



# Rainbow Mob Glossary

VACCHO has developed this Rainbow Mob Glossary to help staff ensure they are using acceptable and respectful terminology when talking about LGBTQIASB+ people within Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

The language, terminology and definitions in this glossary have been developed in consultation with Rainbow Mob, and where possible, is consistent with current legal definitions. However, there is considerable debate within LGBTQIASB+ communities around language and terminology. As such, we acknowledge that the terminology and definitions used here are open to change and cannot capture the complexities of all individual LGBTQIASB+ identities.

The terms in this glossary are not stagnant and will be updated as language evolves. For more information, or to flag any language updates, contact [rta@vaccho.org.au](mailto:rta@vaccho.org.au).

## Language to avoid:

- **asking people what terms they 'prefer'**. When we talk about gender, sex characteristics or sexuality, we're not talking about preferences or choices. We're just talking about how people *are*.

Having a 'preference' can sound as if it's a choice and most people don't feel as if they have a choice in these matters. If you need to, simply ask people what terms they use. If someone discloses to you that they're from one of the LGBTQIASB+ communities, respectfully ask what terms they use to describe themselves, then use those terms.

- **asking if you don't have to** – we all have a right to privacy. We should only have to bring as much of our private selves to work as we want to and feel safe doing. Often LGBTQIASB+ people from different cultures or faith traditions have different family or workplace traditions around disclosure or 'coming out'.



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- **assuming every person who seems comfortable being 'out' in the workplace is 'out' in other settings** – people have the right to disclose about their sexuality or gender identity in their own time and on their own terms.
- **using heteronormative language like 'wife' or 'husband' without checking first** – it assumes all relationships are heterosexual. Use language that acknowledges we have diverse relationships and families, like 'partner', 'parents', 'relationship', 'in a relationship'.

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Where appropriate, VACCHO will use inclusive terms relevant to the particular health topic, such as, "People with a [insert body part]..." For example:

- Topic: Cervical Cancer screening  
"Women and people with a cervix"
- Topic: Testicular Cancer screening  
"Men and people with testicles"
- Topic: Pregnancy  
"Women and Pregnant people"

Contact [rta@vaccho.org.au](mailto:rta@vaccho.org.au) for more information on appropriate inclusive terms.

## Glossary of terms

### **AFAB / AMAB**

Assigned Female at Birth / Assigned Male at Birth. This acronym is primarily used by trans and gender diverse communities.

### **Ally**

A person who considers themselves a friend and active supporter of the LGBTQIASB+ community.

### **Aromantic**

A person who does not experience romantic attraction. Aromantic individuals may or may not also be asexual.

### **Asexual**

A person who does not experience sexual attraction but may experience romantic attraction towards others.

**Bisexual**

A person who is romantically and/or sexually attracted to people of more than one gender.

Note that bisexuality doesn't necessarily assume there are only two genders.

**Cisgender (Cis)**

A person whose gender aligns with the sex they were assigned at birth – someone who isn't trans or gender diverse.

**Gay**

People who are romantically and/or sexually attracted to people of the same sex and/ or gender 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.

**Gender / gender identity**

Refers to a person's sense of whether they are a man, woman, non- binary, agender, genderfluid, or a combination of one or more of these definitions. Gender can be binary (either a man or a woman), or non-binary.

Many people understand their gender as being woman or man. Some people understand their gender as a combination of these or neither.

Gender can be expressed in different ways, such as through behaviour or physical appearance.

**Asexual**

A person who does not experience sexual attraction but may experience romantic attraction towards others.

**LGBTQIASB+**

Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex, Queer and Questioning, Asexual, Sistergirl, Brotherboy '+' used to signify other sexualities and gender not specified in the acronym.

**Non-binary**

A term for a gender identity that sit within, outside of, across or between the spectrum of the man and woman binary.

A non-binary person's gender is not exclusively female or male. They might identify as gender fluid, trans masculine, trans feminine or could be agender (without a feeling of having any gender or having neutral feelings about gender).

## **Pansexual**

A person who is romantically and/or sexually attracted to people of all genders, regardless of their gender.

## **Pronouns**

Pronouns are one way people refer to each other and themselves. Pronouns include the traditional 'he' or 'she', as well as gender-neutral pronouns such as 'they' and 'their', and neo-pronouns such as 'ze' and 'hir'.

Some people use multiple pronouns (e.g. she/they)

Most men, but not all (including trans men), use the pronouns 'he/him.' Most but not all, women (including trans women) use the pronouns 'she/her'. Most, but not all, non-binary people use the pronouns 'they/them'.

Some people use gender-neutral pronouns like 'they/them/their' (e.g. "Pip drives their car to work. They don't like walking because it takes them too long").

If you're unsure what someone's pronouns are, you can ask them respectfully, and preferably privately. Use a question like "Can I ask what pronouns you use?".

Don't ask "What pronouns do you prefer?". A person's pronouns and identity are not a preference. Instead, just ask what pronouns they use.

Note that some people's pronouns may be context specific. Someone might not use their pronouns in a particular environment or around particular people because they do not feel safe or comfortable to do so.

## **QTBIPOC**

Queer, Trans, Black, Indigenous/Intersex People of Colour.

## **Queer**

Often used as an umbrella term to describe the full range of LGBTQIASB+ identities. Some people use 'queer' to describe their own gender and/or sexuality if other terms do not fit.

Note that for some people, especially older LGBTQIASB+ people, 'queer' has negative connotations because of its historical use as a derogatory term and the violence associated with it.

The term has been reclaimed in recent years. While it is still considered derogatory by some members of the LGBTQIASB+ community, it now also encapsulates political ideas of resistance to heteronormativity and homonormativity and is increasingly used, particularly by younger LGBTQIASB+ people, in an empowering way or to describe themselves.

## **Questioning**

A person who is exploring or questioning their gender or sexual orientation. People may not wish to have one of the other labels applied to them yet, for a variety of reasons, but may still wish to be clear, for example, that they are non-cisgender or non-heterosexual.

## **Sex**

Refers to a person's biological sex characteristics. This has historically been understood as either female or male. However, some people are born with natural variations to sex characteristics and are Intersex.

## **Sistergirls (Sistagirls) /**

Refers to trans people within some Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander communities.

## **Brotherboys (Bruthaboys)**

Sistergirls are people assigned male at birth but identify as a woman, or have a female spirit, and can live their lives as women (including taking on traditional cultural female practices). Brotherboys are people assigned female at birth but identify as a man or have a male spirit. Sistergirls and Brotherboys have distinct cultural identities and roles.

These terms can differ between locations, Countries and Nations.

In broader Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, the terms 'Sistagirl' and 'Brothaboy/Bruthaboy' are used as terms of endearment, for women and men respectively, with no reference to gender diversity.

It's also important to note that not all First Nations trans and gender diverse people identify with these terms, but many do.

## Transgender (Trans)

A person whose assigned sex at birth does not match their gender identity. 'Trans' can be used as an umbrella term, but not everyone uses it to describe themselves.

Trans people may choose to live their lives with or without modifying their body, dress, or legal status, and with or without medical treatment and surgery.

Trans people may use a variety of terms to describe themselves including but not limited to:

- man
- woman
- trans woman
- trans man
- non-binary
- agender
- genderqueer
- genderfluid
- trans masculine/masc
- trans feminine/femme

Trans people have the same range of sexual orientations as the rest of the population. Trans people's sexual orientation is referred to in reference to their gender identity, rather than their biological sex. For example, a woman may identify as lesbian whether she was assigned female or male at birth. Trans people may also use a variety of different pronouns. Intentionally using incorrect pronouns to refer to or describe trans people is disrespectful, harmful, and in the workplace, unlawfully discriminatory.