# The business case for LGBTQIA+ Inclusion

Times are changing and along with them expectations and legislation are changing too. Initiatives for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Intersex and Asexual (LGBTQIA+) people are important to make sure you, and your organisation or business, can serve customers well, provide great workplaces for your staff or volunteers and meet the needs of your clients/patients.

This guide is designed to provide you with an understanding of why LGBTQIA+ inclusion is so important.

## Culture: Productivity, Engagement and Safety

It is not easy to understand the impact that “being in the closet” has on people. You may not mind if someone is a member of the LGBTQIA+ community, but there might be people in your business who do and as such, you might need to share with them what your stance is on the topic.

People may fear how their relationship with you would change if they did come out to you. Would you make assumptions or stereotypes about them? Would you treat them differently? When there is no way to know for sure, it can just be easier to hide that part of oneself.

The reality is, you may have more LGBTQIA+ customers, volunteers, or staff than you realise. And just like being a member of the LGBTQIA+ community is not something you can see; members of this community cannot tell how you feel, just by looking at you.

Having LGBTQIA+ initiatives at work or signs of safety such as rainbow stickers or pins can make a significant difference in the experience of your staff, customers, volunteers, or patients.

When people who can be open about their identities, they are more likely to be happy to go to work, receive services they need, form meaningful relationships with others and be more engaged and productive.

## A workforce reflective of society

We are all diverse and to be competitive and deliver products and services to a diverse society it is important to understand and reflect that diversity.

LGBTQIA+ employees and customers can help you to understand the LGBTQIA+ market. Having initiatives that openly support LGBTQIA+ inclusion provides those employees and other key stakeholders with a safe space to speak up and share their ideas and suggestions.

## Legal Obligations

Under Federal and State legislation, unlawful discrimination occurs when someone, or a group of people, is treated less favourably than another person or group as a result of race, nationality or ethnic origin, gender, pregnancy or marital status, age, disability, religion, trade union activity and any other characteristic specified under antidiscrimination or human rights legislation.

Workplace discrimination can occur:

* During recruitment processes.
* When determining employment contract terms, conditions, and benefits.
* During training or development opportunities, regarding who receives opportunities and what is offered.
* During employee selection for transfer, promotion, retrenchment, or dismissal.
* When assessing performance and making pay decisions[[1]](#footnote-2).

The following examples demonstrate implicit and explicit workplace discrimination based on gender or sexuality:

* Recruiting a colleague who is not LGBTQIA+ over one who is LGBTQIA+ as the main criteria for your decision.
* Deciding that a job applicant is unsuccessful because “they won’t fit in.”
* Making assumptions about an LGBTQIA+ person having or lacking skills.
* Failing to deal with alleged cases of discrimination in a timely and appropriate manner.
* Failing to award LGBTQIA+ colleagues’ promotions and career progression opportunities, despite meeting all performance expectations.
* Having a workplace culture that makes LGBTQIA+ employees feel uncomfortable or excluded.
* Encouraging or endorsing jokes about LGBTQIA+ people and identities.
* Failing to provide an environment where trans and gender diverse colleagues have access to the facilities and uniforms that align with their gender identity.

## What does this mean for you?

It is important for all businesses to understand that, alongside legal and policy obligations to treat colleagues and customers fairly, LGBTQIA+ inclusion is good for business.

By taking a firm stance on being an inclusive employer and provider, you will get loyal and engaged staff and repeat customers, clients or patients who feel understood and respected. Additionally, creating an inclusive environment will also ensure that you will get more diverse perspectives and be able to provide better services and products in turn.

1. [Workplace discrimination, harassment and bullying](https://humanrights.gov.au/sites/default/files/GPGB_workplace_discrimination_harassment_bullying_0.pdf), Australian Human Rights Commission 2014 [↑](#footnote-ref-2)