely to return to places where they have had positive experiences with staff. This is just as applicable for TGD folks as for others in the LGBTQIA+ community, people with different disabilities, or folks from different marginalised positions or cultural backgrounds.

Written by Ivy Scurr

1

## USE GENDER NEUTRAL TERMS.

Try using language like "folks" or "people", instead of gendered terms like "ladies" or "guys." Not everyone is a lady or a guy, and you won't always get it right.

2

## USE "THEY" PRONOUNS FOR EVERYONE.

Default to using they/them/theirs for all customers instead of trying to guess who might use she, he, or other pronouns. They is a neutral pronoun that can be used for single individuals as well as groups; the same way as you'd usually use it.

3

## DON'T SINGLE PEOPLE OUT BASED ON LOOKS.

It's great to introduce yourself with your own name and pronouns! However, avoid asking someone their pronouns or gender unless you need the information. This can make people feel singled out for not fitting your expectations of their gender.

4

## DON'T GUESS PRODUCTS BASED ON LOOKS.

Try not to make assumptions about what products a potential customer might use based on how you perceive them. Being herded toward different clothing sections, for instance, can be an awkward and demoralising experience for folks who may look a way you don't expect for their gender.

6

## BATHROOMS MATTER.

Do not police which toilet people use. If you only have one toilet it would already be gender neutral by default. If you have multiple toilets make sure at least one is clearly labelled as gender neutral so non-binary folks are not forced to choose between binary toilets that do not fit.

7

## ACT ON COMPLAINTS.

If a customer tells you that another staff member or other customer is treating them poorly due to their gender or presentation, do something concrete to follow it up and support the customer who made the complaint.

8

## LISTEN, BE OPEN, AND LEARN.

Remain open to feedback on how to improve your support of TGD individuals – this is only an introduction, there is always more to learn and lots of variation of TGD folks' experiences.



# Supporting Younger TGD People

*by Taryn Dorrrough (they/he)*

**Whether you run a cosy café, large medical practice or simply a single office desk, it is important to create an inclusive and safe space.**

For young Transgender and Gender Diverse (TGD) people, reaching out for the first time can be the most difficult hurdle to overcome. On that note, visibility matters! Whether it's a rainbow flag, ally sticker or gender inclusive forms, a young person exploring their sexuality or questioning their gender will most likely notice and it'll brighten up their week.

In situations around school, the shops or simply visiting the doctor, hearing the wrong pronouns or refusal to use a preferred name can have a devastating impact on the mental health of already vulnerable teens. Below, and on the next page, are some ways you can support young TGD people.

## **Politely correct others if they make a mistake.**

If you notice colleagues using incorrect language or names/pronouns for an individual, politely correct them. You wouldn't expect a teen to call out their bully's behaviour, so stand up for those who are unable to themselves if you can.

## **Affirm the young person (despite expectations from family and society)**

Don't say 'it's just a phase,' or 'they are too young to know'. Instead, listen to what they want and encourage gender exploration without the pressure to make any firm decisions.

## **Transitioning is not just medical.**

When a young TGD person comes out, it doesn't automatically mean they want hormones or surgery. Changing names, pronouns, clothing or style are just some of the ways to validate or affirm someone's gender identity.

## **Don't confuse gender and sexuality.**

For people exploring non-binary gender identities, explaining who they are attracted to can be complicated. TGD people are not always straight, nor do they necessarily identify with being gay, bisexual, asexual or any other label. If you are aware of a person's gender identity, it does not mean you can ask about sexuality. Their sexuality is most likely not relevant, and none of your business.

## **If we do reach out, we are seeking help.**

Transgender youth are not your teachers so be willing to educate yourself and put in the effort to learn. If you don't know something, find out!

There are many guides for supporting TGD youth at school (check out MINUS18), navigating transition, connecting with social groups and much more. We don't expect you to have all the answers; most of the time we just need a bit of affirmation and support.



# SUPPORTING YOUNGER TGD PEOPLE

Written by Taryn Dorrough (he or they)

## 1 CHECK NAME AND PRONOUNS

- Check if they go by a different name to what may be on formal documents
- Ask which pronouns they use
- Should these be used publicly, among friends or remain between the two of you?

## 2 KEEP THINGS CONFIDENTIAL AND PROFESSIONAL

- Don't disclose their identity without permission, as this could place the young person in an unsafe environment
- Do not assume parents/guardians are aware or supportive of someone's identity
- Remember that inappropriate or irrelevant questions are a breach of privacy

## 3 ENCOURAGE CONNECTIONS WITH PEERS

- Suggest LGBTIQ+ hangouts like 'As You Are' at Headspace
- Check out Twenty10 for online chats and events for people aged 12-25
- With permission connect them to other TGD people, maintaining the privacy of everyone involved

4

## BE A GOOD ROLE MODEL

- Use preferred names and pronouns and politely correct others if they make a mistake
- Call out transphobic comments and behaviours. If you don't know what this looks like, find out!

5

## EDUCATE YOURSELF

- Browse plenty of reliable resources online
- Be willing to put in the effort and learn

6

## BE A VISIBLE ALLY

- Individuals: Use stickers, posters, flags and resource handouts
- Companies: Have inclusive policies and clear complaint/discrimination procedures. Use gender neutral forms and aim for gender neutral bathrooms or signage



# Emme's Story

by Emme K (she/her)

20 minutes when I was 55 changed my life forever. I stopped hiding.

For personal, survival and safety reasons I hid being transgender.

During art therapy training a few years ago we colourfully expressed unseen aspects of ourselves. A classmate witnessed my artwork and story with loving acceptance and delight. In 20 minutes of sharing I felt emotionally clear from a lifetime of pain, repression and inner darkness. A lifelong wall of loneliness dissolved when I told my class.

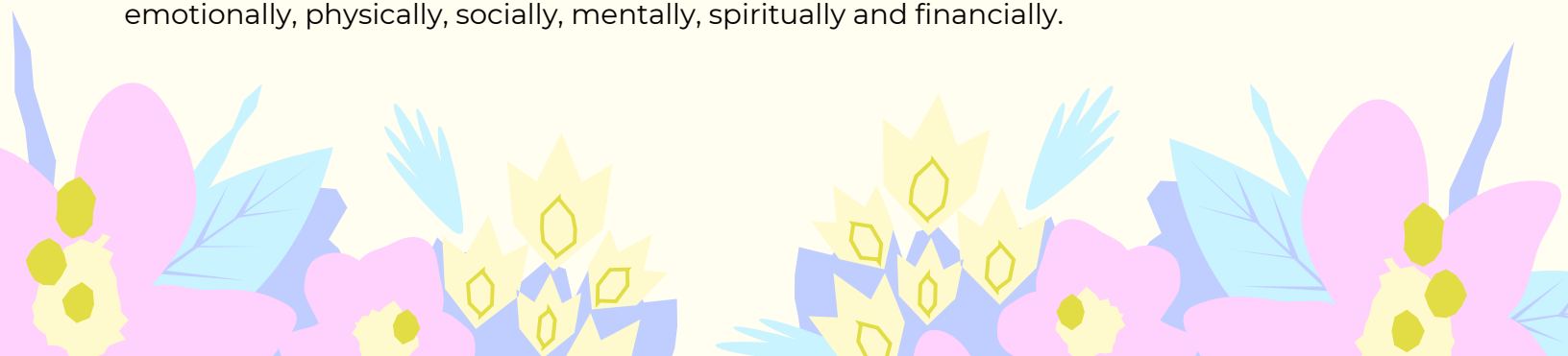
The freedom feelings lasted for weeks, months and years from sharing and being accepted. I couldn't explain being transgender, but I couldn't keep hiding because being authentic with safe people in safe places was profoundly healing.

At age 4 I didn't know the word "transgender" or that others were like me. I clearly knew who I was and kept it as my private secret. Deeply "knowing" I would be a woman when I grew up meant puberty in the early 1970s was very painful as my body appearance betrayed my inner identity. I suffered in silence not knowing what to say or do.

As a teenager I read a news item about a transgender woman in England and was delighted to discover someone out there like me. I didn't speak of it because disapproval and even disgust were common attitudes about diverse ways of sexuality and gender in the overseas place where I lived. Privately and subtly I expressed my inner self, but was afraid of being known and suffering the repercussions.

Like every transgender person, I could tell many stories about coming to a place of revealing and expressing outwardly my identity. In my 30s, because of illness, poverty, and lack of safety and support, I decided to keep being a transgender woman a private, treasured secret. Eventually the suffering and loneliness was too much. Then the liberation of being seen, known, loved and accepted in safe places with safe people in my art therapy school was so profound and life-giving that I needed to continue the openness and authenticity.

However, it's often tough even with more people being accepting. Every day there can be a great deal of anxiety and emotional exhaustion. As transgender people we spend much energy trying to feel safe, dealing with anxiety, struggling to belong, and feeling the effects of both subtle and overt hurt and discrimination. Living can be too hard. Dealing with hurtful words, attitudes, vibes and actions mean those of us who are transgender pay a price emotionally, physically, socially, mentally, spiritually and financially.



We desire to flourish and thrive. To be safe and respected. To belong. To have our transgender gifts valued. To not be stereotyped. We are diverse, living, human beings not problems to be solved or dealt with.

Treat us well with kindness, acceptance, dignity and respect and we will be happier and healthier, and life will be better and more productive for all of us.

As transgender people we bring gifts:

At one workshop an emotionally fragile woman said she watched how the group treated me as a transgender woman. When she saw acceptance and kindness towards me she then knew she was safe. In a course I took, one woman hid a significant aspect of herself for much of the year. Finally she had the courage to share. She was loved and accepted and I watched her shine as she no longer hid. She told of finding inspiration, courage and safety by watching me and how the group treated me.

Many say they relate to me even though they aren't transgender. They hide aspects of themselves for the sake of others. Because of me they find courage and strength to be more true to themselves.

One man said that in his work and social groups a transgender woman like me would not be safe from others or even with him. My story opened up his understanding; and his heart and behaviour changed.

Three in a women's group shared about transgender people in their families: a mum and two gender diverse children. Through their encounters with me, they said they learned to understand and relate better.

**"Gifts that come with being the transgender woman I am include gentleness, empathy, compassion, understanding, adaptability, openness, authenticity and emotional intimacy.**

**I love to share these gifts and enrich others' lives, places and situations. I do it best when I am safe, respected, accepted and treated with kindness and dignity. We all do best when we are treated this way!"**



# SUPPORTING TGD PEOPLE IN THE WORKPLACE

Written by Kait Fenwick (they/them)

1

## REDEFINE "PROFESSIONALISM"

For many TGD employees, finding corporate workwear that fits comfortably and enables the wearer to feel like their authentic self can be challenging.

Creating a culture where smart casual is the norm can alleviate stress for TGD folk. Within organisations where a uniform is a requirement, there are no legal barriers to allowing your staff to wear the uniform that best affirms their gender. All employees should be provided with the spectrum of uniform offerings during onboarding.

2

## ADOPT FLEXIBLE WORKING PRACTICES

Office environments can be fraught with anxiety for many TGD people. Navigating which bathroom to use as well as having to assert your name and pronoun can be exhausting. Enabling TGD people the opportunity to work from home shifts the focus from how a person outwardly presents themselves and back to the quality of their output.

3

## HOLD SPACE (WITHOUT PRESSURING PEOPLE)

But what does holding space mean?

**Holding space refers to an individual making the conscious decision to let go of judgement, be present and provide unconditional support for the people around them.**

Holding space is an example of allyship in practice.

4

## CONSIDER IMPLEMENTING LEAVE ENTITLEMENTS FOR TGD EMPLOYEES

Whilst not all TGD people seek medical intervention, those that do are often faced with hefty out of pocket expenses. On top of those expenses, time is a factor. The reality is that there are few TGD centred medical specialists in Australia, so the wait to see appropriate professionals can be lengthy. Once an appointment becomes available, there is often little flexibility offered to patients due to demand.

If gender-affirming surgery is required, recovery periods can be extensive. Taking time off work can induce major anxiety for TGD employees as they are often already concerned with how they are received in the workplace. Specific leave entitlements for TGD employees enables individuals to focus on healing and recovery without being concerned about the perception of others.

5

## MANDATE GENDER DIVERSITY TRAINING

There is a global shift in the conversation surrounding gender. Gender in Western frameworks was once considered binary. However, it is now widely understood that gender identity and expression is a spectrum. Addressing this ideological shift can be tricky, however, it can no longer be ignored by organisations. Investing in gender diversity training is not just for trans people. Hiring a TGD person to facilitate the sessions is imperative as their lived experience will ensure that the learning materials are multifaceted and centred on underrepresented gender identities.



# Supporting Your TGD Friends

*by Marcel Liemant (he or they)*

**We all want to be a good mate. But when your friend comes out as gender diverse and/or transgender, it can be hard to know how to support them. You want to do the right thing, but sometimes you make mistakes and that's okay. Here is a simple guide to better prepare you for supporting your transgender and gender diverse friends.**

## **Pronouns and Names**

I couldn't write this guide without first discussing pronouns. He, she, they; for such simple words, pronouns maketh the man or woman or gender fluid human. They help your transgender friends feel seen, understood and supported. When we are misgendered or deadnamed it's invalidating and stressful, so even though it can be tricky to get new pronouns to stick in your brain, it's important to try.

**Practice on your own** – Even when your gender diverse friend isn't around, use the correct pronouns and name. Practice makes perfect. This will really help you to better navigate the awkward period of adjustment and will help your friend feel safe and accepted.

**Correct yourself** – If you make a mistake, correct yourself. There's no need to make a fuss and draw attention to your transgender friend, just correct your mistake and move on with the conversation.

**Correct others** – It can be hard to constantly correct someone about your own pronouns. Not only do you have to muster the energy and courage to speak up, you are also experiencing the stress and dysphoria of being misgendered. Becoming that ally that corrects others is one of the best ways you can support your gender diverse friend.

**Normalise introducing yourself and others with pronouns** - To help our culture evolve into a more accepting place for gender diversity, cis people need to normalise indicating their own gender markers. So even though your own pronouns may not have ever changed, start including them when you introduce yourself. That way, transgender people have a safe way to make sure their pronouns are respected without necessarily outing themselves.

## **Listen Well**

Every transition is different, just as every transgender person is different. As a friend, it's your role to be open and non-judgemental. Let your questioning friend question. Let your non-binary friend try out pronouns, styles, hormones. This may not be an experience you identify with, but rolling with the punches and cheering through it all is what a great friend does.

**Awareness** - We live in a cis-centric world, meaning that nearly all aspects of society are built upon the unquestioned assumption of a gender binary. I'm sure you've heard about the age-old toilet debate but in reality, that's just the tip of the iceberg of discomfort transgender people confront daily. You can be an incredible friend to transgender people by trying to put yourself in our shoes.

**Respect our privacy** - We aren't here to educate you or satisfy your curiosity. Let us take the lead with conversations about the inner workings of our diverse lives. These can be taxing conversations and chances are we've been asked the same questions over and over before.

Please don't treat your transgender friends as a gender diverse google search bar. There's an actual search engine you can use to further educate yourself.

**We have different needs** – For transmasculine people that bind their chest, summer is hard. Binders are hot and stifling and can be painful if worn for long periods. Swimming is tricky for every transgender person because bathers are revealing. What cis people take for granted can be an anxiety-inducing ordeal for transgender people. Try to be aware that your transgender friend might be having a different experience.

### **Be an action-orientated ally**

An LGBTQI+ ally gets out into the real world and helps change happen. Here are some ways you can help your gender diverse friends live safer lives:

**Go to rallies and sign petitions** – Get out there, pick up a sign, and use your voice to practice democracy. Transgender people are still fighting for equal rights and fair treatment and we need your help. Become an active ally and hit the streets.

**Support organisations that support gender diversity** – Money talks and being aware of organisations that both support and exclude transgender people, is a huge way to initiate change.

**Celebrate milestones** – And finally, transitioning is exhilarating and terrifying. It's marked with acts of courage, loss, and bureaucracy.

**My friends and greatest supporters taught me a valuable lesson when I started testosterone and that was to celebrate everything, as often and as joyously as you can.**



# ORGANISATIONS WE LOVE

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## ACON HEALTH

ACON are a New South Wales based health promotion organisation specialising in HIV prevention, HIV support and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) health. ACON have offices in the Hunter region.



## NEWCASTLE PRIDE

Newcastle Pride is an inclusive, vibrant, and fun not-for-profit LGBTIQ+ community-based organisation established in 2018 to make Newcastle and the Hunter Region a safer, happier, healthier, and more culturally rich place for the LGBTIQ+ community. Newcastle Pride is a place where we celebrate equality, diversity, and authenticity.

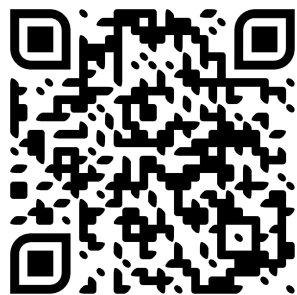


## HUE: COLOUR THE CONVERSATION

Hue is an organisation founded by two women of colour, that delivers a range of antiracism and social justice training programs that are accessible, engaging and strengths based. Hue uses trained facilitators with lived experience to provide participatory and nuanced learning experiences for participants, alongside ongoing support and consultation to organisations looking to implement meaningful change into their policies, processes and work culture.



# Show your support!



## Take The TRANSForm Newy Pledge (and get a free online business listing)

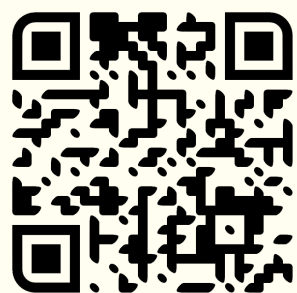
We've created an online pledge you can take to show your support for our community. The small changes you can make are a big deal for those who need them. There's also a map widget; so our community can find bathrooms, and patronise businesses that get it right on gender rights.

*"Transgender, gender diverse and non binary people are, and have always been, part of our communities. We pledge to recognise the equality of all genders. We pledge to improve our places so that they are equal. We pledge to use correct pronouns, have gender neutral forms, and consider gender neutral bathrooms. If we don't have lived experience, we pledge to speak not for, but with, those who do. We pledge to make our places better, and safer, for people of all genders."*



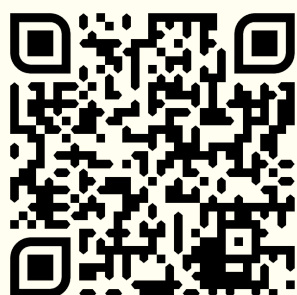
## For Parents

There's a great community of local parents supporting trans and gender diverse kids and young adults. They understand some of the issues your family may be facing and welcome contacts from other parents, whether you have known about your child's gender identity for years or just recently. Use the QR on the left, or email [parents@huntergenderalliance.org](mailto:parents@huntergenderalliance.org) to connect.



## Signs and Posters

Want to implement some of the great tips in this resource? We've got bathroom signage and how to's, posters for workplaces and individuals, and more if you scan the code on the left.



## Gender Inclusivity Training Workshop

We're running a workshop for businesses, workplaces and individuals. Tune in to Zoom at 6:30pm, Thurs 11th March, and learn what you need to know from facilitator Sage Akouri. Sage designed and implemented Minus 18's Gender Inclusivity workshop programme for businesses. Use the code on the left to book your tickets to the workshop.



**Write your notes here!**

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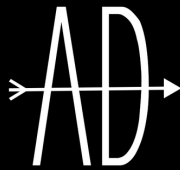




# Hunter Gender Alliance

[huntergenderalliance.org](http://huntergenderalliance.org)

*Booklet by Artemis Designs + Tech*



*Booklet Printing by PrintNova*

*TRANSform Newy is supported by*



"Boost Your Place" Place Making Grant

Dear Lord Mayor's Office,

Please see below cover letter containing information about our project, a Newcastle initiative to help make our City a more inclusive and connected place for all of our community, supported by CN's Boost Your Place grant.

We are very proud to have achieved this outcome and it would not have been possible without the support of the CN grant. Please also find attached an electronic version of the booklet produced in accessible hard copy and electronic versions. We would be honoured and proud if the City of Newcastle would consider taking the pledge to recognise and support gender diversity. The pledge is on the last page of the booklet.

Warm regards

Hunter Gender Alliance

M project contact 0432 180 130

E project contact [sparrow@huntergenderalliance.org](mailto:sparrow@huntergenderalliance.org)

Dear businesses of Newcastle and the Hunter Region,

Have you been wondering how you can make your organisation more welcoming, but are lacking access to the most relevant resources?

As part of the "Boost Your Place" grant awarded by the City of Newcastle, Hunter Gender Alliance have developed the enclosed resource, Transform Newy. It provides you with valuable information and tips on how you can make your business or service welcoming and supportive for gender diverse people.

Gender diversity in the Hunter Region is part of what makes our community vibrant. It is important to ensure we make our gender diverse clients/customers feel safe at all stages of life and in all environments. However, about 70% of gender diverse people aged 14-25 experience discrimination. Under federal law, gender diverse people are protected from discrimination. So, why is it that discrimination is still so common? Studies have shown that when organisations have accurate information about diverse people, they can drastically increase their inclusiveness.



**Hunter Gender Alliance**  
[huntergenderalliance.org](http://huntergenderalliance.org)  
[info@huntergenderalliance.org](mailto:info@huntergenderalliance.org)



Hunter Gender Alliance acknowledges the traditional custodians and rightful owners of the lands on which we work and gather. We pay respects to Elders past, present, and emerging. We acknowledge the long history of gender diversity amongst First Nations Peoples. We join our Indigenous brothers, sisters and siblings in calling for a Treaty. Always was, always will be, Aboriginal land.

We're also encouraging businesses to take our pledge to support trans and gender diverse people on our website. This is an excellent way to show your support and also may have a flow-on effect of increasing patronage amongst the LGBTIQ+ community. Trans people need safe, welcoming places to go with appropriate facilities, and feel more comfortable attending businesses that support our community.

This resource has practical information and examples which may help you to understand how to handle situations involving gender diverse staff and clients/customers. Transform Newy includes highly relevant information from local writers, plus links to resources we know you'll find interesting and useful. We welcome you to share these resources within your network.

Warm regards,

Hunter Gender Alliance