

# TRANSGENDER & GENDER DIVERSE INCLUSION IN SPORT

## RESEARCH

01

Recent research on diversity in communities shows that sports clubs often approach diversity and inclusion through a haphazard and accidental approach, and often feel they do not have the expertise or knowledge to engage with certain forms of diversity. (Spaaij, Magee, Farquharson, Gorman, Jeanes, Lusher, & Storr, 2018). Inclusion on the grounds of sexual orientation and gender identity therefore is left out and not addressed, and clubs may not feel equipped to address these issues.

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The majority of trans and gender diverse people have a negative experience when engaging in competitive sports and sport-related physical activity, and a key barrier to their participation is a lack of inclusive provision and sporting environments (Jones, Arcelus, Bouman, & Haycraft, 2017).

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Sports clubs and teams can be an accepting and affirming place for trans and gender diverse people. Their affirmation process may lead to several challenges, and team members and sports clubs can support a person through this (Storr, Spaaij, Symons, & O'Sullivan, 2017).

There are positive stories across Australia whereby sports clubs have been a safe place and source of support for trans and gender diverse people.

### More information

Read the full *Guidelines for the inclusion of transgender and gender diverse people* in sport on the Sport Australia website.

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If you or your organisation/club does not have the knowledge or experience around trans and gender diverse inclusion, it is fine to ask for help. Research shows that having never met or interacted with a trans or gender diverse person can be a barrier to trans and gender diverse inclusion, and that sharing stories from trans and gender diverse people can help raise awareness and help improve inclusion practices (Barrett & Stephens, 2012).

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Young trans and gender diverse people want to play and engage with sport and exercise. According to the Trans Pathways study (2017), 81.7% of young people would like to exercise more, but don't feel like they can because of financial barriers, discomfort while exercising (e.g. due to wearing binders) and fear or unwillingness to exercise in public.

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89% of trans young people experience peer rejection which impacts their ability to engage in activities such as sports. Therefore, providing welcoming, inclusive, and safe sporting environments can positively impact on the health and wellbeing of trans and gender diverse people (Trans Pathways, 2017).

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Young trans and gender diverse people who have socially transitioned may not have gone through puberty, and by changing their hairstyle or clothing, are often viewed as their affirmed gender (Durwood, McLaughlin & Olson, 2017). This means your club may have young trans people playing in your sports or competitions, without knowing.

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Many trans and gender diverse people have negative experiences in physical education and at school (Robinson, Bansel, Denson, Ovenden & Davies, 2014; Symons, O'Sullivan, Borkoles, Andersen, & Polman, 2014). This causes them to drop out and disengage from sport. Therefore, sports clubs have an important role to include trans and gender diverse people so that they can engage in sports they are passionate about. This is especially important given that trans and gender diverse people may have had negative experiences at an early age.

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The From Blues to Rainbows report (2014), found that 60% of young trans and gender diverse people avoid change rooms, meaning many are put off by sporting clubs and spaces with no inclusive spaces to change (including gyms). Therefore, being able to access safe bathrooms and changing rooms is key to facilitating participation.

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The decision to play on a men's or women's sport team for a trans and gender diverse person can be challenging. The different stages of transition process for a person may mean different choices are involved around which team to play on, especially for someone who is non-binary (Krane, Barak, & Mann, 2012). For example, a trans man who has recently transitioned may have friends and support networks in the women's team they have played on since they were a junior.

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It is important to discuss and identify ways in which to support trans and gender diverse people in particular, because often the experiences of LGBT people in sport, are homogenised and viewed as the same. However, the experiences and support needs of people based on the grounds of gender identity are unique and different to those based on sexual orientation (Caudwell, 2014).

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Being able to participate in sport is important to trans and gender diverse people. A report from the Australian Human Rights Commission in 2015 found that amongst LGBT communities, those surveyed raised concerns about the lack of participation of trans and gender diverse people in sport (Australian Human Rights Commission, 2015).

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Consider trans and gender diverse people, especially young people, as part of a wider social system including friends and families. A young person will often be supported by their family and friends, so there is the option to include and attract more people to your club through new players or volunteers (Trussell, Kovac, & Apgar, 2017).

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Inclusive policies around trans and gender diverse people in sport have been shown to be extremely important in fostering inclusive and welcoming environments, facilitating the participation of non-binary people in particular and individuals playing in women's sports leagues (Travers & Deri, 2011; Buzuvis, 2017).

*Making sport inclusive for everyone*