



Transgender and Gender Diverse Members

Title:	Transgender and Gender Diverse Guideline for Surf Life Saving Clubs
Policy Link:	6.05 Member Protection
Last Review Date:	April 2024
Responsible Portfolio:	Diversity & Inclusion

Surf Life Saving is a welcoming and safe place for all members. In response to requests for advice from clubs and members on how to be as welcoming and inclusive for all members when delivering surf lifesaving activities on the beach, Surf Life Saving Australia has developed this factsheet in consultation with its State Centres, [Lifesavers with Pride](#) and [Pride in Sport](#).

We recommend referring to the [Pride in Sport LGBTQIA+ terminology](#) factsheet when reading this guideline.

Why develop this factsheet?

Surf Life Saving Australia and its member organisations are committed to being inclusive and open to all members of the community - including transgender and gender diverse people. This factsheet was driven from requests from the membership for assistance in this area.

This factsheet has been designed for the membership with practical suggestions and terminology to assist with creating a welcoming, safe and inclusive environment in all surf clubs, with further resources available at the end of this document. Please note that terminology and phrasing can evolve, so this factsheet will be routinely reviewed and updated as necessary to reflect any changes over time.

1. Are Transgender and Gender Diverse people able to participate in surf lifesaving as their affirmed gender identity?

Yes. Any person can participate in surf lifesaving. The SLSA Membership Registration form includes male, female and non-binary options and existing members can update their gender identity in the [Members area](#).

Every gender affirmation experience is different and a personal matter for the individual. For confidential support and advice, we encourage clubs to contact the team at [Pride in Sport](#) who have assisted SLSA in providing this guideline.

2. How can members update their details in the membership database?

SurfGuard is the membership database where individual member's details are listed upon joining the movement. Should a member request to update any of their details (title, name, gender, clothing) this can be done by the member using the Members Area. Changes can also be made by contacting the member's State Centre.

Updates are uploaded overnight and reflected in SurfGuard the next day. All details in SurfGuard are linked to the member's personal details. In the same way that a name change due to marriage updates all prior awards, proficiencies and patrol hours to the new details, updating a person's gender identity will also update all associated details to match the updated identity.

How can Surf Life Saving members respect and support Transgender and Gender Diverse people?

If members are unsure what they can do, there are many ways people can respect and support transgender and gender diverse members. Here are some examples:

- Seek education on gender diverse identities and experiences.
- Ask what their preferred name and pronouns are. Use the name, pronouns, and terms that they prefer or have asked others to use.
- Avoid making assumptions or asking invasive questions about someone's gender identity, expression, or history. Challenge stereotypes about gender. For example, sex is biological – a person is assigned a sex at birth based on a set of characteristics associated with reproduction and biology, whereas gender is shaped by the society and culture we live in. Gender stereotypes are ideas and messages about the differences between males and females.
- Respect the rights and needs of all members. Involve transgender and gender diverse people in discussions and decisions that impact them.

Include your own pronouns when introducing yourself so that our gender diverse members don't feel isolated when disclosing their own.

What to do if the wrong name or pronouns are used accidentally (e.g., mis-gendering)

Mistakes are understandable. It's respectful to apologise and ask for the correct names and pronouns. A suggestion is to refrain from 'explaining' the mistake and moving on with the conversation. It may take some practice to adopt new habits, especially if you have known the individual before their transition by a different name or gender.

What to do if you are witness to discrimination, like racism, sexism, transphobia, homophobia, or biphobia?

Instances of homophobia, transphobia, biphobia or interphobia in any form is unacceptable. To ensure a safe environment for all members, Clubs can make trans-awareness information available to members to outline inclusive behaviours. It would also be appropriate to outline those behaviours that you understand to be in breach of the SLSA Member Protection Policy 6.05.

3. What if a gender diverse member wants to compete in the sport of Surf Life Saving?

Children under 12 can compete as their affirmed gender and be treated as any other child wishing to participate in junior activities, both at Nippers and in competition. For adults competing in surf sports, the SLSA Surf Sports Manual addresses athletes that identify as Transgender/Transsexual.

4. What Uniforms are available for members?

SLSA supports members and staff in wearing uniforms (patrol uniforms, club shirts, program clothing etc.) that is aligned to the person's affirmed gender. SLSA patrol uniforms come in two non-gendered styles across varying sizes, with a classic straight cut, and a slimmer cut. All members and staff, including transgender or gender diverse people are free to select either style uniform.

What about the use of facilities like toilets and changerooms?

While many transgender and gender diverse people prefer to use bathrooms, showers and changerooms that align with their affirmed gender, there is also a strong preference for privacy. This is the case for many people, regardless of their sex or gender identity. People who identify as non-binary may prefer to use gender-neutral facilities.

Have a conversation with the individual or families to produce an agreed solution which will ensure that all parties are always kept informed.

Surf Life Saving Clubs that are in the process of, or considering, upgrading facilities also have an opportunity to seek out facilities that are inclusively designed. Consideration can also be given to working with local governments, the SLSA Grant Support Unit and other community-sport infrastructure providers to access facilities which have been designed to be inclusive.

The Australian Human Rights Commission in their Guidelines for the inclusion of transgender and gender diverse people in sport state that when new facilities are built, or existing facilities are being upgraded, there is an opportunity to make these inclusive by:

- creating private spaces so that people can change, shower and use the toilet safely and comfortably
- providing a gender-neutral space where possible, without co-opting accessible toilets or family rooms.

5. In a club Nipper program, if an Age Group Manager is informed of a gender diverse participant within their age group how will this be managed on the beach?

When a parent discloses to the Club that their child is gender diverse, Clubs should engage with care and compassion, like they would with any member. Where possible, the Club representative should approach the parents early in the season to make them feel welcome and comfortable.

Where large age groups need dividing, suggest creating multiple mixed gendered groups to avoid any issues, which includes the roll call process. As a Child Safe Organisation, we abide by the ten National Principles for Child Safe Organisations, and the rights and wishes of a child is paramount to their safety regardless of which gender group the child elects to participate in, their decision should be supported.

Routine check-ins with the child's parent or guardian is suggested after the first and subsequent Nipper sessions to seek feedback on and advise on any other areas that can make the child feel as included and safe as possible. It is important for all family members to feel engaged and informed about how their child is supported throughout their Nipper journey.

SLSA welcomes Clubs to create inclusive, safe and welcoming environments where any disclosures are considered respectfully.

ADDITIONAL SUPPORT

For additional support, refer to the following resources and organisations linked below:

- [SLSA Inclusion & Diversity Statement](#)
- [SLSA 6.05 Member Protection Policy](#)
- [SLSA Policy 6.02 Privacy Policy](#)
- [Australian Human Rights Commission - Guidelines for the inclusion of transgender and gender diverse people in sport](#)
- [National Principles for Child Safe Organisations](#)
- [Sexual Discrimination Act 1984 \(Commonwealth\)](#)
- [Pride in Sport](#)
- [Lifesavers with Pride](#)
- [Terminology - Better Health](#)

For further information about this factsheet, please contact: diversitycoordinator@sls.com.au