

The Simple Guide to being an Ally for Equal Rights

Individual Voices can make a difference by:
Being inclusive
Celebrating difference
Speaking Up which empowers others
Advocating for rights



The guide to being an ally is an invitation and opportunity for people who believe in equality for all Australians including the lesbian and gay couples living in our community.

Many of us believe in LGBTIQ rights or equality but don't know how to be supportive.

We need to understand this community cannot achieve equality without support from energetic, compassionate and dedicated straight allies. We understand there are barriers that may keep people from getting involved, and that's why we have printed this resource.

Some may feel this issue has nothing to do with them because they are straight. Others believe they have never met someone who is LGBTIQ. However, research shows that most people at least know of someone who is, and as many as 40% report they have LGBTIQ friends or relatives.

Getting started is easy. Here are five ways to start moving equality forward for this community today.

STEP ONE: EDUCATE YOURSELF

Don't know or understand issues of inequality or discrimination that impact on them
Confused about definitions
Concerned that you may say something that is going to offend

One of the best ways to become an ally is to:

- become informed
- ask questions
- do research

Our LGBTIQ friends, neighbours and co-workers are not so different from us, but there are differences that we need to know, so that we can help others to understand.

These friends and colleagues will be pretty impressed you are taking an interest in wanting to say the right thing or understand what is going on with them.

If you don't feel comfortable asking questions directly to your LGBTIQ friends (that's ok) you can gain information from:

- internet
- libraries
- contact LGBTIQ community organisations

STEP TWO: SPEAK UP AND SPEAK OUT

Everyone's been there. Whether it's a racist, sexist or gay joke we often stay quiet and don't speak up about it being inappropriate. We knew something should have been said but we just.....didn't.

Silence condones inappropriate behaviour.

Most times, people make inappropriate comments just because they can. However, speaking up reminds people to be more aware and sensitive to those around them and it eventually changes minds.

STEP THREE: BE HONEST

When we talk to or about our friends and acquaintances, we should include all of the facts not just the ones we think people want to hear.

When talking to our friends if unclear on an issue it's best to be honest and say "I don't understand, but I want to....."

We should never assume we are going to offend someone or have to hold an uncomfortable conversation.

STEP FOUR: SUPPORT EQUALITY

Places such as at work, the local school, university and at home are just a few areas where a straight ally can express his/her support in tiny ways to friends and family.

Our voices carry tremendous weight where the voices of LGBTIQ people are often disregarded.

We bring a different perspective to the conversation, our insistence for equality is different – **It is not about you/us, it is about others, and about doing the right thing.** Small things matter.

Presently, many report that homophobic and transphobic attitudes are still prevalent which means they are fearful to be honest when socialising. It is important to realise that in standing up for change, there will be people just as vocal as you who will argue against this change.

STEP FIVE: LETTING PEOPLE KNOW

By now you have information, spoken up, been honest and supported equality. You may have some concerns that people will think you are LGBTIQ. Just clarify that you are a straight ally or let them assume otherwise. It's up to you.

Let everyone know that they can become a straight ally too. You don't even have to know a LGBTIQ person.

However, just by attempting one or two steps can make a difference. Only do what you are comfortable with.

SOME PEOPLE WANT TO TAKE THEIR VOICE AS ALLIES FURTHER

You have the power to change things further by voting for politicians who are supportive.

You can talk to people generally about the discrimination LGBTIQ people experience in the community generally.

People will discover the more they read the more they will believe in the need for change and will feel more comfortable discussing these issues with others.

What's in it for you?

You will know that you have helped the general community become less homophobic and transphobic

You will know that you have made a positive difference to LGBTIQ workers or friends, who know that you are supportive.

You will know that you have become an advocate for change.

What we as individuals can do:

- Make positive comments
- Be supportive
- Never condone inappropriate trivialising or jokes
- Never be condescending – for example, never assume “they are all lovely”, neat or artistic
- Ask about their weekends, their friends and what they like to do for fun
- Be inclusive when possible

LGBTIQ people don't want to be treated differently. They just want equality.