



Australian Government
**Department of Agriculture,
Fisheries and Forestry**

Gender Affirmation Guidelines

People Strategy and Safety Branch



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About this guide

The department aims to create a safe and inclusive workplace for all staff - an environment which is inclusive of all gender identities and expressions. Supporting and respecting staff in affirming their gender is a practical way to demonstrate the value we place on transgender staff. It may also reduce the likelihood of misunderstandings and ensure transgender or gender divergent staff do not experience harassment or discrimination in our workplaces.

This guide aims to provide:

- a brief introduction to gender affirmation
- guidance and templates for staff who are affirming their gender and their managers.

NOTE: Transgender people are not obliged to let their colleagues or any other work-related party know that they have or intend to affirm their gender in the workplace. It is not mandatory.

This guide should be used by:

- those who choose to publicly affirm their gender in the workplace
- managers and colleagues of staff members affirming their gender.

Understanding gender affirmation

Transgender - or trans for short - is an umbrella term for those whose gender differs from that which they were assigned at birth. This includes binary trans people (trans men and trans women) and non-binary trans people, who may use descriptors like gender-queer, bi-gender, a-gender, gender 'x' or gender-fluid (though not all non-binary people use trans as a descriptor).

Gender affirmation, also known as transition, refers to the process where a trans or gender divergent person takes steps to socially and/or physically affirm their gender. The distinction between sex and gender is central to understanding gender affirmation.

Sex refers to the biological and physiological characteristics such as chromosomes, hormones, reproductive organs and secondary sexual characteristics.

Gender refers to a person's deeply held internal sense of themselves.

Gender expression refers to the way a person expresses their gender by means, for example, their name, appearance and mannerisms.

There are many ways to undertake gender affirmation. Some people will change their name and the way they dress. Others may undertake a range of medical and/or surgical treatments.

The decision to affirm gender is a very personal one and every transgender person's experience will be different and unique. Detailed information about gender transition is available from the [Gender Centre](#) and [A Gender Agenda](#).

Using Inclusive language

Language is a powerful tool for building inclusion at work. Guidance on using inclusive language is available on the intranet. If you are unsure about which terms to use, you can ask the person what pronouns they use or ask your manager for advice.

Generally, a person who identifies with a gender other than the one they were assigned at birth may be referred to as a transgender person. Once a transgender person chooses to publicly express their gender it is important that they are referred to using their affirmed name and pronouns (e.g. he, she, they).

Gender affirmation and the workplace

It is important that staff members who undertake gender affirmation at work are supported. The department is committed to providing a safe and inclusive workplace for all employees. This is essential to the morale and cohesion of our teams and is conducive to an environment where every person is able to work to their full potential by 'bringing their authentic self to work.' Additionally, the department is obliged to provide a safe workplace free from harassment or fear and a responsibility to comply with the *Sex Discrimination Act 1984*, which prohibits discrimination on the basis of gender.

Staff intending to affirm their gender and who are seeking support to do so in the workplace should consider talking to one or more of the following persons about their intentions to transition in the workplace:

- their manager
- the Culture, Diversity and Inclusion section at culturediversityandinclusion@aff.gov.au
- the Rehabilitation Team in People Support on 1800 312 717 or email PeopleSupportRehab@aff.gov.au
- TELUS (formerly LifeWorks), the department's Employee Assistance Program (EAP) on 1800 273 865
- Pride in Diversity, the department's employer support program provider for LGBTIQ+ workplace inclusion on 02 9206 2139.

For staff members affirming gender who would like support with their transition in the workplace, the above internal and external resources are great options to consider to build a LGBTIQ+ trained support team for all stages of the affirmation process.

Please note, not all managers will be trained in LGBTIQ+ awareness but this can be arranged for both managers and colleagues, and any other persons that the staff member affirming gender may like to be a part of their support team.

Staff undertaking gender affirmation need to be supported in accordance with their social and health needs. It is important to respond promptly to staff who indicate they are intending to affirm their gender at work, so they know they have good support. Respectful communication is key. See the 'Support and further information' section of this guide for more details on the internal and external support services available to transgender staff members and their managers and colleagues.

Every gender affirmation is unique.

Due to the individual nature of the gender affirmation process, managers and support people need to demonstrate a willingness to hear and be open to understanding the individual's needs. The support team needs to have the relevant information to support the staff member in accordance with their needs. However, it is important that the support team does not ask for personal information unrelated to providing workplace support.

Developing a plan

It is recommended that the support team develop a Gender Affirmation Plan. The plan should be personalised and agreed by the support team but should consider proposed timelines and actions that will be taken to assist the staff member during the transition process including:

- expected timeframes
- proposed leave plans if required
- who will be in the support team
- how the change will be communicated to staff
- what training will be recommended or delivered to staff
- details of an event, if applicable, for the staff member to meet with their team in their affirmed gender
- dates when changes of gender and name etc. will be made in Aurion and SAP
- date the staff member will present in the workplace in their affirmed gender.

The plan should be regularly reviewed to incorporate changes. The staff member affirming gender must be comfortable with the activities in the plan.

Letting people know

Communication and planning can help reduce the likelihood of misunderstandings and rumours. Communication should start before the staff member presents in the workplace in their affirmed gender. The staff member and support team will decide who needs to be advised. This may include:

- immediate team
- broader team
- other teams at the site
- local leadership team
- external stakeholders.

The staff member affirming gender will also decide the amount of information to be provided to each group. The privacy of the individual's personal information will need to be balanced with the need for colleagues to understand the change and the expectations of their behaviour. While it is natural for colleagues to be curious, it is important that communications are respectful of the staff member and their privacy. The support team will also decide how the message will be communicated. Options include face-to-face meetings, training sessions and emails.

The manager and staff member may wish to organise a morning tea or similar event to introduce the staff member in their affirmed gender prior to their return to work.

Awareness raising and training

Many staff may not be well informed about gender affirmation and the particular challenges transgender people may face in the workplace. It is recommended that colleagues be provided with access to transgender awareness training, educational resources and the name of someone they can contact if they have any questions. Consideration may also be given to extending these opportunities to the local leadership teams and other co-located staff.

Training options via [LearnHub](#) include:

- Managing Unconscious Bias
- Diversity and Inclusion Essentials

- Monthly LGBTIQ+ awareness training delivered by Pride in Diversity – advertised each month in the Business Bulletin

Pride in Diversity may also be engaged to provide specific transgender awareness training for managers and colleagues of transgender staff. The Culture, Diversity and Inclusion section can be contacted for advice and assistance in arranging this training.

Leave

Managers should be flexible and supportive of the needs of a staff member who is affirming gender to take leave prior to affirming their gender in the workplace. Both personal leave and miscellaneous leave can be accessed depending on the circumstances.

Personal leave can be utilised in accordance with *Clause 6.22-6.35 of the Department of Environment and Energy Enterprise Agreement 2016-19 (DoEE EA)*.

An additional 5 days of paid miscellaneous leave can be approved (refer to *Clause 6.90 of the DoEE EA*) for transitioning staff to allow the individual to prepare in any way required before they return to work as their affirmed gender. This time away for the workplace also allows the manager and support to communicate with the team, organise training and request system changes etc.

Staff are also eligible to purchase leave in accordance with Clause 6.90 of the *DoEE EA*. Further information surrounding leave can be found within [the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry Leave policy](#).

Harassment free workplace

Transgender staff may be particularly vulnerable to harassment and discrimination. Managers must take reasonable steps to prevent staff from being harassed, bullied and discriminated against. In the early days of them affirming gender, staff may inadvertently misname or misgender the transgender staff member. If this occurs, the individual who made the mistake should acknowledge the mistake and apologise to the individual. Deliberate misgendering is unacceptable behaviour and may constitute bullying and harassment.

More information on addressing unacceptable behaviour is available on the [intranet](#). You can also contact your local [Workplace Contact Officers](#). There are also trained LGBTIQ+ [grievance officers](#) working in the Integrity Branch- as well as [confidential contacts](#) for all LGBTIQ+ staff to access -

Bathrooms and facilities

. Staff members can use whichever bathroom facility they choose to which aligns with their gender identity.

In accordance with the Human Rights Commission and the *Sex Discrimination Act 1984* all staff are entitled to use the bathroom and changing facilities in accordance with their gender identity. Under no circumstance should a person who has affirmed gender be asked to use facilities that are not aligned to their gender expression or that they feel uncomfortable to use.

Changing your personal details

NOTE: If at the time of affirming your gender in the workplace you do not have the legal paperwork to change your 'legal name' your log-on details will not change. However, visually to your colleagues and stakeholders your preferred name will be used in outlook (email and contact details).

Table 1 How to change your personal details

Personal Details	Process details	Evidence Required	Forms / Contact/s
Title	Changes can be made at any time without evidence to an alternative title of either Mrs / Ms / Miss / Mr or the non-binary title Mx	No	Change of Personal Details Form
Preferred name *	A preferred first name is a name that you commonly use that is different from your legal given name. Your preferred name can be changed at any time without evidence.	No	Employee Self Service in Aurion Employee > Personal > Edit Change of Personal Details Form
Given name *	Your 'legal given name' can be amended once you have changed your name via the appropriate legal channels. The following should be sent to Payroll: - A certified copy of your legal documents detailing your change of name - Change of Personal Details Form	Yes	Change of Personal Details Form Payroll@aff.gov.au
Gender	Your gender can be amended to either Male/Female or X by completing a Change of Personal Details form	No	Change of Personal Details Form
Email	Your email address and contact details will automatically be updated once any name changes have been processed by payroll.	No	Change of Personal Details Form
Phone	You will need to complete and submit an Extension Number Form to have your phone's	No	Extension Number form

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	display and details updated.		
Security Pass	A new security pass will need to be requested.	Manager approval	Security Pass Request Form Security.passoffice@aff.gov.au
Security clearance	The Security Branch will need to be advised of the staff members change in personal circumstances if you hold a current security clearance.	Varies - as advised by the Security Branch.	security.helpdesk@aff.gov.au or call (02) 6272 3771.
Other accounts	QBT portal (booking flights) and the AOT online booking portal (accommodation) will also need to be updated. The name may also need to be changed in leave spreadsheets, on call registers and team contact lists.	No	
Name badge, desk plates and business cards	New name badges, desk plates and business cards may be requested. A cost code needs to be supplied when the order is placed.	No	Manager approval
Superannuation	Advice should be obtained from your superannuation fund to determine if there will be any impact on superannuation entitlements (some fund calculations are based on gender tables (e.g. based on women living longer than men), and the administrative requirements of the fund to record a change of gender. We report contributions and personal information including gender to government superannuation funds on a fortnightly basis.		Seek advice from your superannuation fund

Support and further information

Internal support services

The below internal contacts are available to provide confidential advice and support to employees and managers about gender affirmation in the workplace.

Table 2 Internal contacts

Service	Details	Contact Details
Culture, Diversity and Inclusion section	Provides confidential advice and support about gender affirmation in the workplace.	culturediversityandinclusion@aff.gov.au
People Support Rehabilitation	Provides confidential advice and support about gender affirmation in the workplace. Case management and return to work expertise to support your time both at and away from the workplace.	1800 312 717 or email PeopleSupportRehab@aff.gov.au
LGBTIQA+ grievance officers	Provide confidential support and advice for LGBTIQA+ employees experiencing bullying and harassment	1800 998 880 or email Integrity@aff.gov.au

External support services

Below are some of the external resources and support services available to both employees and managers. There are a number of other services and resources across the country. Feel free to do your own research outside these channels if you choose.

Table 3 External contacts and resources

Service	Details	Contact Details
Pride in Diversity	Is a national not-for-profit employer support program for LGBTIQA+ workplace inclusion specialising in HR, organisational change and workplace diversity. Pride in Diversity publishes the Australian Workplace Equality Index (AWEI), Australia's national benchmarking instrument for LGBTIQA+ workplace inclusion from which Top Employers for LGBTIQA+ people is determined.	02 9206 2139
Employee Assistance Program	TELUS (formerly LifeWorks') Employee Assistance Program offers confidential coaching and counselling services. These are available to all department employees and their immediate family members in Australia and overseas. Service	Free call 1800 273 865

	contact is available 24/7 to cater for out-of-hours emergency situations.	
A Gender Agenda	A community organisation based in Canberra which works with the intersex and gender divergent community and is engaged in raising awareness of sex and gender diversity issues.	https://genderrights.org.au/

Frequently asked questions

How can I effectively support my colleague through the gender affirmation process?

- Educate yourself on terminology and the issues that transgender people can face.
- Be conscious of the language you and your fellow colleague's use. If you hear a colleague misgendering or using inappropriate language, appropriately correct them.
- Avoid providing unsolicited advice, although well intentioned. A staff member will ask for advice if they want it.
- Be open and honest and acknowledge that you are an imperfect ally, you may make mistakes and that is ok. Correct yourself and be guided by the staff member.
 - Avoid saying things like 'sorry but I've known you as X for so long' as this may place the blame and guilt on the affirming staff member.
- Be conscious of confidentiality and disclosure. What a staff member chooses to tell you in confidence is not necessarily something they want everyone to know.

Which pronoun should I use to refer to a transgender person?

You should use the pronoun requested by the staff member. They will let you know which pronouns to use.

How do I approach a person who has affirmed gender – everything has changed?

A person who has affirmed their gender is much the same person as they were before; they are likely to have the same sense of humour, the same personality and the same likes and dislikes. You should continue to treat them with respect, provide them opportunities to contribute in the workplace, as well as show your support so they can feel that they belong and that they are accepted in the workplace.

What if I feel uncomfortable sharing a toilet or changing facility with someone who is transgender?

If you are uncomfortable sharing those facilities with a transgender person, you can choose to use a toilet or change room in another location, or an accessible toilet or change room. Asking a person to use a facility that is not aligned to their affirmed gender identity or denying them access to bathrooms is gender-based discrimination and is a violation of the *Sex Discrimination Act 1984*.

If an employee goes through a gender transition while they are working, shouldn't they let everyone know, to avoid confusion or embarrassment?

Transgender people are not obliged to let their colleagues or any other work related party know that they have affirmed their gender. In the interests of clarity and courtesy, some transgender

employees may let their immediate or broader team and customers that they regularly interact with know, but this is not mandatory.

If I'm working with someone who has affirmed their gender, and a client calls for them using their former name, what should I say? Should I tell them 'she' is now a 'he'?

There's no 'rule' that covers such a situation, but it is important to note that sharing this personal information without consent is considered unacceptable behaviour and a form of bullying and harassment. It is wise to check with the person who has affirmed their gender and ask how they would prefer this type of situation to be managed. If in doubt, a non-committal response could be, "Let me put you through to X (affirmed name) and (affirmed pronoun) will be able to help you with that".