

Inclusive Practice

UNDERSTANDING THE DIFFERENCES:

LESBIAN, GAY, BISEXUAL, TRANSGENDER AND INTERSEX PEOPLE

When you speak about ‘the general population’ or ‘the mainstream’, you are talking about ‘LGBTI’ people in those communities too. LGBTI people have many different ways of living their lives; there is no such thing as ‘the LGBTI lifestyle’.

There are many ‘LGBTI communities’ (plural!) – there is no single ‘LGBTI Community’.

INCLUSIVE PRACTICE

WHAT DOES ‘LESBIAN’ MEAN? A lesbian is a person who self-describes as a woman and who has experiences of romantic, sexual, and/or affectional attraction solely or primarily to other people who self-describe as women. Some women use other language to describe their relationships and attractions.

WHAT DOES ‘GAY’ MEAN? A gay man is a person who self-describes as a man and who has experiences of romantic, sexual and/or affectional attraction solely or primarily to other people who self-describe as men. Some men use other language to describe their relationships and attractions.

WHAT DOES ‘BISEXUAL’ MEAN? A bisexual person is a person of any gender who has romantic and/or sexual relationships with and/or is attracted to people from more than one gender. Some people who fit this description prefer the terms ‘queer’ or ‘pansexual’, in recognition of more than two genders. Although ‘bi-’ technically refers to two, it is often used by people who have relationships with and/or attractions for people of more genders than just women or men.

WHAT DOES ‘TRANS’ MEAN? Trans and Transgender are umbrella terms often used to describe people who were assigned a sex at birth that they do not feel reflects how they understand their gender identity, expression, or behaviour. Most people of trans experience live and identify simply as women or men; most do not have ‘a trans identity’. In addition to women and men of trans experience, some people do identify their gender as trans or as a gender other than woman

or man. People from Aboriginal/Indigenous and Torres Strait Islander communities often use sistergirl or brotherboy. People from societies around the world with more than two traditional genders often use culturally specific language.

WHAT DOES 'INTERSEX' MEAN? A person with an intersex characteristic is a person born with physical characteristics that differ from modern medical norms about strictly 'female' and strictly 'male' bodies. Intersex is not about gender, but about innate physical variations. Most people with intersex characteristics describe their gender as simple women or men, not as a 'third gender'.