

GUIDELINES FOR EMPLOYERS AND SERVICE PROVIDERS



is discrimination illegal?

Yes. It is generally against the law to discriminate against or harass people because: they are transgender, or, you think they are transgender, or, they have a relative or associate who is (or you think is) transgender. In the same way as with other types of unlawful discrimination, (race discrimination, sex discrimination, and so on), transgender discrimination and harassment are only against the law in relation to employment, service delivery, government education, registered club membership and the provision of any type of rental or holiday accommodation. It is also against the law to publicly vilify people for being transgender. For more information about transgender vilification please visit the [N.S.W. Anti-Discrimination Board website](#).

what does the law mean?

It means that you must treat all people who identify as transgender or gender diverse fairly. It does not matter whether they have or haven't had "sex-change" or other surgery. It does not matter whether they are or aren't taking hormones. It does not matter why they are transgender. It does not matter what gender they were at birth, or what gender they prefer to be. It does not matter whether they already live as their preferred gender, or whether they are in the process of "changing over" to their preferred gender ("transitioning"). If they fit the definition of transgender given above you must treat them fairly.

The general rule is that you should treat people who identify as transgender in the same way as you would treat anyone else. In most cases, this means that you should treat transgender people in the way they wish to be treated. In other words, if they want you to treat them as the opposite gender to their birth gender that is what you should do.

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There is more information about the exact legal rights of trans people - including who is counted legally as being their preferred gender and who isn't, in the N.S.W. Anti-Discrimination Board fact sheet [What is Transgender Discrimination?](#)

The rest of these guidelines answer the most common questions employers and service providers ask us about transgender discrimination. If your question isn't answered either here or in the "transgender discrimination" fact sheet please contact the Anti-Discrimination Board. External Link for advice. You don't have to give us your or your organisation's name when you contact us.

supporting transition

If your employee, or customer or client is transgender, or decides to transition to their preferred gender while working for or doing business with you, it is best to ask them how they wish to be treated and then abide by their wishes. For example, a person who identifies as transgender may still wish to be addressed as their original gender, or they may wish to be known as their preferred gender. They may wish to set an official date from which they will always be known as their preferred gender. It depends on the individual.

It's important to check with the particular person first and not make assumptions. If they are in the process of "transitioning" (adjusting to their preferred gender), it is important to ask them how they wish to handle this with their colleagues or your staff. Some may wish to talk with their colleagues/your staff themselves, or they may want you to do this for them. Some may want to have a period of leave before coming back as their preferred gender. You can get more information on how best to handle transitioning from the Gender Centre or the [N.S.W. Anti-Discrimination Board](#).

If you have a dress code, it must apply to men and women fairly. In general, someone who is transgender should be allowed to wear the clothing or uniform of their preferred gender.

changing records

Anyone (including a transgender person) can change their name by deed poll or statutory declaration. If a transgender person has changed their name, you should change your records to reflect this. You can ask for an official document to confirm the name change, although you don't have to do this.

asking for proof of gender

This would depend on the circumstances and the reasonableness of the request. In general, you can only ask to see someone's identification in a situation where everyone else would be asked to show their identification. In most situations, it wouldn't be appropriate to ask questions about someone's gender unless you are asking everyone else too. In general, it's best to treat a person who identifies as transgender in the way they are presenting themselves and not ask inappropriate questions.

In a situation where everyone is asked to show their identification, and a transgender shows you an identification of the opposite gender to the one they present as, you should be extremely sensitive in your approach. All you need to do is establish that they are the same person as their identification. You do not need to ask why they choose to present differently, or to harass or insult them in any way.

Toilets and change rooms

A person who identifies as transgender who has a birth certificate or recognition certificate in their preferred gender must be treated at all times as their new gender. It would be discrimination and against the law to do anything else.

All other trans people should be allowed to use the toilets or change rooms of their choice unless this would be "unreasonable in all the circumstances". In the vast majority of cases this means that trans people should be allowed to use the toilets and change rooms of their preferred gender. It is not necessary, and in most cases would be insulting and against the anti-discrimination law, to either install a special set of toilets / change rooms or make trans people use a different set than people who are not transgender.

Once again, don't make assumptions. Some trans people may wish to use the toilets of their birth gender, while others may wish to use the toilets of their preferred gender.

harassment

Prevention is better than cure! It is management's legal responsibility to make sure, to the best of their ability, that no-one - including trans people - is harassed when working for them. If other members of staff refuse to work with, be supervised by, or share toilets with trans people, or if they harass trans people, call them names, or refuse to use their preferred name or gender, this would be transgender harassment, and against the law.

this means that you need to set a standard for what is acceptable and professional work behaviour and what isn't. You should implement grievance procedures to deal with all types of harassment, including transgender harassment. Staff must be advised that transgender harassment is not only unacceptable in your workplace, but also against the law, and that disciplinary action will be taken against them if harassment continues.

For more information on how to prevent and deal with harassment ask the Anti-Discrimination Board for their harassment in the workplace guidelines.

employing trans people

In general, all job advertisements, jobs, apprenticeships and traineeships must be open to anyone who is transgender, in the same way that they are open to anyone else. Transgenders must be assessed on their merits against the specific criteria for the particular job in the same way as all other applicants. You must not dismiss someone for being transgender, or for deciding to "change over" to their preferred gender while working for you - unless the job is legally only open to people of their birth gender, and then you can only dismiss someone once they have a birth certificate or recognition certificate in their new gender. In all other cases, a transgender can only be dismissed for the same reasons that anyone else can be dismissed - for example, for ongoing poor work performance, serious misconduct, medical reasons that mean they're no longer fit enough to do the job, or redundancy.

gender specific jobs

Someone who is trans has the legal right to be considered for a job that is legally targeted towards only one gender, if they have an official birth certificate or recognition certificate issued in that gender. (This could be a certificate in their birth gender, or one in their preferred gender, as some trans people are legally able to get new certificates in their preferred gender).

If you wish, you can target a job towards trans people only. It is not against the law to do this - as long as the job is open to all trans people. If you wish to target a job towards either male-to-female trans people or towards female-to-male trans people you should get advice from our legal branch first, as you will almost certainly need to get an official exemption from the anti-discrimination law before going ahead.

providing services for trans people

You must provide all your services to trans people in the same way as you provide them to everyone else. Trans people must be allowed the same access to rental and holiday accommodation, government education, club membership and indeed to the vast majority of other services, as anyone else. Trans people must not be harassed by you or any of your staff.

If staff members refuse to serve trans people, give them lesser or demeaning service, harass them, call them names, or refuse to use their preferred name or gender, this would be transgender discrimination, and you as a service provider could be held legally responsible for this. You should specifically tell your staff that they must treat all customers, including trans people, fairly and that anyone who disobeys this instruction may be disciplined.

legally excluding trans people

Someone who is transgender has the legal right to use and be admitted to a service, club or educational institution that is legally targeted at only one gender, as long as they have an official birth certificate or recognition certificate issued in that gender. (this could be a certificate in their birth gender, or one in their preferred gender, as some trans people are legally able to get new certificates in their preferred gender). In addition, if you decide to admit a transgender who does not have the appropriate certificate to a single-sex club or educational institution, your club/institution won't lose its single sex status just because you have done this.

If you wish, you can target a service towards trans people only. It is not against the law to do this - as long as the service is open to all trans people. If you wish to target a service towards either male-to-female trans people or towards female-to-male trans people you should get advice from our legal branch first, as you will almost certainly need to get an official exemption from the anti-discrimination law before going ahead.

CONNECT WITH US

psychological services

victim of crime advocacy

youth and family support

information and referrals

counselling

advocacy

groups

accommodation

street outreach

case management

speech pathology

needle syringe program

HIV and Hep C testing (DBS)

The Gender Centre is committed to developing and providing services and activities in NSW which enhance the ability of people exploring their gender identity to make informed choices. We offer a wide range of services to gender explorers, their partners, family and friends in NSW. We provide:

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THE GENDER
CENTRE
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