# Key Terminology

Every LGBTQIA+ person or community will have preferred ways to describe their own sex, gender, and sexual orientation. The use of the acronym *LGBTQIA+* is not intended to exclude any groups but rather be representative of the complexity and diversity of this community.

LGBTQIA+ stands for lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, queer, intersex, and asexual. The + is designed to recognise identities not specifically captured by the acronym, such as pansexual. This acronym is designed to represent a range of diverse sexualities, genders, and sex characteristics.

Below is a guide to common terminology used within the LGBTQIA+ community.

## Overarching terms

* **Sexual orientation** describes a person’s attractions to others.
* **Gender identity** is part of how a person understands who they are in relation to the social construct of gender. Many people assume gender is connected to their biological sex, though gender may differ from a person’s biological sex.
* **Ally** is used to describe a person who supports and stands up for LGBTQIA+, Sistergirl and Brotherboy communities. An ally may or may not identify within the community, such as a gay man may be an ally to bisexuals, lesbians, and trans people. Ally networks may be made up of people who do or do not identify as LGBTQIA+, Sistergirl and/or Brotherboy.
* **Queer** is used as an umbrella term encompassing a range of genders or sexualities. Queer can be used if other terms related to sexuality and gender do not feel right to the person. The use of the term queer should only be used when a person uses it to describe themselves, as it was historically used as a slur.
* **Questioning** refers to in anyone who is determining or questioning their sexual orientation and/or gender identity.

## Biological sex and intersex

* **Biological sex or sex assigned at birth** refers to a person's biological sex characteristics. Historically, sex has been understood as either female or male. However, we now know that some people are born intersex.
* **Intersex** is an umbrella term used to describe a person born with natural variations to physical or biological sex characteristics, such as chromosomes, hormones, or anatomy.  Not all intersex people use the term intersex to describe themselves. Intersex people may identify with a range of genders, and sexualities that have no connection to their intersex status.

## Sexual orientation

* **Lesbian** is primarily understood as a woman who is romantically and/or sexually attracted to other women.
* **Gay** is a person who is romantically and/or sexually attracted to people of the same gender identity as themselves. This term is often used to describe men who are attracted to other men, but some women and gender diverse people may describe themselves as gay.
* **Bisexual** is a person who is romantically and/or sexually attracted to people of two or more gender identities.
* **Asexual**is someone who does not experience sexual attraction.
* **Pansexual** is a person who is romantically and/or sexually attracted to individuals regardless of gender.

## Gender Identity

* **Cisgender** is someone whose gender aligns with the sex they were assigned at birth – someone who is not transgender or gender diverse.
* **Transgender (Trans)** is someone whose gender does not exclusively align with the one they were assigned at birth. Not everyone who fits the definition of being trans will use the term to describe themselves. For example, a man who was assigned female at birth might refer to himself as ‘a trans man,’ ‘a man with a trans history’ or just ‘a man.’  It is important to use the terms someone uses to describe themselves.
* **Gender Affirmation** refers to the process where a trans or gender diverse person takes steps to feel socially and/or physically and/or legally more aligned with their gender. The term affirmation has replaced the term ‘transition,’ as rather than transitioning from one gender to another, a trans person is affirming the identity they know themselves as. This process differs between people and every experience is valid.
* **Brotherboy** refers to Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander transgender people with a male spirit, whose bodies were considered female at birth. Brotherboys live their lives as men. Brotherboys take on cultural, spiritual, and religious roles of men within their communities.
* **Sistergirl** refers to Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander transgender people with a female spirit, whose bodies were considered male at birth. Sistergirls live their lives as women. Sistergirls take on cultural, spiritual, and religious roles of women within their communities.
* **Non-binary**is an umbrella term for someone who identifies as a gender other than a man or a woman. There are a range of non-binary gender identities. Non-binary people may use a range of pronouns such as they/them, ze/zir or he/them.
* **Pronouns**relate to a person’s gender identity and are used to refer to others such as he/she/they. Everyone has pronouns, and it is important that you respect people’s pronouns and do not make assumptions of what pronouns a person may use. It is good practice to introduce yourself with your pronouns.

Please note that not all LGBTQIA+ people will use the specific terms outlined above to describe themselves. If you are unsure, just ask.