



STAND
OUT

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A huge thank you to the young people right across Australia who shared their stories, and are standing out against homophobia and transphobia each and every day.

READ ONLINE
minus18.org.au




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STAND OUT

AGAINST HOMOPHOBIA AND TRANSPHOBIA IN SCHOOLS

A person is sitting on concrete steps, with their legs and hands visible. They are wearing white socks and dark shoes. The background features a large, textured tree trunk and some blurred foliage, suggesting an outdoor setting like a school campus.

WE ARE THE YOUNG
PEOPLE CREATING
CHANGE IN OUR SCHOOLS,
AND THIS IS YOUR
GUIDE TO CHALLENGING
TRANSPHOBIA AND
HOMOPHOBIA IN YOURS.

STAND OUT



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THE BASICS

GENDER DIVERSE (GD)

Used to describe people who do not identify with the gender they were assigned at birth. For example, someone who was assigned female at birth may feel as though they identify more with a male gender. This is also known as transgender.

Gender diversity also includes people who identify as agender (having no gender), as bigender (having two genders) or as non-binary (not strictly woman or man). Some people identify as genderqueer or as having many or changing genders.

Everyone has their own way of understanding their own sense of gender and how they choose to express it. People belonging to certain cultural backgrounds may use their own cultural terms, such as Indigenous Australian 'Brotherboy' and 'Sistergirl'.

Language can also change. The most important thing is to respect the terms that people choose to use. Research tells us that around 5% of people are gender diverse.

SAME SEX ATTRACTED (SSA)

Used to describe people who are physically or emotionally attracted to people of the same sex or gender. Some people prefer to use the term 'same gender attracted'. These terms include those who are exclusively same sex attracted as well as people who may be attracted to more than one sex or gender, or all genders. Other words that people use to identify their sexuality are gay, lesbian, bisexual, queer and pansexual. Research tells us that around 10% of people are same sex attracted.

INTERSEX

Used to describe people who are born with different kinds of bodies. Intersex is an umbrella term, often associated with a medical diagnosis of DSD, that describes people who have natural variations that differ from conventional ideas about 'female' or 'male' bodies, including genital, chromosomal and a range of other physical characteristics.

Although intersex people are often confused with transgender and gender diverse people, being intersex is not about gender identity and most intersex people identify as women or men. Like other young people however, intersex young people might be same sex attracted or gender diverse. Research tells us that around 1.7% of people are intersex.

HOMOPHOBIA

Used to describe a whole range of negative feelings or behaviours towards anyone who is same sex attracted. Homophobia can also affect people who others think are same sex attracted, as well as those who have family members or friends who are same sex attracted.

In schools, the most common form of homophobia is the use of homophobic language. This can be name-calling, homophobic "jokes", rumours and abusive words, such as 'fag' or 'dyke'. Even phrases like "that's so gay" which compare sexuality to words like 'crap' are homophobic and can have a really negative effect that might not seem obvious to everyone.

Homophobic behaviour can also include abusive threats or actual physical violence, sexual harassment and deliberately excluding someone because of their sexuality.

TRANSPHOBIA

Used to describe a whole range of negative feelings or behaviours towards anyone who is transgender or gender diverse. Transphobia, and fixed ideas about gender, can affect a lot of people, including those that have transgender friends or family members.

Transgender and gender diverse students often find school a challenging place to express their gender identity. You may have heard transphobic language like 'tranny', or other comments such as "you act like a girl" or "why do you have a boy's haircut" that can have a really negative impact.

Transphobia can also include specific restrictions on the way that students are allowed to express their gender; things like which uniform you're allowed to wear or toilets you can use at school. All of these things can seriously affect the physical and mental wellbeing of transgender and gender diverse students, as well as their ability to engage in school.

Transphobia and homophobia can happen face to face, at school, online or even by text. All transphobia and homophobia is bullying, goes against school policies and can potentially be illegal. Nobody should have to tolerate any form of transphobia or homophobia, ever.



WHY WE STAND OUT

THE RESEARCH

- » **75%** of same sex attracted or gender diverse young people in Australia experience some form of homophobic or transphobic abuse.
- » **61%** of same sex attracted or gender diverse young people in Australia experience *verbal* homophobic or transphobic abuse.
- » **18%** of same sex attracted or gender diverse young people in Australia experience *physical* homophobic abuse.
- » **80%** of these homophobic and transphobic incidents take place in schools.

This is pretty bad, but we also know that;

- » **10%** or more people in Australia are same sex attracted. This means that if your school has 1000 students, there are likely more than 100 who are same sex attracted.
- » **1.7%** or more people in Australia are intersex. This means there are likely to be several intersex students in a school of 1000.
- » **5%** or more people in Australia are transgender or gender diverse. This means that if your school has 1000 students, there are likely more than 50 who are transgender and/or gender diverse.

So, you aren't alone! A lot of the time people just don't think about being homophobic or transphobic and have never been called out on it. Some don't even realise that a simple phrase like "that's so gay" or a comment such as "you walk like a girl" can cause hurt to another person.

WHY CHALLENGE HOMOPHOBIA AND TRANSPHOBIA?

It might seem like an odd question to ask – but it's important to know the answer for when people ask you. Nobody likes bullying, right? We all have the right to be free from bullying and discrimination. Despite the law differing in each state and territory, it states that discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation, gender identity or intersex status at most school is illegal (see: *Your Legal Rights pg 34*).

Not only that, but homophobia and transphobia can have very real consequences for people's physical, emotional, and mental health and wellbeing. For many who have been on the receiving end of homophobic or transphobic bullying, it can lead to negative feelings, skipping classes, and not being able to do their best at school.

We know that there can also be some pretty serious health outcomes for young people who are affected by homophobia - things like unwanted pregnancy, being more likely to catch a sexually transmissible infection, taking drugs, self-harming and even suicide.

Fixed ideas about what it means to be a 'boy' or a 'girl' can have really negative effects on transgender, intersex and gender diverse young people and young people with intersex traits. Having to deal with transphobia can lead to a lot of the same outcomes as homophobia.

Homophobia and transphobia have an effect on everyone, particularly in schools. You or your friends might be same sex attracted or gender diverse, or someone in your family, or one of your teachers. Like sexual identity and gender identity, being intersex is not always visible and negative comments can be hurtful. Nobody should be made to feel bad about being different or uncomfortable trying to be themselves.

At the end of the day though, we can all agree that bullying, harassment, and being made to feel unsafe is never OK, especially at school.

We created this guide to give you ideas on how to create change in your school. We want to give you information on what you have a right to do, and help make sure that what you decide to do has a real impact. Hopefully by the end you will feel more confident and ready to stand up and stand out.





MAKE AN IMPACT

7 HANDY WAYS TO CHALLENGE
HOMOPHOBIA AND TRANSPHOBIA

KNOW YOUR FRIENDS AND SUPPORTERS

A really important step in challenging homophobia and transphobia is to work out who your supporters are, and who you can go to for help when you need it. The more people you get involved, the more you can achieve. Having supporters also helps you show others that standing out against homophobia and transphobia is something a lot of people are passionate about.

FRIENDS

Ask your friends and classmates to help you out, and get them to ask around to find people who are interested in getting active. Not all of your friends necessarily need to go to the same school as you - just having someone to talk to can be useful.

If the idea of asking people face to face seems a little daunting, you can set up an online group for people at your school who want to do something on a site like Facebook. Make sure it's set to 'closed' if you want to keep it simple.

STUDENT LEADERS

Your student leaders, maybe the School Captain/s or Student Representative Council (SRC), are great people to have on board. Depending on your school, these are the people who help plan activities and talk directly to teachers about student issues - all of which could be pretty handy later on. If you don't know what the student leadership set up is at your school, ask one of your teachers.

TEACHERS

It can be pretty useful to have at least one teacher on board with your activities. School staff should know all the school rules and policies, and be able to help you talk to other teachers. If there are some teachers you have a better relationship with, such as your homeroom teacher, the school counsellor or the wellbeing coordinator, start off with them. Tell your teachers some of your ideas about what you want to do and ask them for any advice they might have, and what kind of support they could offer.

FAMILIES

Schools really listen to the concerns of students' families. If you have supportive family members, or know another student that does, try and get them involved. Family members can email or call the school to ask what is being done to support same sex attracted, gender diverse and intersex students, and how transphobia and homophobia are being challenged. Your school will probably also have a school council, board or parent committee that involves family members who might be able to help create change.

COMMUNITY ORGANISATIONS

Organisations and local councils in your community can also offer support, especially if you are having trouble finding many supporters inside your school. They may be able to provide guest speakers, further resources, contacts for local support, posters, booklets, merchandise, and may be able to answer questions you have.

The organisations listed in the back of this guide are a good starting point.

BEING SEEN AND HEARD

PUT UP POSTERS

A lot of transphobia and homophobia comes from people who have just never thought about it. One of the easiest and most effective ways to raise awareness and promote a more inclusive environment is to put up posters throughout your school. Posters can: remind students 'it's ok to be gay'; advertise support groups for same sex attracted, gender diverse and intersex young people; and remind everyone in the school that homophobia and transphobia will not be tolerated

Here are some tips from students who have put up posters in their own schools:

Getting hold of good posters

Posters that display a message you think is important and suit your own school is a good way to go. Posters are available from different groups and services. You can even download some from minus18.org.au. But if you can't find anything you like, you can always make your own.

Talk to a teacher

Before putting posters up, make sure teachers know what you're doing so they can tell other teachers about it. If you can, it's a good idea to get permission to put your posters up, so you avoid getting in trouble. If your school or teachers say no, ask for reasons and see if they make sense. If they don't seem reasonable, try another teacher, or you may have to be creative about where you place them.

Get some friends to help

Having help putting up posters means a lot less work. If you want to remain anonymous, meet with your friends before or after school to put them up in privacy. Some students who've put up posters in their schools have found that they can be torn down or defaced by a few unsupportive students. If this happens to you, don't give up! If your posters get taken down, or defaced, put more up in their place. Usually after a while of this the people removing them will get the message.

Another way to make sure your posters aren't defaced is to put them behind glass or laminate them. This is where having a staff member on your side can be a huge benefit.

GET PEOPLE TALKING

Discussing homophobia and transphobia with friends, classmates and teachers opens up a huge number of opportunities to talk about how discrimination affects people, and what can be done to challenge it. But we know it's a little easier said than done.

Doing this on your own can be a fairly big task, so having teachers and friends who are also challenging homophobia and transphobia can make it a lot easier. Here are some ways that you can get the conversation started:

- » Talk to a supportive teacher about discussing same sex attraction, gender diversity and being intersex in class. It could be as simple as using positive examples in their subject area or making sure this stuff gets covered properly in sex ed.
- » Use your assignments to start conversations. For example, some students have chosen to do their English oral presentations on equal marriage rights or their Music or Art assignments on how artists express their sexuality, gender or intersex status through their work.
- » Talk to teachers about inviting guests from community organisations that support gender diversity, sexual diversity or being intersex to speak at your assemblies or to come into your class. Contact one of the organisations listed at the back of this guide for more information.

Some people may worry that if you start talking about homophobia or transphobia, everyone will assume you're gay or transgender yourself (whether you are or not). We think this shouldn't matter, but we know that having a group of students and teachers working together can help you out. With a group working together, different people can start lots of discussions.

JOIN SAFE SCHOOLS COALITION AUSTRALIA

Check to see if your school is a member of the coalition at safeschoolscoalition.org.au.

Member schools have made a commitment to supporting sexual and gender diversity, as well as challenging homophobic and transphobic bullying. If your school isn't a member, ask your teachers and principal about joining. Member schools gain access to expert training, resources and advice. Be counted.

**THIS IS A
DISCRIMINATION
FREE ZONE.
HOMOPHOBIA AND
TRANSPHOBIA
WILL NOT BE
TOLERATED.
K THANKS.**

MINUS18.ORG.AU

Small text: Read to create change in schools





CHALLENGING HOMOPHOBIA AND TRANSPHOBIA

Schools tend to be eager to stamp out bullying of all varieties – yet there is a lot that happens in schools that teachers and staff are unaware of. If a student is bullied without anyone knowing, then there's no way for that person to receive support.

Basically, a school that knows when and where homophobia or transphobia are happening is more likely to support students who are trying to do something about it. Here are a couple of ideas that might make it easier to find out what's going on:

KEEP A RECORD

Keep a log of every instance of homophobic or transphobic bullying you see or hear. Record the time, who was involved, what happened and who saw it. Record all incidents, even things you might consider 'small', such as name-calling or negative language. When you and your friends have collected a number of incidents, take them to a trusted teacher, year level coordinator, or principal and tell them what is going on. If something happens that needs urgent attention, tell a teacher straight away.

ASSESS YOUR SCHOOL

You can assess how supportive your school is by completing a Safe Schools Coalition student survey. These are available online through the Safe Schools Coalition Australia website. They are basically short questionnaires that ask a series of questions about what your school is like – how much transphobia and homophobia people witness, and what kind of visible support is in place for same sex attracted, gender diverse and intersex students.

The results of these surveys can be a great starting point to give you specific areas that your school may need to improve on. Make sure you pass the results on to your teachers, and talk to them about what they can do to help with the next steps.

UPDATING SCHOOL POLICY

A policy is basically a written guide about what's expected from staff, students and families at your school. Some of your school policies might be found in the front of your school diary, or on your school website. Have a read, and if you think there are some missing, ask to see the bullying policy, and any policy on supporting diversity. If they exist, make notes when you're reading them if it helps. From here, you will be able to see what they cover and what's missing.

Do your school's policies specifically mention homophobia, transphobia, gender diversity, or intersex status?

It's really important that the policy specifically mentions that homophobic and transphobic bullying is wrong and will not be tolerated at your school. If homophobia and transphobia are not mentioned specifically, it is much easier for staff and students to make excuses about not doing anything about it or to ignore it altogether.

Try to find some examples of other Australian high schools that have this in their policy, and question why it is taking your school so long to 'catch up'.

Sometimes schools will use the excuse that "there's no homophobia or transphobia here" so there's no need to mention it. This is where your homophobic and transphobic incident logs come in handy, as you can show your school just how much of this specific type of bullying is occurring without them knowing.

Ask a member of staff what the process is for changing a policy and see if you can get a group of people together, including student leaders who can help you out.

You can also suggest that in addition to updating the school policy, that your school keeps a specific record of any bullying or incidents that are homophobic or transphobic. It's a great way for them to show other staff and students what's happening and whether any improvements are being made over time.



CHANGING LANGUAGE

Challenging the language of classmates and teachers can have a massive impact on transphobia and homophobia, particularly if a group of students do it together. Creating spaces free from negative language is a big step in actively standing out against discrimination and bullying, and making sure other students realise that what they say can be hurtful and insulting.

If another student makes offensive comments you have the right to challenge them, or to ask your teacher to challenge them. This can happen in lots of different ways.

You won't always get the response that you want. That's pretty normal. The important thing is to keep going – attitudes may take a while to change, but the more you or others say it, the more likely it is that the message will eventually sink in.

CALL THEM OUT

One way to challenge transphobia or homophobia is to place the responsibility back on the person making the comments. Being labelled a "homophobe" (someone who is homophobic) isn't a nice title to have, and isn't something most people want to be known as.

Responding with "stop being a homophobe" or "you're being transphobic" can make the person aware that their actions aren't OK. It also puts the responsibility back on them, making it their problem to fix.

If your teacher makes a homophobic or transphobia remark, this is a more serious issue. If you don't feel able to challenge them directly, you should make a record of exactly what they said or did and report it to someone in school leadership – a principal or assistant principal – or another teacher you trust.

STOP "THAT'S SO GAY"

The phrase "that's so gay" is often said without any thought about what it actually means. In reality, what a person is actually saying is "that's so same sex attracted" – which doesn't exactly make a lot of sense. Some people argue that they don't mean it as an insult to people who might be

gay or same sex attracted – but the fact is, using the word "gay" as a replacement for words like "crap" and "stupid" is saying that gay people are all those things.

There are lots of possible responses to a phrase like "that book is so gay". You can point out the fact that "the book doesn't actually have feelings for other books" so they're not making any sense. You might want to remind them to "think before they speak" because they could be insulting people without even realising. You can even explain to them that when they use "gay" in place of words that mean "bad", they sound like a homophobe.

Even if they don't stop, other people around can see what you're doing and will be getting the message too, so don't give up.

RESPECT IDENTITIES

Nobody likes it when people don't respect who they are. It sounds simple, and it really should be. For gender diverse students it can be hard to get everyone just to use the name and pronoun preferred by that person (e.g. he, she or they). It makes a massive difference if you can do this, and get everyone else to do it too. Schools need to be supportive if a student wants to change their name – people do it all the time – and should be just as supportive about changing a pronoun.

Students shouldn't have to put up with questions or comments about their gender identity and the way they express it. The same goes for students who are intersex; just because someone has been open about their intersex status, it doesn't mean they want to talk about it all the time.

Bisexual students can also face criticism about their identity, and negative comments about why and who they're attracted to. Phrases like "they're just confused" aren't necessarily true, and don't respect a person's own identity and sexuality.

If you have difficulty changing people's language, you can report it to the school, or another adult. If all else fails and you still feel that your school has not done enough to challenge language, or respect students' identities, you can check out one of the support organisations at the back of this guide.

SHARING INFO

It makes a big difference if all students have access to information and resources on the topics of gender identity, same sex attraction or being intersex. Some students may not feel comfortable asking a teacher for information, so your school should provide lots of different options. These different resources can be shared in a common room, the wellbeing office, in the library or via the school intranet and social media.

For digital copies of resources, to request merchandise, and for recommended books and videos, you can head to minus18.org.au.

RESOURCES AND VIDEOS

Does your school have resources on being intersex, or on same sex attraction and gender identity?

If it does, have a look at it to see how relevant and up to date they are. If not, you can encourage your school to order some, or find them yourself. There are heaps of free resources and videos available online and from local groups (like the ones in the back of this guide). It would also be a good opportunity for you put a poster up in the office to show other students it's a safe place to discuss their sexuality or gender identity.

Two great resources are 'OMG I'm Queer' and 'OMG My Friend is Queer', both available from Minus18 and Safe Schools Coalition.

BOOKS

Have a look in your library for books that talk about same sex attraction, being intersex or gender identity. If you feel like it, ask the librarian to help.

If there isn't much there, you could suggest to the library staff that it would be worth ordering some. There are some great fiction and non-fiction books with a focus on same sex attraction and/or gender diversity. There might even be some relevant papers or magazines that you could get delivered on a regular basis to put in the library.

ONLINE INFORMATION

Can you access websites from school computers that give information about gender diversity, same sex attraction or being intersex? Some students don't have access to the internet at home, or it is monitored by their family so having access at school is really important.

Try accessing the website minus18.org.au, safeschoolscoalition.org.au or some of the groups listed at the back of this guide. Are any of them blocked? If so, for what reason? Speak to a teacher about the importance of allowing students to access them at school, and let them know why this matters.

SERVICES

Does your school provide information on services that support young people in your local community?

It's a good idea for services to be promoted to all students, and this can be done in a few different ways. Posters and information packs can usually be ordered from services such as youth groups, counselling providers or health services.

When you get hold of this information, place it in easily accessible locations, such as the student wellbeing office or school library. You never know who this information might help.

MERCHANDISE

There is a whole range of other things you can use to spread the message about supporting gender identity, sexual diversity and intersex status, and challenging transphobia and homophobia. This includes things like posters, stickers, wrist bands, pens, flags, badges, t-shirts and more! These items are really great to have at events or activities to give away to supportive students.

You might also like to get creative and make your own. Think about the key messages you want to get across to other students, and get together a group to workshop your ideas. Also, don't forget the tips from earlier on about effective posterings!



HOLDING EVENTS

Having events at your school that raise awareness of homophobia and transphobia as well as start conversations about gender and sexual diversity is a great way to get more people involved. It can also be a useful way to start a group and find out who else is interested in standing out with you.

There are heaps of different events you can run. Some can be a lot of work, so the more students and teachers you have on board, the easier it will be. Start by having a meeting that brings together everyone who wants to help out – this could be just your friends, your supporters, or include teachers, captains or other student leaders. The first thing you need to work out is what type of event you want to run.

IDEAS FOR EVENTS

Your group could decide it wants a school-focused event that raises awareness for sexual and gender diversity, a fundraiser for a local charity, or both! Brainstorm ideas about how the event will take place, and whether or not you will need some money to make it happen. Here are a few ideas for low-cost events:

Speakout!

Invite some guest speakers, or line up some students and teachers to come along and 'speakout' on a relevant topic. It could be 'why we support equal marriage' or 'why our school supports gender diversity'. Book a room or hall and advertise around the school.

Casual Clothes Days

Students make a gold coin donation and are allowed to wear casual clothes for the day. The money could go towards a local group, to your school group, towards resources, or even relevant books and DVDs for your library.

Free Film Screening

Find a film you could show at lunchtime or after school with themes of gender diversity or sexual diversity. You could even run a mini film festival.

Sausage Sizzle

Get some friends together at lunch time and have a sausage sizzle. Proceeds can go towards a charity organisation, or help your school challenge homophobia and transphobia. Make signs to let people know what their money will be spent on.

International Day Against Homophobia and Transphobia (IDAHOT)

May 17 is IDAHOT, and your school can participate by inviting guest speakers from organisations that support sexual and gender diversity or by running activities throughout the day.

Intersex Awareness Day (IAD)

October 26 is an internationally observed awareness day designed to highlight the challenges faced by intersex people.

International Day of Silence

Encourage students to participate in the International Day of Silence in April, where each person takes a vow of silence to raise awareness for the name calling and homophobia and transphobia that goes unnoticed in schools.

Spirit Day / Wear It Purple Day

In August students donate a gold coin to wear purple for the day (such as clothes, ribbons or pins) and even decorate their classrooms in purple to raise awareness of the high levels of bullying of same sex attracted, gender diverse and intersex students.

Rainbow Sports Day

Speak to your PE teachers about putting on a special rainbow sports day. Check out the 'Fair Go Sport' project run by the Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission for inspiration.

FUNDRAISING

If you're setting up a group, think about whether it might be a good to fundraise for your activities. Events like the ones listed above are a great way to do this. Think about what kind of things you could spend money on, and what you can do for free.

You may also be keen to fundraise for local or national organisations or charities. Do some research and spend some time thinking about your options. Get in touch with the group you pick and ask them to tell you how they might spend the money you raise.

Whatever events you decide to put on, make sure they're fun, easy for everyone to get involved in and send a strong message to the entire school. Anything that raises awareness of homophobia or transphobia is a fantastic place to start.



FORMING A STAND OUT GROUP

Students across Australia have already set up gender and sexual diversity groups in their schools. These groups are sometimes called 'Stand Out Groups', 'Gay-Straight Alliances', 'Queer-Straight Alliance', 'Diversity Groups', or have their own unique name.

The idea of a group is to bring together students who are gender diverse, same sex attracted or intersex with their allies and supporters in order to challenge homophobia and transphobia and generally make schools more inclusive and supportive of gender and sexual diversity.

There is no one right way to organise a group, but the following steps might help you get started.

Give your group a stand out name

You could do this by having a mini competition or vote. You can also create logos or fact sheets about why you've created your group.

Find out the rules

Ask a teacher what the process is for setting up any kind of club or group in the school. Do this with a friend if you can so that you can both ask questions and make sure you're getting all the info you need. You may need to go away and prepare before you take the next step.

Find some supportive teachers

It's going to be much easier to do anything if you have a least one teacher on your side. They can help you work with other staff members, school leaders, community groups, and the school council or board.

Pick a place and time to meet

Think about what rooms are available that offer privacy but are also easy to find. Some groups meet during lunch time; others after school. Talk about what works best for others and be flexible if you need to.

Hold a meeting

It can feel like a big step, but go for it! Having some food and drink available can really help get people along. Ask a teacher if they can help provide refreshments for you. Once you get together, talk about whether you want to form an agreement about how you work together to make sure the meetings are safe and useful.

Don't be discouraged if only a few people turn up! A small group of passionate people can create big change.

Create an online space

Set up a website, blog, or closed Facebook page for your group. Ask a supportive teacher whether you can put a link to the group on your school's website.

Spread the word

Figure out the best way to advertise the group in your school. This could include announcements in assembly or classes, listing in the school bulletin/newsletter, posters, flyers, Facebook group or event, word of mouth, setting up a lunchtime stall, chalking on pavements, and more. Be creative!

Get more people involved

Make links with your school welfare or wellbeing team – they should be able to refer other students to the group. Encourage the whole school to participate in events like IDAHOT, Pride, Mardi Gras, or even an equal marriage rally.





OUR STORIES

HERE ARE JUST SOME OF US WHO ARE
STANDING OUT. YOU'RE NOT ALONE.



MICHAEL

ANTI-HOMOPHOBIA TASK FORCE

What made you challenge homophobia at your school? In year 11 I went to talk to the school counsellor to check what resources we had at the school on sexuality and gender diversity. As it turned out, you only ever got resources on sexuality if you specifically asked for them – they weren't on display with the other resources. I thought this was a bit crap (and so did the counsellor), so she and I had a meeting with the vice-principal, getting conversations started on what the school was doing to support sexual diversity.

What happened from those conversations? From there, the three of us started an "anti-homophobia task force" around the school with students and staff. We made posters, and put them up around the school, which was pretty awesome, since up until this point there had been nothing around.

We also did a presentation on International Day Against Homophobia and Transphobia at a full school assembly, which all the students and teachers thought was really moving. Everyone got behind it, it was pretty amazing.

What sort of impact have you made so far? I sort of noticed that what we were doing was working when other students came up to us who were asking for help with their sexuality. It just felt really good – especially when guys on the football team got behind the initiatives. That sort of stuff is just so important, 'cause it shows that sexuality doesn't matter any more, and that everyone can get along – as cheesy as that sounds.

What advice would you give to other students? Don't even worry about the kids who won't appreciate what you're doing. Be confident about whatever you do – the more you believe in what you're doing, the more everyone else will.



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SAME SEX ATTRACTED YOUTH AND FRIENDS

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Why was SSAYF created? We created SSAYF (which stands for 'Same Sex Attracted Youth and Friends') after being inspired by other schools and what they're doing. We really thought it would be beneficial to have a sexual and gender diversity group in our school environment. We didn't really have that much of a problem with homophobia or transphobia but we really felt there was a bit of ignorance. Sexuality wasn't talked about much and we thought it needed to be out there. We also thought that as an all girls school, we wanted to be a powerful image of women, and accepting of all different ways of life.

What difficulties have SSAYF faced? Definitely striking a balance between privacy and activism. So, when SSAYF started we wanted it to be a safe, welcoming environment for everyone, and we didn't want people to be afraid about coming. So we made it a little bit private but still welcoming for those who wanted to come. This

year, we've tried to become more of a presence in the school. We've "come out" a bit, and wanted to really have an impact.

What's a typical SSAYF meeting like? Some of the things we do in SSAYF are sit around and chat, usually we have after school meetings with beanbags and food, and what we like to do to start off our meeting is go around, talk about our week, and usually that leads into some form of discussion. So really what we do is talk as friends. When issues come up, it's so good to be able to discuss them with people who are accepting of you.

What advice would you have for others? It really helps to have people around to support you – so friends, people at school, or even people outside of school who are there to encourage you. One of the things we were surprised about at SSAYF was how many people were actually supportive. Once it started, people were coming to me saying "this is really great – I wouldn't have thought of it before – I'm so glad this is happening". Try not to be too afraid; it's difficult, but once you're there, it changes the school environment, and feels really fantastic.



SOFA

SAME SEX ATTRACTED, OTHER AND FRIENDS ALLIANCE

How did SOFA all come together? We set SOFA up to provide support for queer students at our school so they could feel comfortable being themselves. The homophobia experienced around the school was verbal, but extended to attitude as well, phrases like “that’s so gay” or “do this, or you’re a faggot”. The sort of thing that’s pretty typical of an all boys school.

What difficulties have you faced? Some of the difficulties we faced when we tried to start SOFA was people saying that there wasn’t really a need for gay students to have their own group. We started putting up anti-homophobia posters around school. Some were torn down, but they also started conversations, and the support that we had in our school grew.

What impact has SOFA made on Melbourne High School? When we started up SOFA, we invited a speaker from Minus18 to our school assembly.

The guy who spoke had only recently left high school, and spoke about his experiences with homophobia and transphobia how things have changed after only being out of school for a few years. It was such a personal story - it changed the students’ way of thinking about homophobia and transphobia, and really clicked with them that homophobia is actually something that can cause a lot of hurt.

The most amazing aspect of SOFA? By far the stand out moment for SOFA was attending Pride March this year where lots of students from the school, in the group and even teachers came along to support us. It was amazing – we got the largest cheers. We had the support of the entire queer community, but also from the school community.

Do you have any advice for other students? Get teachers to support you. We have so many supportive teachers here, and they’ve helped us out more than we could have imagined.



TATUM

TRANSITIONING AT HIGH SCHOOL

How did you Stand Out at your school? I grew up in a beachside town in Western Australia. It was a pretty chilled out environment. I'm a transgender female, and I've been living like this for about 6 months nearly.

The way I've stood out against transphobia at my school has been to educate people as much as I can about what being transgender actually means. I found that there has been just so much misinformation on a lot of the basic concepts. Probably the biggest misunderstanding is that sexuality and gender identity are the same thing.

What was the hardest part about Standing Out? It was scary! When I transitioned at school I started wearing a dress, which was confronting for some people. Some people spread rumours, and that day it felt like every single eye was on me.

Where did you get support? I spoke to my school councillor who linked me into some organisations that really helped me in my transition, like Minus18. My food tech teacher approached me and told me that she was really proud of me as well. But the biggest support for me came from my family.

What advice do you have for other students wanting to stand out? Finding the confidence to transition and be myself was so important. Having support is too. Try joining some sexuality and gender diversity groups in your area or online and establish a good support base if possible, like staff at school, friends or family. It's scary, but for me it was totally worth it.

I'm living how I wanted to live for my whole life. I'm using the girls' toilets and locker rooms, and I'm treated in the same way as all my female friends are treated. I just feel amazing.



ASHIN

SCHOOL UNIFORM POLICIES

What made you want to Stand Out at your school?

I define myself as genderqueer - don't really identify as a man, or use the 'he' pronoun, but I use that term because sometimes I have days where I feel more feminine and some days where I feel more boyish.

I didn't feel comfortable at all wearing the "girls" uniform at school. It also didn't really make sense to me why the boys got to wear pants and the girls had to wear tights and the skirt. I mean, it that wasn't the type of thing I wore at home, and it made me feel uncomfortable.

How did you go about getting your school on board?

The way I went about it was to figure out what was going on in other schools. I met some friends on Minus18, some of them were genderqueer identifying. They told me about how they set up a

meeting with their principal, and got permission to wear the uniform that they wanted.

So I spoke to my friends at school, then to one of my supportive teachers, and from there we set up a meeting with my principal. I was really nervous, but the meeting actually went really well; we spoke about uniforms and about what the school's policy was - that sort of thing. I don't think I was surprised it went well, but it was definitely a relief.

How did you feel after?

After that I felt way more comfortable. The way I would describe it is that I finally felt out and proud about it. I felt I was finally representing myself how I wanted to, not how society wanted me to be.

What advice would you give other students standing out?

I would definitely say 'do it', because you have the right to! Having a supportive teacher is a really good help - I also think you'll be surprised by how supportive some people can be. If you're finding it too challenging, there's lots of support out there for you outside of school too.



ALICE

STAND OUT GROUP SPECTRUM

What made you want to start Spectrum? I didn't feel there was an overwhelming desperation for a group to be formed at school, but I definitely witnessed a lot of casual homophobia. My friend Michael and I set up Spectrum to create a safe space within the school for people who were unsure of their sexuality, or coming out, or whatever, and give them a place to talk openly about what they're going through. Especially getting support from people who've gone through the same things...I know that's exactly what I needed when I first came out.

How did it go from there? We first started meeting one lunch time a week and mainly discussed various issues like media representation, marriage, coming out, religion (which was surprisingly positive), legal issues in Australia and the rest of the world. We set up an anonymous

suggestion/question box in the library for all students, we made posters and a banner together which we used at Pride March and at a few equal marriage rallies.

What's the most amazing thing about standing out? Just one thing? Haha. We had 40 people turn up to our first meeting which was completely mind-blowing. Teachers approached us wanting to help out, and everyone was quick to come out of their shells and talk openly about who they are and how they feel.

What advice do you have for those wanting to stand out? I'd have to say try and start as soon as possible, especially if you're trying to start up a group. It took us three months of meetings and planning / organising with the school and each other but it was totally worth it.

Also, I'd say don't give up! You don't have to change the thinking of every single student either - helping just one person is enough to make a massive difference. Seriously, every little bit counts.

A sunset scene at a beach intersection. In the foreground, a person is seen from behind, walking away. To the right, another person is walking towards the camera. A traffic light pole stands in the center, with a sign for 'MARINE' and 'JACKA'. The sky is a mix of orange, yellow, and blue, with clouds. The ocean is visible in the background.

NEED MORE SUPPORT?

NO MATTER WHERE IN AUSTRALIA
YOU ARE, WE'VE GOT YOUR BACK

MORE PLACES TO GO

AUSTRALIA WIDE

SAFE SCHOOLS COALITION AUSTRALIA

Nationally convened by the Foundation for Young Australians (FYA), Safe Schools Coalition Australia is proud to create change in schools to build safer and more inclusive environments for same sex attracted, intersex and gender diverse students, teachers and families. FYA is a national independent non-profit organisation dedicated to all young people in Australia.

safeschoolscoalition.org.au

MINUS18

Australia's national organisation for LGBT youth, Minus18 is young people leading change, building social inclusion and advocating for an Australia free of homophobia and transphobia.

Jump on to the website, get to know other same sex attracted and gender diverse young people, access resources and advice, and get info on upcoming events.

minus18.org.au

HEADSPACE

Headspace is the national youth mental health foundation and supports young people who need someone to talk to or who are going through a tough time. Check out their website to find your nearest headspace centre or for online mental health support.

headspace.org.au

QLIFE

QLife is a counselling and referral service for people of diverse sex, genders and sexualities. QLife provides nationwide, peer supported telephone and online chat support to LGBTI people of all ages.

1800 184 527 qlife.org.au

OII AND AISSG

Organisation Intersex International Australia and Androgen Insensitivity Syndrome Support Group (AISSG) Australia provide support and education by and for intersex people.

oii.org.au

aissga.org.au

ACT

SEXUAL HEALTH AND FAMILY PLANNING ACT

SHFPACT is a health promotion charity supporting schools to deliver relevant and effective sexuality and relationships education for ALL students.

shfpact.org.au

BIT BENT

Bit Bent is a social support group held in Belconnen and Woden for young people who want to hang out with other LGBTIQ or questioning young people, in a safe and friendly space.

NSW

FAMILY PLANNING NSW

Family Planning NSW provides reproductive and sexual health services as well as information and health promotion for doctors, nurses, teachers and other health, education and welfare professionals.

fpnsw.org.au

TWENTY10

Twenty10 is a community organisation working with and supporting people of diverse genders, sexes and sexualities, their families and communities in NSW of all ages. It incorporates the Gay and Lesbian Counselling Service NSW, including specialised services for young people.

twenty10.org.au

NT

NORTHERN TERRITORY AIDS AND HEPATITIS COUNCIL

NTAHC provides a range of programs supporting LGBT health, with a particular focus on preventing transmission of HIV, Hepatitis C, STIs and minimising the physical and social impact of HIV/AIDS and Hep C.

ntahc.org.au

QLD

FAMILY PLANNING QUEENSLAND

Family Planning Qld provides sexual and reproductive health clinical services across QLD. They also provide education and training to health professionals, teachers and community leaders.

fpq.com.au

OPEN DOORS YOUTH SERVICE

Open Doors provides counselling and support services to young people who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual and/or transgender. They also provide support to families.

opendoors.net.au

SA

SHINE SA

SHine SA (Sexual Health Information Networking and Education SA) works in partnership with government, health, education and community agencies, and communities, to improve the sexual health and wellbeing of South Australians.

They are the SA provider of Safe Schools Coalition Australia.

shinesa.org.au

TAS

WORKING IT OUT

Working it Out provides services designed to meet the needs of people negotiating their sexuality and/or gender identity and intersex status through individual counselling and support, support groups, student education, workplace training, and community education.

workingitout.org.au

VIC

SAFE SCHOOLS COALITION VICTORIA

SSCV is a coalition of schools, staff and students dedicated to supporting gender and sexual diversity and challenging discrimination in all Victorian schools.

They are the VIC provider of Safe Schools Coalition and based out of GLHV.

sscv.org.au

MINUS18

In addition to its national activities, Minus18 in Victoria runs the annual Same Sex Formal, social and dance events, Stand Out workshops and an online social network for same sex attracted, and gender diverse young people.

minus18.org.au

WA

FREEDOM CENTRE

Freedom Centre is an organisation and drop in centre for young people to support each other and their communities to be informed, happy and healthy about their sexuality, sex and gender.

freedom.org.au

YOUR LEGAL RIGHTS

Discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation, intersex status or gender identity is prohibited under several laws in Australia. Knowing about some of this can be useful to help respond to questions or concerns that others might have.

The Sex Discrimination Act (2013) states that it is against the law to discriminate against a person on the basis of sexual orientation, gender identity and/or intersex status. This can include discrimination and bullying in places of work and study.

Schools that don't challenge homophobic or transphobic bullying or that maintain restrictive policies around uniform, personal records and access to bathroom facilities could be breaking the law.

DISCRIMINATION

Discrimination can either be direct or indirect. Direct discrimination occurs when a student is treated less equally compared to other students because of their sexual or gender identity.

Indirect discrimination occurs when a school imposes a requirement, rule or practice:

- » that a student with specified attributes cannot comply with;
- » that a higher proportion of students without the specified attributes can comply with;
- » that is not reasonable having regard to the circumstances of the case.

Despite the laws differing in each state and territory, discrimination is not allowed at most schools, even if your school discriminates without meaning to.

An example of this might be not allowing a student to stay in a particular room at school camp, not being allowed to start a school club, or even expelling a student on the basis of their sexual identity, gender identity or because they are intersex.

It's also your school's responsibility to ensure that you are safe from harassment, such as students or teachers making negative jokes, threats, or offensive remarks based on gender identity, sexuality or being intersex.

Safe Schools Coalition Australia is a great starting point for getting assistance to create change in your school.

RELIGION

Getting religious schools involved may seem a bit trickier, but there are plenty of students and teachers in Australia standing out in these schools.

Every school values the health and wellbeing of students, and respect for differences. All schools agree that bullying of any kind is harmful and should not be accepted. When a student is bullied in a homophobic or transphobic way, the school should respond in the most effective way possible.

Setting up a "diversity group" within a religious school that promotes the acceptance of all students (including those who are gender diverse, intersex or same sex attracted) should be encouraged.

It's important to consider that some people will want to connect their own identity with their faith and spiritual beliefs. For many, religion goes hand in hand with sexual identity, gender identity and intersex status.

Try to talk about challenging homophobia and transphobia as a way to make sure everyone is safe and able to be happy and healthy. Everyone from every religion can agree that we all should have the right to be healthy and happy, so challenging homophobia and transphobia is about achieving that shared aim.

CREATED BY

MINUS18

Australia's national organisation for LGBT youth, Minus18 is young people leading change, building social inclusion and advocating for an Australia free of homophobia and transphobia.

Jump online for support, chat, events and resources.

WWW.MINUS18.ORG.AU

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