

Start the
conversation...
and keep it going

**Words, terms and phrases we
use or hear on site**



Toolbox Talk

TOPIC

Start the conversation... and keep it going

Words, terms and phrases we use or hear on site

DATE

OUTCOMES

Conversation is facilitated to raise awareness and education for site-based workers, subbies and project teams on the importance of language and how this affects different people, particularly LGBTQ+ people in the context to the Wear it Purple campaign.

What you should know before delivering this toolbox talk

- What is the support process for workers to action a complaint in your organisation?
- What support mechanisms are in place? Employee Assistance Program (EAP), etc.
- Can you offer LGBTQ+ awareness training on site for workers and leaders? (Your internal HR/Diversity & Inclusion function, Pride in Diversity or InterBuild can help).
- Is someone on site known to the workers who can add a personal element? E.g. they may be a parent of an LGBTQ + child.

We encourage you to be bold, be brave, and open up the conversation to promote good mental health outcomes for everyone on site.

TIP FOR SUCCESS:

This toolbox talk has many options to choose from, some will resonate more than others with you and your team.

It is separated into pages for you to print out and remove anything that you don't think will "hit the mark" with your team.

You should allow 15-20 minutes to review and decide what you want to include in your talk beforehand.





Introduce the reason for the Toolbox Talk

TIP FOR SUCCESS:

Relate topic area to your diverse business, workers, workplace safety, etc.

TIP FOR SUCCESS:

If you have someone on site with a personal connection to LGBTQ+ people, see if they can share their story.

What are we trying to achieve?

An open and honest conversation (without judgment) about the language we use and how it can affect those around you, even if it is just “a joke”. Exclusive language can negatively affect who you are as a person. We must all feel included, which in turn, creates authenticity.

The only way we can be a truly inclusive place to work is with your help. I can talk to you about setting expectations blah blah blah, but it takes all of us to bring it to life.

Depending on your role, your circle of influence, and who you are as a person, there are things we can all do to move the workplace towards one where workplace inclusion is just the norm, starting with the language we use.

Why are we talking about this now?

We all know how to look after our mates when the chips are down with R U OK conversations and this talk is an extension of that as today we talk about our language.

Our words shape our behaviour and influence the behaviour of others, regardless of our intent. Have you ever heard someone say something that didn't sit well with you but you kept quiet to avoid an awkward conversation? We need to look for ‘courage over comfort’ in these situations as our words are heard by those around us and we all want to be included and supported as part of the team.

For those of us who don't always feel included, we hope this talk sparks more conversation and understanding within our team. I challenge everyone to call me out anytime after this talk, respectfully of course!

Australian statistics

Our industry

Construction workers are **six times** more likely to die from suicide than to die from an industrial accident.¹

The suicide rate of young construction workers (15–24) is almost **twice as high** as that of all working-age males.

Up to **one in twenty** construction workers will contemplate suicide each year.²

LGBTQ+ people

75% (or **3 in every 4**) LGBTIQ youth experience some form of discrimination.³

Compared to the general population, LGBTQ+ people are:

- nearly **six times** more likely to experience and be diagnosed with depression.
- over **three times** as likely to report having an anxiety-related condition.

Compared to the general population, LGBTQ+ people are more likely to attempt suicide, specifically:

- LGBTI young people aged 16–27 are **five times** more likely
- Transgender people aged 14–25 are **fifteen times** more likely.
- **35%** of transgender people aged 18 and over reported having attempted suicide in their lifetime.



LGBTIQ people are **two and a half** times more likely to have been diagnosed or treated for a mental health condition in the past 12 months.

73.2% of LGBTIQ people aged 18 and over reported having ever been diagnosed with a mental health condition compared to 45.5% of the general population.

57.2% of transgender and gender diverse people aged 18 and over reported having been diagnosed with depression in their lifetime.

53.2% of transgender and gender diverse people aged 16 and over reported having experienced sexual violence or coercion, compared with 13.3% of the general population.⁴

TIP FOR SUCCESS:

Highlight the stats that you want to share

Choose your top 5 to share with the group

References

1. *Australian Institute for Suicide Research and Prevention (2006) and Mates in Construction*
2. *Mental wellbeing and suicide prevention, WorkSafe.qld.gov.au*
3. *Health and Wellbeing, May 2019, Terang and Mortlake Health Service*
4. *LGBTIQ+ Health Australia, The 2021 update*



TIP FOR SUCCESS:

Engagement works best using personal stories that are reinforced by leadership. We are all human not super-human!

How can we all contribute to improving these statistics?

The answer is, step by step.

Inclusion starts with looking at ourselves

We all have a story.

Do you always feel people respect your story?

It is important to understand how our environment and past experiences have formed us; understand what drives and motivates us. This is different for each person.

The simple truth is that we are all unique, with unique backgrounds, life experiences and personalities.

We gravitate towards people with similar thinking and beliefs as it validates our own.

Yet there is a lot to be gained by working with people who are very different to us, because their values, talents and ideas will challenge and complement ours.

Understanding that what we say and do can be taken differently depending on these factors and we want to “include” people, not make them feel bad or excluded.

This document contains tips and exercises to help start conversations about inclusive language and begin the journey towards making our work sites safe for everyone.

Myth busting

Let's bust some common myths and misconceptions

Reference:

[Words at Work: Building inclusion through the power of language](#) by Diversity Council Australia.

We hear: "that's so PC!"

Inclusive language is not about being 'politically correct' – it is about using language which is respectful, accurate, and relevant to everyone. It is about keeping up with changes over time in our society.

We think people are too sensitive

It can be difficult to 'walk in somebody else's shoes' and understand why they may feel excluded by particular words.

If we haven't experienced exclusion we are less likely to recognize words, phrases and incidents that stereotype or exclude.

"Making a conscious decision to avoid particular words is not about coddling people or shielding them from offense – it's about chipping away at the idea that using language that alienates people is acceptable in the first place.

We've always said it, it's 'the norm'

So why change now?

Language is always evolving. Because "we have always" said

it or done it one way, it is not an excuse for hurtful behaviours that can put someone down or exclude them.

Be open to change and understand we all make mistakes and we all can take steps to improve ourselves.

There are more important issues, why are we wasting our time on this?

Talking about language might seem small, but changing our language is an easy way to create a productive place to work which wants to include everyone.

For example, if you give a small child a drink in a cup and constantly say "don't spill that" in many instances guess what they do?

Yep, they spill some. However, if we change that to "keep it in the cup" they focus on keeping the drink in the cup and not on the words spilling it."

Our brains direct our behaviours – the focus on words is powerful. If we focus on inclusive language, the behaviours will shift to create an inclusive environment.

3 simple steps to inclusive language

It starts with every one of us

Pay attention to our everyday language and how people react to things we say.

Creating new habits using inclusive language requires breaking old habits. We need to think about our language choices otherwise we default to words and phrases we have used in the past.

Remember, we all make mistakes. Try not to get defensive (e.g. "it was just a joke", "don't be so serious"). If you catch yourself out, just apologise, learn from it, and try to avoid doing it again.

Say something – direct language

If we hear someone using language that excludes others, say something. Speaking up is a way of influencing those around us. Change takes time and lots of small steps speaking up.

Focus on the behaviour and avoid labeling, name-calling, or using loaded terms (e.g. calling someone sexist, racist, or homophobic). It is not about laying blame, it is coaching for the behaviour we all want to see.

Try appealing to their better instincts and ask questions (e.g. "I'm sure that you didn't mean that gay guys can't cut it in our industry", "what did you mean by that?")

While we can't control other people's behaviour we can make our views very clear and set limits (e.g. "Perhaps you haven't thought about it before but telling jokes like that can offend people – I'd prefer you don't tell these sorts of jokes around me anymore")

Keep it simple (e.g. "No, I don't think about it that way", "I don't find that funny", "That comment sounds like a put-down of Indigenous Australians/women/ LGBTQ+ people, etc. Is that what you meant?")

If we are not comfortable saying something in front of other people, consider saying something when we are with the person one-on-one (e.g. "Can we have a quick chat about the comment you made earlier? It might not have been a big deal to you but...").

Say something – indirect language

If we don't feel comfortable saying something directly, you can try the indirect approach (e.g. "Wow!", "Ouch!", "Hey, let's keep it professional, ok?")

While not as effective as a direct approach, it does at least show that we have noticed the language is not inclusive and we are uncomfortable with it.

Reference:

[Words at Work: Building inclusion through the power of language](#) by Diversity Council Australia.

Bullying is never acceptable. If you witness or are subject to behaviour that is targeted or repeated, speak to your manager or HR representative.

Tips to remember

Keep an open mind

Be open to changing what we have always thought is 'normal', respectful and appropriate to say.

Be open to learning and understanding about language, conversations and banter which can (even if we don't mean it) exclude.

Try to stand in someone else's shoes and see it from their point of view. How comfortable would you feel if it was one of your loved ones – family or friends. Would you be comfortable for them to be in a workplace that they felt excluded?

We don't have to have all the answers or be perfect – just be open to change.

Focus on the person

Focus on the person first, rather than the demographic group they belong to.

Instead of "Jonah, that gay guy, is new to the team and is interested in leading this project" try "Jonah is new to the team and is interested in leading this project".

Would we refer to another new team member who was straight as "that straight guy"? It shows that labeling of any kind is not needed in any situation.

Instead of "Disabled people" try "people with a disability".

Instead of "It's great having Jenny Lui in the team as Asian people are so good with numbers" try "It's great having Jenny Lui in the team as she has excellent finance skills".

If in doubt, ask

We don't need to know all the answers, just be open to having the conversation. If you're not sure what terminology someone prefers, just ask them.

Keep calm and respond

Sometimes we can say things that exclude others without knowing it or meaning to. If we are called out for not being inclusive, here are some useful ways to respond, especially if we 'didn't mean it like that!'

Getting called out doesn't mean we need to defend ourselves – trivialising someone

else's feelings (e.g. "You're over-reacting!") doesn't help build inclusion.

Instead of attempting to justify our actions (e.g. "I was only joking") try focusing on understanding the other person's perspective.

Say something like "I'm sorry. I didn't mean to offend you." If we are confused about their reaction, ask "Could you explain why what I said was wrong?"

Have the courage to call it out with one another

It can be hard to call someone out on the language they use, especially when it's coming from someone we respect, is a person in power, or even a family member we love.

In fact, it is called out less than half the time we hear it.

Back in 2014, the Construction Industry Training Board reported that 48% of people experience homophobic language on sites every year, with 11% hearing it at least once a week.

Reference:

[Words at Work: Building inclusion through the power of language](#) by Diversity Council Australia.

EXERCISE 1

Words at work

TIP FOR SUCCESS:

This exercise works best with a group open to discussion – the best learning happens from each other!

Inclusive language

What is language that is exclusive? What is homophobic language?

Have you ever said or heard: that's gay, don't be a sissy, toughen up princess, don't be girl, man up, wimp?

ACTIVITY: REFLECT

How could this make the people around you feel? Why?

We all want to be included and valued. The first step in changing our own behaviour begins with self-awareness – check yourself!

ACTIVITY: DISCUSS

What words or phrases do we use that might offend or harm others? What are some words we can use instead to be more inclusive?

Remember:

- We all want to fit in, be included, feel valued and connected to one another.
- Think about the words we use, call out bad language (respectfully) to help us all shift the dial
- Ask questions about why someone said that and have the conversation in a respectful way

Idea: Consider using a tip/language jar like the old swear jar to engage people in thinking / changing what we say / do without even knowing it.

EXERCISE 2

Just how diverse are we?

TIP FOR SUCCESS:

This exercise works well if you want the group to self-reflect and not provide responses in front of the group.

ACTIVITY: REFLECT

Which of these statements relate to you?

- I have a family
- I have a gay family member or friend or identify that way myself
- I have important women in my life (wife, mother, daughter)
- I grew up in a religious family
- I have parents not born in Australia
- I am adopted

We expect everyone here can relate to at least some of these statements.

ACTIVITY: DISCUSS

Now think...

- How would you feel if someone said a sexist remark about your partner, girlfriend, or daughter?
- What would you think if someone said your family member or loved one was not man enough or a sissy?
- If your parents were told to “go home” to where they came from?

This exercise shows how diverse we are and that we are more than what we see in front of us. It highlights our personal values and beliefs, and how we all have differences based on our upbringing and environments we grew up in. These things shaped our values and beliefs that we carry into our adult life.

EXERCISE 3

What does LGBTQ+ stand for?

This exercise helps to build LGBTQ+ awareness and confidence in what the terms mean. This exercise can be conducted as a lesson, an open discussion, or a quiz!

L is Lesbian: Lesbian is a term used to describe women who are primarily emotionally, physically, and/or sexually attracted to other women.

G is Gay: Gay is a term used to describe individuals who are primarily emotionally, physically, and/or sexually attracted to members of the same sex. It is more commonly used when referring to males, but can be applied to anyone.

B is Bisexual: Bisexual describes an attraction to someone of the same gender and other genders. Everyone's experience is a little different, and bisexual doesn't necessarily mean being attracted to only two genders or equally split between male and female.

T is Transgender: Sometimes people feel that their gender doesn't match the sex they were born with, ie - someone born with a penis might identify as a girl - this is referred to as being transgender. Sometimes trans people change their name, their clothes, or even make change to their bodies. Sometimes they don't.

Q is Queer: A common umbrella term to refer to all LGBTQ+ people. Anyone who is attracted to the same gender or is gender diverse.

'+' sign: is used as "plus" in order to describe all the other gender and sexual orientations that don't fit into the letters such as pansexual, intersex, etc.

So what about some terms for the 'straight' world?

Straight: The word "straight" is often used to mean "heterosexual" which means you're sexually attracted to the opposite sex only. Generally, "straight" means you're attracted to the opposite sex, whether it's in a sexual or romantic way.

Cisgender: When you were born, people looked at your genitals and decided that you were a girl or boy based on what they saw. As you grow up and learn about the concept of gender, if you identify with the gender you were assigned at birth you're cisgender, or "cis." Pronounced "sis" or "sisgender"

For example, if you were born with a penis and identify as a man, you're a cisgender man.

Other interesting terms to know:

Gender Diverse: Describes a person who feels that their gender identity does not fit into the categories associated with their assigned sex. For example, someone who is raised as a girl may feel as though the categories of female/feminine are restrictive or don't apply to them. Questioning how gender stereotypes relate to you is normal – and some people identify as genders other than male or female.

Non-Binary: An umbrella term people use to describe gender that doesn't fit squarely into male or female. This can be a mix of both, fluid, or something else entirely.

EXERCISE 4

Pronouns

What are pronouns and why are they important?



Watch: 5 minute video by Minus18 on pronouns

Pronouns are words used to refer to someone without using their name such as he or she. It is important to respect people's pronouns.

You can't always know what someone's pronouns are by looking at them. Asking and correctly using someone's pronouns is one of the most basic ways to show your respect for gender identity.

Gendered Pronouns

'She' and 'he' are examples of gendered pronouns. She is typically used by female-identifying people. Similarly, He is typically used by male-identifying people.

Gender Neutral Pronouns

They, them, and theirs are common gender neutral pronouns. These are basically pronouns that don't imply 'male' or 'female'.

We use them all the time when we don't know the gender of the person we're talking about, e.g. "Oh no, someone dropped their wallet!"

Gender neutral pronouns are typically used by gender diverse and non-binary identifying people.

There are lots of other gender neutral pronouns. They can take a bit of getting used to, but it's important we use the right ones. If we're not sure, just politely ask.

Personal Pronouns

Most people have personal pronouns. Whether they use she, he, they, or anything else can depend that person's gender identity. For example, it's common for gender diverse people to prefer they, or other

gender neutral pronouns. A female or male identifying person might prefer her or he pronouns, respectively.

Why they are important

There are lots of reasons why it's important to use the pronouns that a person prefers. Put simply, though? It can make a person feel pretty shit when you use the wrong ones.

If someone happens to use pronouns that are different to what you might expect, they've probably thought long and hard about which ones and why.

Misgendering is a term used to describe accidentally or intentionally using incorrect pronouns about or towards a person. It can happen as an accident, and that's okay. But when it happens intentionally, it's pretty crappy.

It's not always easy to come out and tell people you're transgender or that prefer a new set of pronouns, so using the right ones really is a big deal and a pretty awesome thing.



Genitals do not always equal gender. This is probably the biggest mistake people make.

It's an easy assumption to make, but genitals and bodies in general don't reflect anything about a person's pronouns or gender.

Above all else, don't try to argue this with a person. Even if you personally disagree, a person who's asking you to use new pronouns more than likely already has their mind made up, and will probably also feel pretty hurt. Basically, what's more important? Someone's anatomy, or their happiness?

Slipping up

Yes, stuffing up is pretty bad, but it does happen. Using new pronouns for a person can take some getting used to. Some can sound pretty strange, and changing the words we use in general can be harder than expected.

Slipping up can feel pretty awkward or even make us feel guilty, but it's really important not to snap or take it out on the person we're talking about or to.

We might not pick it up instantly. If we do slip up (this bit's important), don't snap over it, or make a huge deal out of it. Just keep trying our best and move on. We'll get the hang of it with time! It can help to practice too.

What you can do?

Remember to always ask people what they prefer. Some people still might not openly use their new pronouns around everyone, like certain family members or friends, so check in and make sure not to 'out' anyone.

Having good, supportive, understanding people around is huge for any young trans person figuring themselves out. By being there for your friends, you're making a big difference.

We use pronouns every day.

Using the right ones can help people feel safe and accepted.

Reference:
[What are pronouns and why and they important?](#) by Minus18

Additional resources



Watch: *Words at work* by the Diversity Council Australia



Watch: *Closing the Gender Gap in Engineering & Technology* by Shell



Watch: *Racism* by the NZ Human Rights Commission



Watch: *Our staff talk about #HoldTight* by ANZ Australia



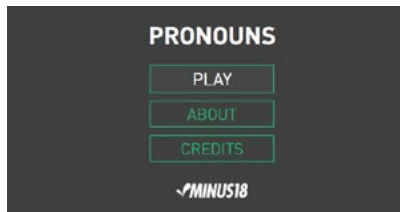
Watch: *Australian Snickers Ad - Progressive or Sexist?*



Watch: *2019 InterBuild Industry Video for Wear It Purple Day*



Read: *What are pronouns and why are they important?* by Minus18



Play: *Pronoun game* by Minus18



Watch: *What are pronouns?* by Minus18

DO YOU HAVE ANY

Questions?

If you'd like more information, please contact InterBuild at info@interbuild.online or check out their website at interbuild.online.

InterBuild is the LGBTQ+ network for the property and construction sector.

Thank you for your time discussing this important issue.