



**OMG I'M  
QUEER**

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***COMING OUT AS  
AS SAME SEX  
ATTRACTED OR  
GENDER DIVERSE  
DOESN'T HAVE  
TO BE AN  
OMG THING.***

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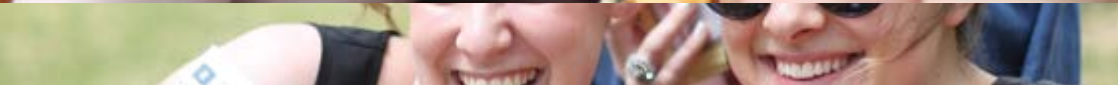
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# sexuality and gender.

Alice Chesworth

All people have their own sexuality. Whether that's straight, gay, queer, bisexual, or something completely different; each person's own sexuality applies only to them.

Now you've probably heard the old saying: "labels are for cans of soup." Basically, that sexuality can't really be defined, and that for some people, words can't REALLY describe what you're feeling. For example, if you're a guy who likes girls, but you like the look of other guys in the change room, what would you call yourself? Straight? Bi? Bi-curious? All those labels come with these predefined meanings – and sometimes they can just be pretty confusing.

We use labels to describe absolutely everything in our lives; it's basic English. So it shouldn't be a big shock when we try to put labels on our sexuality as well.

When I filled in my About Me on Facebook I said I'm: *A girl, 19, a little bit punk and a little bit goth, a student, blonde (for now), feminist, bisexual and atheist.* But the list could have gone on for ever.

When you label your sexuality though, people have certain expectations about what that means. If you're a gay guy then some people automatically assume you should be flamboyant, into fashion and gossip, know all about Gossip Girl and be all like OMG-THAT-SWEATER-IS-SO-HOT!

Well, that might be the case. But that's not because of being gay. Labels don't dictate who you are; you use them to describe yourself.

I use the term bisexual to describe my own sexuality. Basically, I like dudes and dudettes, but there's a bit more to it than that. Some bisexuals are more attracted to one gender than the other, some don't care about gender at all.

Others, like me, find their sexuality is fluid, and changes over time: sometimes liking guys more, sometimes liking girls more. Looking at sexuality as something that's fluid and always changing is pretty cool. So many people see it as being black and white – you're either gay

or straight. But it's not always as simple as that, and each person has their own individual sexuality.

Sex and gender are two other characteristics we tend to label. Sex is your physical aspects (ie your wibbly wobbly bits) and gender is how you feel in your mind in terms of masculine and feminine. Sometimes, physical sex and gender don't match up, so you could be born with lady bits, but feel quite masculine.

Obviously gender isn't always that strict, we all know girls who wear pants and spit on sidewalks, and boys who spend hours doing their hair every morning. Your gender is a way of expressing yourself.

Some people identify with aspects of both traditional genders and feel they are 'genderqueer', 'gender neutral', 'inter gender' or feel like they are another gender altogether. For genderqueer people, what they call themselves is very personal and entirely up to them.

Other people feel connected to the gender that doesn't 'match' their physical sex. This is called being transgendered. Some people have a 'fluid' gender – it changes over time. My friend has warned me not to be surprised if one day she rocks up with a shaved head and asks to be called Bruce. But you know what? That's completely up to her.

What you label yourself is up to you. It's the word that YOU feel suits you best. One of the words I love is 'queer'. Using it to describe your sexuality or gender means that you know that you're a little bit different, and what the hell is wrong with that? Embrace it!





# country kids.

## Mitchul Hope

We caught up with three very different people about what it was like for them growing up queer in rural areas.

### Tell us a bit about yourself.

**Hayley:** I'm 15 and from Lara. I've been living here all my life.

**Kane:** I'm 16 and a half years old. I'm from Geelong, and I've been here all my life as well.

**Markus:** I'm 20, and I lived in Ballarat for 7 years.

### So who do you live with?

**Hayley:** Mum, dad and three brothers.

**Kane:** I have a split family; step-mum, dad and sister. mum and step-dad.

**Markus:** My immediate family made up of my mum, step dad, step brother and full sister.

### What was coming out like for you?

**Hayley:** About two years ago, I came out to friends and some family members. I'm not fully out to my family yet. Coming out was odd. It didn't seem to phase many people, but the ones it did phase only seemed weirded out.

**Kane:** I came out last year to my immediate family, friends, youth workers, neighbours. Everyone was pretty surprised when I told them. I haven't told my Dad yet though I'm not entirely sure how he'll take it.

**Markus:** I came out as a lesbian firstly in early 2009 to my parents and my sister, and then to friends, and then extended family and neighbours. Most people were like "Yeah, so tell us something we don't know," which was comforting to know that they accepted me. I came out as transgender to close friends first in early 2010, and then my sister and parents in mid-2011. Mum was ok but in shock. She loves me but she isn't sure about the transgender stuff, she's a bit iffy still. It takes patience and understanding on both sides. I'm not completely out to everyone as transgender; it's a process.

### What was the community's reaction like?

**Hayley:** I was abused by a few girls because they were scared I'd "lesbian rape" them. WTF?

**Kane:** Everyone was pretty shocked. Some people made comments.

**Markus:** Most people don't care. In saying that there are the odd groups of people who made derogatory comments about me being a lesbian and being transgender. I've been bashed, and had things thrown at me. All I do in those situations is take note of who it was and report them. Nothing will change if you don't make some noise about the problem.

### What was high school like for you?

**Hayley:** I came out at the start of year 7. Coming out made things a bit different – but it really wasn't that hard.

**Kane:** I came out in high school. Looking back, it wasn't the best idea for me. The wrong people found out, and everything became pretty hard.

**Markus:** I didn't come out but it was assumed I was a lesbian. It was pretty confronting. I was having people assume my sexuality because of the way I spoke and dressed.

### Do you feel that living in the country as a queer person is becoming safer?

**Hayley:** Yeah definitely. More and more people accept me for who I am.

**Kane:** Support groups like GASP\* (Geelong Adolescent Sexuality Project) help out heaps.

**Markus:** Yes. I know now that anyone who's got a problem with me isn't worth my time.

### Do you think it is different for queer young people who live closer to the city?

**Hayley:** People find out faster. People in the country aren't as adjusted to queers and as such, aren't as comfortable and are a bit more judgmental.

**Markus:** I think in the city it's publicised more and there're younger people with potentially more open minds. In the country or rural areas people tend to be a bit more conservative.

### What advice can you give to young queer people living in the country?

**Hayley:** Embrace it!

**Markus:** 1) Be yourself. 2) Love yourself. 3) Confidence is key.

# doing it.

## Alice Chesworth

Guys, I'm not going to lie - sex can be pretty damn fun! I honestly don't know why they don't tell you this at school. Hell, they don't really tell you much about how it can affect your emotions or relationships, or even about how to know when you're ready.

So, it's time to talk about sex.

The first time is daunting for everybody, no matter what your gender or sexuality. It can be fun, scary, intimate, boring, wild or just plain awkward. My first time was all of these at some point. But what really counts as your first time?

It may come as a surprise, but there is no strict definition for virginity, especially if you're queer. Penis-in-vagina sex is not the only sex, and certainly not the *ultimate* sex. If you ask me, virginity is whatever you think it is. I've had friends who count their first time giving oral as their virginity. Another friend defined it as the first time her hymen broke. That is, until she broke it while riding a bike... Honestly, there is just no way of telling if someone is a virgin! I'm bisexual, so I ended up thinking of myself as having two virginities, my first time with a chick and my first time with a dude. How you think about it is really up to you!

OK, so you know the basics, right? Consent? Protection from STIs and unwanted pregnancy? (And if you don't, you can check out some great info sites on page 34). You know what all the wobbly bits are? Good! But the real question might remain - am I ready?

BAM! I bet they didn't ask you that at school. Here are a few questions you can ask yourself if you think you're ready to go beyond tongue wrestling (first time or not):

- Do we both want this?
- Are we being safe and using protection?
- Do we know our boundaries and what we don't want to do?
- Do we trust each other?
- Are we ready for the physical and emotional outcomes, like becoming closer or getting hurt, STIs or pregnancy?

- Can we talk to each other about these questions? (Even if it's awks!)
- Do either of us feel unsure or uneasy about any of our answers?

If you or your partner answered yes to that last question it might be a good idea to take a step back, and talk about it together.

Just remember: sex isn't a fix all! It won't necessarily make someone like you any more or less, it won't make you a "real" man or woman or make you more mature, it won't always feel great or bad and it won't always make you climax!

One of the most common questions people have is, "will it hurt?" Truthfully, it might or it might not; it's different for everybody. If you're worried about it hurting there are some things you can do. Make sure you're both turned on and in the mood. If there's any kind of fingering, cut those nails and remove any nail polish first! Use plenty of lubrication when there's penetration.

A few other things to keep in mind: sex shouldn't be an accomplishment OR something to be ashamed of and it certainly isn't a requirement of loving someone! You should respect your partner's feelings, and they should definitely respect yours. If you do 'do it' then just because you've had sex once, doesn't mean it has to become a regular part of the relationship. Just because you're dating or have had sex with someone before doesn't mean they automatically have your consent either, it's always up to them.

Besides, not everyone is doing it, only about half of high schoolers have had sex by year 12, and for a lot of them they've only had one or very few experiences. It's about what feels right for you so don't go with the flow, go at your own pace.

*If you want to check out more info on sex, or where to get a sexual health check-up, check out some of the organisations on page 32 ↗*



# tough times.

## Jade

When I was younger, I would often feel quite sad and lonely. But it wasn't until a few years ago when something happened that made me realise I couldn't go on like this.

I'd always had frequent conflicts with my Mum. We never saw eye to eye and our personalities clashed. She often verbally abused me and made me feel worthless. However there was one incident that was the final straw.

My Mum accused me of bashing my niece. Obviously this is something I would never do or have done. She then told my sister (niece's Mum) who automatically took my Mum's side.

I can't remember the exact details but I do recall there were a lot of tears and arguing. I also remember the way it made me feel. I felt furious, angry, depressed and sad. Like I wanted to go to sleep and not wake up.

That's when I knew I couldn't go on like this. I rang my friend who contacted her Mum. She then called me and we talked on the phone for a bit. She was calm and asked me if I needed somewhere to stay.

She also referred me to headspace where her daughter Jennifer worked. I was a bit hesitant at the time because I didn't know what to expect.

My first experience with headspace was when Jennifer took me to see the headspace doctor. Sitting in the waiting room wasn't what I expected. I remember thinking 'why are there murals on the walls, toys, and computers and all that?' It wasn't like a typical doctor's waiting room at all.

At first, I was reluctant to open up to the doctor as I have trust issues. But having Jennifer there made it easier. I also got a good vibe from the doctor and from then on, I felt comfortable talking to her.

The doctor assessed my mental health and the diagnosis was that I had depression. My initial reaction was 'now what?' The doctor suggested ways to cope with my situation.

These suggestions included regular exercise, establishing support networks and getting counselling.

I didn't tell anyone straight away because I was afraid of being judged. When I did eventually open up to some people about what was happening, they were very supportive.

Even to this day, I still suffer from depression. I know for me it's not something that will ever disappear, but I'll always have ways to manage it. I exercise regularly – I play a lot of soccer. I also volunteer for several organizations (headspace local and national, St Vincent de Paul's and the Smith Family). This helps me because it gives me something to do and I know that I'm changing someone's life for the better. Since volunteering, I've met many wonderful people. A lot of them have become my friends.

One major change in my life is I now live on my own. I realise my Mum and I will never see eye to eye and I'm fine with that.

One thing I do regret, however, is not getting help earlier. I know how hard it is to take the first step to reach out to someone. Yes, there are times when I feel down but I know I will never end up in that place again. I encourage you to seek help if you're feeling depressed – there are people and organisations out there that are willing to listen.

*Jade is a member of the headspace Youth National Reference Group (hY NRG). If you're going through a tough time check out some of the organisations on page 32 ↗*





## It's pretty amazing how good you can become at fooling yourself, after a while.

You hear someone talking once about how everyone goes through a phase of thinking about people of the same sex. It's just normal and it happens to everyone. That's puberty for you; your balls are so keen to get involved in SOMETHING, they don't know WHAT they're doing.

Sure, I found myself becoming emotionally and sexually attracted to some of my best friends and tried desperately to perceive their platonic friendship as something more and sure, I was masturbating on a regular basis over the idea of having sex with guys and I had little to no interest in girly lady girls... but surely I wasn't gay???

Only gay people were gay.

I think it was around Year 10 when I really started to notice it. I was a pretty chubby kid, very academic, hopeless at sport and, perhaps unsurprisingly, never been kissed. Pretty much all of my mates went along to discos and music gigs and had 'pushed' or 'picked up' or, in some racier circumstances, 'fingered' the females of their choice, proudly bragging after the fact around school about their prowess.

I convinced myself that I was better than these callous thugs. I just hadn't met the right girl. When I had my first kiss, I wanted it to be special, just like in the movies,

with heaps good emotions and Dashboard Confessional playing in the background and stuff.

In the meantime, I took the time to admire my fellow young men in the school change-rooms and to listen intently at sleepovers when we all talked about jacking off and to fantasize about a handsome prince riding into Warrnambool on the back of a mighty steed to take me away from it all, so that we may live together happily in some magical, mystical, faraway place like Melbourne.

Growing up in a regional, footy-loving place like Warrnambool, I was pretty regularly given the message that gay = bad. Heck, just being a little bit different in any way was often frowned upon. Goths, emos, theatre enthusiasts, fat kids, ugly kids, poor kids – they all had a hard time trying to get by in the patriarchal monoculture that is high school. But at least they were acknowledged as existing. I clearly remember that the very idea of being anything but straight being seen as ridiculous, really. The word 'gay' became synonymous with 'shit', and every time I heard one of my best friends casually spit out the word to describe a test or a song or a piece of clothing, or call one another 'poofa' or 'faggot' as if it was the worst possible insult, I winced, and the pressure inside me just went up a notch or two.

I felt alone for quite a long time. I was supposed to be the smart, busy guy who did lots of things and did them pretty well and wasn't any trouble. I'd always been fine, I took care of myself, I couldn't really picture me asking anyone for help. Plus I'd had so many conversations with people

# COMEDIAN AND MINUS18 AMBASSADOR TOM BALLARD IS PRETTY QUEER.

about the girls I, er... "liked". How could I go back on that? Did I want to be a gay liar? Is THAT what I wanted?!

Finally, it all just became too much and it was evident to me that this was my lot. I was a homosexual, a poofa, a faggot, a queermo, a woolly woofter, a shirtlifter, a fudge-packer (though I didn't actually know what that involved, exactly). I was gay. At the end of my Year 12 year, I wrote a letter to my cousin Lucy and poured my heart out to her. I remember crying as I wrote the words down, overwhelmed with fear and sadness and relief. It was one of the toughest things I've ever had to do.

Luckily, Lucy was lovely. She told me that she didn't love me for my sexuality, she just loved me for the person I am. As did my mum and my dad and my brother Gavin and my best friends Jeremy and Daniel and Caleb and Zacc and Liam and David and Luke and Michael and Alex and everyone else, and my other cousins and my aunts and uncles, all of them coming to the table and accepting me for who I am: a big ol' fairy.

I've been extremely lucky. But perhaps my story is a testament to the way things are changing for people who are same sex attracted or genderqueer. The world is getting better and there are amazing role models out there and there is no reason – absolutely no reason – why being something other than heterosexual should stop you doing anything you want to do, as Oscar Wilde and Graham Chapman and kd Lang and John Gielgud and Bob Brown and Elton John and Missy Higgins and David Marr and Freddie Mercury and Simon Amstell and

Harvey Milk and so many others have proved.

I love my life as an openly proud, gay man. I get to talk on the radio and do comedy and travel the country and the world and go on TV sometimes and make people laugh. I'm not a gay comedian; I'm just a comedian who happens to be gay. If I make someone laugh, they don't give a damn if I fancy penises or *vajim-jams*; they just like me the way I am.

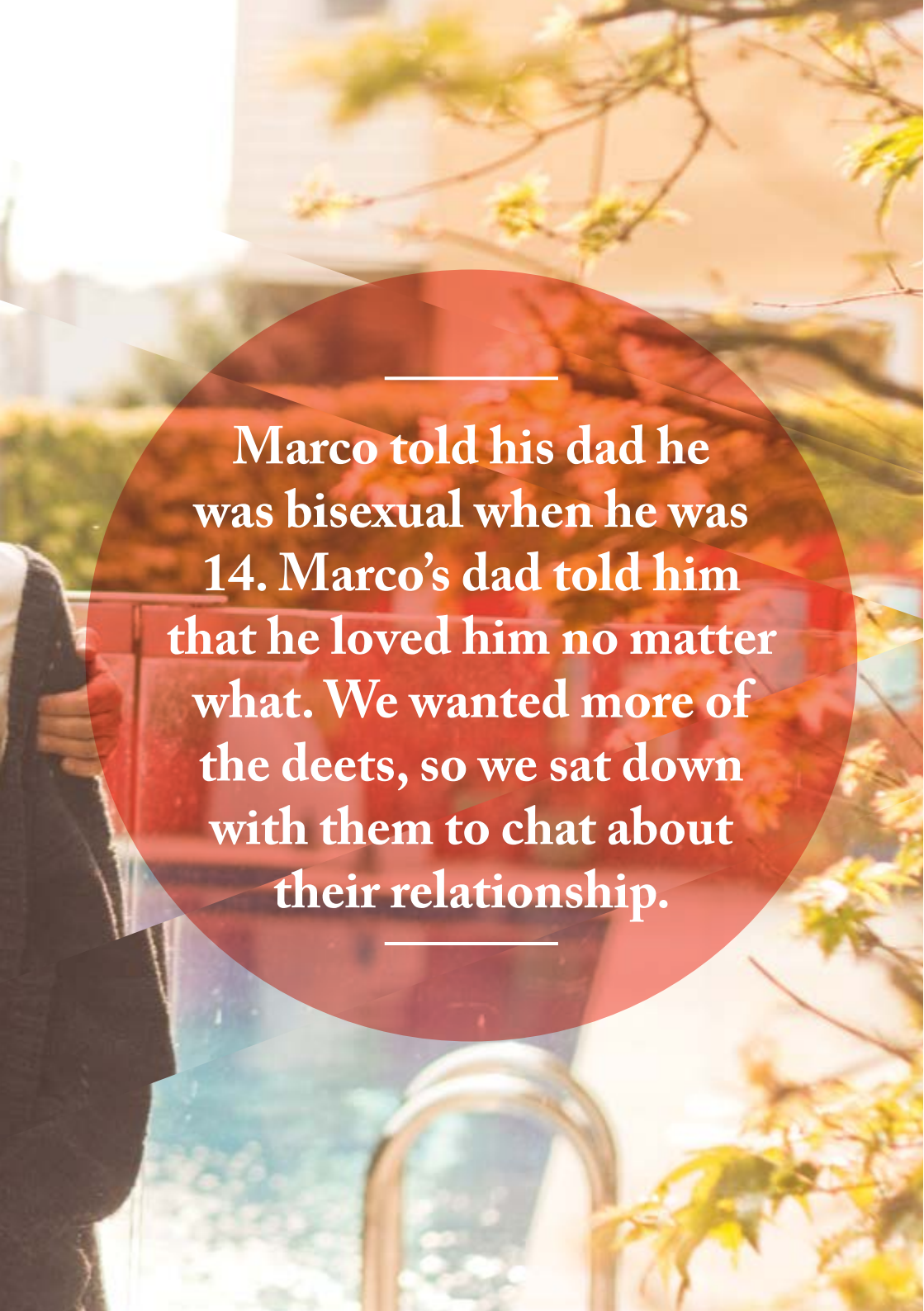
And honestly, if someone judges you or dismisses you or belittles you because of your sexual orientation or gender identity, they are, quite simply, not worth knowing. They are on the wrong side of history and if you ask me, you don't need 'em.

Whether you think you might be gay, lesbian, straight, bi, transgender, intersex or just queer in some way, you are beautiful and you are important and, best of all, you are alive. And that is a stupendous thing that needs to be celebrated, every single day.

Coming out was tough for me. For some people it's a lot tougher, for others it's easier, for some people it's a non-event. I wouldn't change who I am or what I went through for the world, because it is all fundamental to the guy I am today. And, while that guy should eat less cheese and be nicer to some people and read more books and not steal his housemates' milk all the time, he is, I think, on the whole, a pretty good person. Even if he is a bender.





A person wearing a dark jacket is standing on a balcony, looking out over a city and a body of water. The scene is overlaid with a large, semi-transparent red circle. Inside the circle, white text is centered. Above and below the text are short white horizontal lines.

**Marco told his dad he was bisexual when he was 14. Marco's dad told him that he loved him no matter what. We wanted more of the deets, so we sat down with them to chat about their relationship.**

# telling dad.

Chrystal Moore

## What's your family background?

**Dad:** OK there's four of us in the family; mum, dad, son and daughter. Culture wise; my wife comes from Malaysia and I was born in Israel and came here when I was five. So it's a bit of a fruit salad of a family.

**Marco:** We are pretty crazy as a family, especially the extended family; they are really fun on, but very fun! We have more to do with mum's side of the family, because dad's side are a bit older.

## How would you guys describe your relationship?

**Dad:** Well I think it's pretty good, we have always been close. It's loving, he has been a pretty good kid. We tell each other "I love you", stuff like that. We go on a lot of family holidays. We are all supportive of each other. I once got pulled up for speeding when Marco was a little kid, and I got a \$200 fine (I was really upset), and Marco (eight years old at the time) had savings of I'm not sure how much but he offered them to me to pay the fine. He is always very supportive of me and I support him. We support both our kids. It's a good relationship.

**Marco:** Dad is supportive of me whether it's a late assignment, me running for class president or kids picking on me; dad's always there offering me advice. He helps me however he can.

## What was it like when Marco came out?

**Dad:** I was surprised at first, but then I took a few days to think it through. At the end of the day he is still the same kid I've always loved and it really didn't matter. He is still the same person, whatever his preferences are... well they're his preferences. I can't help what I prefer and Marco can't help what he prefers, it's just how you're made up. I would never hold that against him. He is a good kid, studies well and doesn't give me too much of a hard time... most of the time [chuckles]. I love him and in the end he is a good person.

**Marco:** Umm, I was very nervous and anxious. At first I was down about it because even though

mum and dad were trying their best there was still tension. I'd had years to think about this, it had been on my mind for quite a while. I'd had the time to come to terms with it, but mum and dad had to deal with the idea kind of out of the blue. It was like I came out of the closet and they went in. But now they have come a long way, they are really good and really accepting. If anyone was to be homophobic towards me, my parents would be the first ones to jump up and defend me.

## Did you feel that there were any conflicts with religious and cultural beliefs, because of Marco coming out?

**Dad:** Religiously we go to a synagogue which is a Jewish place of worship. It's a reformed or a progressive one where being gay is accepted.

## And Marco; you feel comfortable in that environment?

**Marco:** Yeah, they are very warm and very good. Although amongst the community there I have never openly announced that I am bisexual, but at school (which is a Jewish school) everyone's pretty good about it and the staff are accepting and understanding.

## How important is that to you?

**Marco:** It really does mean a lot, initially there were a few kids who weren't so nice. They grew out of it and were apologetic later on.

## What was it like for the rest of the family when Marco came out?

**Dad:** For my wife and me it took us a few days to come to terms with it. I think I spoke to Marco's sister once about it and she seemed fine with it. We haven't made a big deal out of it. Is that right Marco?

**Marco:** Yeah, things have been good, Sophie (Marco's sister) was the first person to be like "yeah whatever, I wish mum and dad would chill out a bit", because at that stage it was very early on and my parents were anxious for me. Her reaction was really nice and reassuring for me.

**Dad:** I think our biggest concern was that Marco was already a part of minorities being Jewish, part Asian and then to be a part of another minority "bisexual". Life can be more difficult, and that really concerned us. His safety was our biggest worry.

### **In what ways has your relationship changed?**

**Dad:** I don't think it really has changed, it was just adjusting. You know you think your kids are going to grow up get married, have kids and so I just had to adjust to the fact that that may not happen. Big family occasions he may not come with his girlfriend, but with his boyfriend... how's that going to go down? At the end of the day I love him.

**Marco:** Not very much, we still talk, hang out... really the only difference is now when we talk about girls, that means we might also talk about boys. Talking about relationships, last year I had a bad break up and dad was good with it. I needed someone to talk to and he was really good with it.

### **Has coming out changed you?**

**Marco:** When I was younger I was shy, I was never the outgoing kid. Since I came out and meeting people especially at Minus18, my confidence has grown and I have come out of my shell. I'm a lot happier and a lot louder [chuckles].

### **Have you seen those changes in Marco?**

**Dad:** He has matured, he was shy. In his reports it used to say "it would be good if he interacted more", since coming out he is now more of a leader. He was house captain a couple of years ago and class captain another year.

**Marco:** I've gone from someone who tried to stay out of the spotlight to wanting to be in it. At school there was an art show I was involved in and one of the pieces was me in drag. That in itself was a big thing for me and for the school. Everyone loved it.

**Dad:** They all asked who the pretty girl was. [laughs]

### **Do you feel Marco experienced any form of bullying?**

**Dad:** The kids at school are comfortable with him, he is popular. Unless there are instances I'm not aware of?

**Marco:** Nah, the only cases are the people at school, especially the boys were uncomfortable with it. As time went on they grew out of it, but I actually still felt a bit awkward going out to a swim centre or change rooms. I didn't want to make them uncomfortable. But now I'm fine in that environment.

### **Marco's an active member of Minus18 do you know much about it?**

**Dad:** I know what he has told me, and it's good.

**Marco:** Mum and dad have met a lot of the people and really like them. They are proud of the work I have done, especially on Stand Out. The only complaint from them is "don't neglect your homework!".

### **How has being involved with other queer young people helped you?**

**Marco:** Again being so quiet it was amazing to go to a dance party where there were these outrageous and outgoing people. I went with a friend to my first one, it was great seeing all these people going nuts and having fun in costume. So I enjoy working with Minus18 and attending the events.

---

# believe what you want.

## The story of Rachel Goff as told to Micah Scott

My name is Rachel Goff. I come from a Uniting Church background, I grew up in the country; Lake's Entrance. The congregation in my town was mostly made up of people over the age of 70. Both sides of my family are of the preacher line. So my Dad's Dad was a Minister, and my siblings are also in the Ministry. It's very much ingrained. It's the kind of Christianity where you don't dance, you don't drink, and don't do any of those 'naughty things'.

Growing up, I missed church twice; once when I had chickenpox, and once when we were on a holiday. It's funny; church was always something I wanted to do. Christian values were instilled in my family, and in me.

When I was 15, I decided I wanted to be baptised. My religion was a real personal decision. Shortly after, I went into my 'happy-clapper' phase, with 'What Would Jesus Do' wrist bands, and a pretty conservative attitude. I would tell people they were going to hell if they didn't do certain things. It was intense!

I've been through a long process of figuring out what I identify as – but I've settled on the term 'gay'. When I left home, I joined the Christian Union at uni. In one of the bible study groups, I had a different interpretation of a Bible passage. It was part of Jesus' teaching, and I said "Well, maybe it means this". The group turned around and said, "no, that's not right", and that I had to leave. It was a shock, but helped me move out of that 'black and white' way of thinking. It made me realise that there're a number of ways you can interpret what the Bible says.

It wasn't until I was 20 that I actually realised I was gay. I moved out of home at 18 to go to uni. I was writing in my journal one night, and I actually wrote the words "I think I'm attracted to women." And that really just confirmed it for me. Looking back, I realise now it had been an internal process before that, but it wasn't until that point that I was like, "yep, that's what I am".

I never got the sense that God didn't love gay people, and never got the sense that I was wrong in my sexuality. There was never a stage that I believed homosexuality was a sin. Even when I was going through my more conservative phase, there was never a moment where I thought that God didn't love me because I was attracted to girls. So if I'm talking about my personal relationship with God, there was never a conflict. I know that's not everyone's experience, so I consider myself pretty lucky. I did leave the church when I realised I was gay though; I didn't want to put myself through other people thinking I was wrong, or the pressure of conforming to other people's beliefs. I knew that I would be attacked by members of the church that I was going to at the time.

What I did do was seek out a number of people who I considered to be strong spiritual figures, and I connected with them one-on-one, rather than being part of a larger religious community, which I didn't feel part of. One of my friends also invited me to a regular Tuesday night dinner and discussion group with quite a progressive group of people. We would talk about things like what God wants for us, would look at Bible passages, and how we would apply them to our current lives.

For me, it was about changing my experience of religion to fit with me, and my own beliefs.

After breaking up with my girlfriend, I realised I needed more support from my friends, and decided it was time to come out. I told my friends in my Tuesday night bible study group one-by-one, when I was confident they would accept me. It went really well – while some people believed the bible didn't support being gay, they still loved and supported me. There were lots of different reactions – but none were homophobic or hateful.

Telling my family was a different story. Some of my Dad's family sent me brochures for ex-gay services. When I came out to my parents, I brought my second girlfriend home, and said "I'm gay! This is my girlfriend!" Haha. That must have been pretty full on for them. They said they loved me regardless, but they've found it hard to understand it from a small town perspective. Since then, Mum has been fantastic, and is so supportive. Her perspective on religion has changed, specifically what she believes in what God wants for people.

Mum's side of the family were pretty full on about it – telling me I had the devil in me. They were pretty homophobic, and made me feel awful, leaving me empty and gutted. I didn't want to see any of them again. I've had so much spiritual guidance and counselling over the years, and also mental health support. It made me realise that my upbringing and my beliefs don't define me. I can actually define myself. My friends are also an amazing support.

When I'm with people who identify as both Christian and queer, I feel like I'm at home. They get it. They understand what it's like to have to come out to both parts. When you're gay, you have to come out to the community. But when you're Christian, you have to come out to the gay community. It's quite confronting that there are so many people in the queer community who are anti-religious. Don't get me wrong, I can certainly see where people are coming from when they generalise Christianity, saying "God hates us, Christians hate us", but that's not actually my experience, and not the kind of Christian I want to be either.





## Ashleigh Lesbian, 16

A couple of years ago I told my older brother I'm a lesbian. Given that we're pretty close and I can talk to him about anything, I figured he'd be pretty relaxed about it. One afternoon at Southland, we were looking through calendars in a gift shop and I absent mindedly murmured "that girl is really hot".

My brother laughed and said, "you know what? it wouldn't surprise me if you were gay". I think I blushed harder than I ever have. Turning to him I said, "well yeah... I sort of am". I was completely terrified, shaking, and waiting for him to say something. He just grabbed me, gave me the most amazing hug, and grinned; "At least I don't have to beat up your boyfriends".

## Katrina Pansexual, 18

I've always been pretty open about my sexuality. In fact, ever since I was 12, I knew I wasn't straight. I chose to answer people honestly if they ever asked, and it never felt like a really big deal. When I was 16, I felt I had fully come to terms with my sexuality, and felt the term pansexual really described how I felt.

After the cake was cut on my Grandma's 80th birthday and most of the family had left her party, I was helping her wash the dishes, and casually asked "so, did you hear some of the states in America just allowed gay marriage?". Without blinking, she replied, "oh good! I wish they had have realised same sex love is natural a few years earlier, your Uncle Bob was jailed for it, and Auntie Jess was institutionalised," she said.

I was pretty shocked - definitely not the reply I was expecting! "Well I guess that makes me feel more comfortable telling you I'm not straight," I admitted, looking at her. "Oh thank God!" she chuckled. "I'd hate for you to grow up to be a homophobe."



# COMING OUT CAN BE FREAKIN SCARY.

LUCKY YOU'RE NOT ALONE, EH?

Jules  
Gay, 16

When I came out at school, I hadn't really planned it. I had just attended my first Minus18 event, and a video was posted online, and I thought I'd share it on Facebook. Awkwardly, I was in the video and almost everyone one of my classmates commented on it, "wow! You're gay, you're actually gay. Faggot." and other cruel things like that. It was too late to take it back, so I just embraced it. I deleted the status, changed my 'interested in' on my account, and went to school. There wasn't a single person at school that wasn't talking about it, it was the best goss since one of the teachers left the school two weeks after starting. I lost a lot of friends that week, but I also discovered who my real friends were. They were the ones that stuck up for me.

As clichéd as it sounds, that was one of the best weeks of my school life; I stopped lying to my closest friends, and started to be myself. It was like a fresh start and I could finally really be me.

Maddy  
Lesbian, 21

The hardest part about coming out for me was figuring out what to say to other people. Every time I came out to someone new I tried to make it seem as casual as possible, sliding it into conversation somehow. I'd spend weeks coming up with ways to turn conversations onto the right topic and planning out answers to things they might say.

One thing I can remember was when we did issues lessons in English on same-sex marriage or equal rights. I'd try and bring that up in conversation after class. Or when talk about relationships came up, I'd try to subtly mention the possibility of having a girlfriend. I remember coming out to one person when she was talking about how hot Johnny Depp was and I just said something like "yeah, I'm not really the best person to ask."

When I came out there were mixed reactions: some of my friends pulled away from me almost immediately, which sucked pretty hard. When I came out to my sister, though, I got the last reaction I'd ever expected.

She just laughed, which was followed with "You really thought I didn't know?". I realised maybe I wasn't hiding it as well as I thought.

Coming out to mum was a fair bit more difficult. I'd lie in bed at night gripped with fear that she'd freak out, would get angry or be disgusted, and I'd be short one happy home. After all that stress and all that worry, it was almost a letdown when all she said was "I know." Apparently my family knows me better than I do, and the fact that they love me despite that is amazing.

## Scott Bisexual, 17

I came out to my family when I was in year 9. I'd recently started a relationship with my first boyfriend and we'd been hanging out every chance we had. My parents had begun to find it strange how much time I wanted to spend with my new 'friend', but didn't question it. One day, we were sitting in my room together, cuddling on my bed. Suddenly the door starts to open and the two of us jumped back from one another. Mum walked in just as we flew to opposite sides of the bed. The penny finally dropped, and mum awkwardly stuttered "I-It's alright Scott, you don't- it's okay" and closed the door. Awkward. I was a bit shaken and avoided her for the rest of the day. Eventually, Mum confronted me and asked what was going on. At first I was reluctant to talk about it and tried to dismiss it, but eventually told her I was bi. The next morning Dad knocked on my door, he sat on my bed and said "Mum told me about last night". I cautiously asked "Are you okay with it?". Dad was silent for a while, then suddenly responded "Scott, you like boys and girls, I like Asian women. Neither of us can help that, it's just who we are".

## Rebecca Transgender, 16

I'd been talking to a friend about being transgender for a few months and had come to terms with the fact that, while born a girl, I wanted to be physically male.

Although I'd often casually talk about it with him, I wasn't ready to tell everyone yet, especially not my best friend. She's always been a good, supportive person, but she comes from a traditional family and I wasn't really sure how she'd take it. During our school ski camp, some of the

girls decided to give me a 'makeover'- I reluctantly agreed, and they gathered around me, applying makeup, doing my hair, and changing my clothes. It was a pretty overwhelming experience for me, and before they could finish I ran and hid. I burst into tears, and couldn't stop.

I hated feeling trapped and pressured by the girls, being dressed up to look womanly made me feel bulky and disgusting. Eventually my best friend found me. She tried to comfort me, but couldn't understand why I was so upset. Suddenly I didn't care anymore, I told her that I wanted to be male and waited for her anger or rejection. Instead she was calm and kind. Smiling, she said "I figured as much, I've noticed how you've been trying to look less feminine, you could have told me." I don't think I could have asked for a better reaction.

## Camden Gay, 17

Around 13 I found myself noticing other guys. I hated it, and every time I found myself drifting off into some deep lustful trance I would feel dirty afterwards. Somehow I managed to convince myself that everything would be alright and I'd revert back to "normal" and forget the entire experience. Looking back, how I managed to do this for two years is beyond even me. By the time I hit about 15 I realised I had to accept myself for who I am. Over a few months, I did a lot of looking online, eventually realising it wasn't all that bad. But that didn't prevent me from being scared beyond belief of anyone finding out!

Eventually I reached the point where I was bursting to tell someone, anyone. Luckily one of my friends had recently come out, and having him to talk to made things so much smoother. Sure, some people were completely shocked and didn't quite know how to react, but others were completely ecstatic about it. Within the one day it seemed I'd told everyone I knew.

It takes more than just courage to come out; it takes time and a fair bit of mental preparation. But the reality is, you can never be truly prepared. Although some of the people I told weren't that great about it, in the long run it showed their true colours. Now I know who my real friends are, I can be open about myself and it's been amazing ever since.



## Ace Bisexual, 19

I had my first ever crush on a girl in grade six. It was totally new and exciting and something I'd never felt before. It wasn't until grade 7 that I realised that I liked girls, and only girls. I developed pretty strong feelings for one of the girls in my class, and I felt shattered on the weekends and school holidays, because I couldn't be near her. Funnily enough, it wasn't until sometime afterwards, when I was sitting in my room one night when it just hit me. Bam! I realised I'm bisexual.

Telling my mum was a gradual process over a couple of months. I remember going for long car trips with her, and I'd drop hints. I'd say stuff like "I don't really feel comfortable when I date guys" or "Dating guys feels weird to me. I haven't really liked a guy yet". Sometimes I'd make comments like "that lady is so pretty", hoping that she would take the hint.

Finally being honest about my sexuality was the hardest thing ever. It was really emotional and I had to hold back tears. Mum and Dad had always said to me that they'd love me no matter my sexuality; I still couldn't help but be worried though.

At 16, I wrote a note to mum, gave it to her, and walked away crying. Mum followed after me and gave me a huge hug. The weight of the world came off my shoulders. That same night, I told my dad. He gave me a "who cares?" attitude, so that was kind of cool.

A few months later I told my sister while watching TV. While she was accepting, she told me about her gay friend getting bullied at school, and she was worried that the same thing would happen to me. Finally deciding to tell everyone, I came out to my close friends by Facebook messages. It got annoying typing individual messages so I just thought "what the hell?" and posted it in my Facebook status. It got something like 70 likes and 100 comments, so it made me feel a lot better! Everyone at school was talking about it, but no one gave me grief about it.

## Alice Bisexual, 19

I first came out as bisexual to two people, my best friend and my boyfriend. My best friend quickly told the entire school, not in a mean way, but the constant questions sucked. My boyfriend accused me of cheating - "how else would you know you were bi?" - but eventually got over it. A few months after that I listed my orientation as "bi" on MySpace just so people wouldn't have to keep pestering me. I didn't really care what anyone thought, except my parents who I don't share much about myself with.

One day I left my computer on and went to school. When I came home mum sat me down and asked if what my MySpace said was true. I freaked out and ran upstairs. I wasn't ready to talk about it with my parents, even if they were. It took me another 5 years to finally come out to my parents, after testing the water by talking about going to a marriage equality rally and Minus18 events. I honestly don't know what I was so scared of! Mum said she had figured out it wasn't just a phase and that she loved me no matter what.

The only thing that really changed was that I could finally talk openly about my views on marriage equality and how I started up a gay-straight alliance at my school, which my parents were proud of and now boast about to their friends! Coming out seemed like SUCH a big deal at the time but now I don't know why I was so scared. Being bi is only one small aspect of who I am and if someone has a problem with it, well, that's their problem.

## Millaa, Genderqueer, 21

My family was pretty poor growing up. As a teenager, I always wanted to stand out and make an artistic impact. I became known for my outrageous fashion often arriving at cafes dressed in leg warmers, stockings, bikini briefs, dinner suits, colourful makeup, elaborately decorated high heeled shoes and heavily hennaed hair affecting an androgynous image.

I came to the realisation I was genderqueer at age 19. One day when talking to a friend about the diversity of gender I came to the conclusion that I didn't feel I fitted a male or female gender role. Sometimes I have a boy day and the next a girl day, and that's fine.



# online bffs.

## Madeleine Paulson

When I was 17, I got a message through a website. It was just a short message commenting on something I'd mentioned in my profile, but it was also the start of one of my first online friendships.

We sent messages back and forth for a couple of months, and the more I talked to her, the more I liked her. And after a while, nervous as hell, I asked if she wanted to meet up in person.

Meeting her was awkward, to say the least. The phone number she gave me was wrong, we had more awkward silences than an elevator, and to top it all off, my mum insisted on coming along. Yeah – I'm so cool.

But since then I've met up with heaps more people from online in person. To my parents' surprise, none were axe murderers, and a couple have become my closest friends. Some people I know have even met their boyfriends or girlfriends online, and plenty more have found friends for life.

If you want to meet someone from online, you don't need to be paranoid like my mum. You do need to be a bit careful though, and there're a few things to look out for. I'd say the biggest is to make sure the person is who they say they are. Might seem like a no brainer, but I once met up with a gorgeous European model, who ended being a girl from down the road. It's not hard to make something up when you're on the other side of a screen. Adding people to Facebook, or having a Skype chat are good ways to make sure someone is the real deal. Photos are good, but in the case of my European model friend, they can easily be faked. My best friend chatted to a teenage guy online who ended up being in his thirties. Situations like this are what you're going to want to avoid.

One of the major warning signs I've experienced is when someone wants to meet up after just a day or two. It's a bit suss if you ask me, and probably means they only want to get in your pants, which is another thing to keep an eye out for. Tons of people I know have been messaged asking to hook up, and I'd be pretty hesitant to get into that kind of situation. Don't let yourself

be pressured into anything you don't want to do, make it clear what you want and what you don't want. Remember, the block button is your best friend for creepers online.

So everything checks out, you've been talking for a while, you know they're legit, and you want to meet up? Awesome! You've heard all the clichés about arranging to meet in person. Meet somewhere public, take someone with you, or at least make sure someone knows where you are. You might want to have an excuse to leave ready, just in case something goes wrong or they turn out to be a bit odd. I used to say that my parents were really strict and wanted me to be home by a certain time. You could also say you have a test tomorrow, or that you need to feed your platypus (uh, maybe not). Try asking a friend to give you a call during the meetup, so they can give you an escape route if you need one. And if the person does happen to be creepy, or pressure you, or isn't who they said they were, don't feel like you owe them anything. Don't be afraid to walk out (this is why meeting in a public place is totally better).

Once you've decided on a place and time to meet, have a chat to the person on the phone or webcam, and keep their number in your phone. At this point, the nerves might kick in. If you're anything like me, just before you meet, you'll be either pacing around looking around constantly, or sitting on the train or tram checking your phone constantly. It's normal, and it gets better as soon as you start talking. If you've been careful, you'll be fine. If you've been chatting online for a while, and you get along well enough that you want to meet up in person, they're not going to hate you on sight. Meeting someone from online for the first time can be awkward, but it can just as easily be fantastic. So fear not! If you keep your brain in gear and your phone in your pocket, you might just find yourself an amazing new friend.

*We've been told to remind you to always keep safe online. If you want to know more about online safety and security, you can check out the [Department of Communications website communications.gov.au/online\\_safety\\_and\\_security](https://www.communications.gov.au/online_safety_and_security) ↗*



# party party.

Micah Scott

My 18th birthday party was mostly spent with my friends dragging my furniture onto the front lawn while my parents were away for the weekend, and getting rather drunk.

Being the first of my friends to hit the big one-eight (and not being mates with the fake ID crowd) I decided to spend my first overage night hitting the clubs with some older friends-of-friends who I met a few months before. So one Friday night after a long day of year 12, and being the fresh and eager 18 year old I was, I headed over to meet my new friends-who-I-kind-of-knew-but-not really. Excited for the night ahead, we had a few pre-drinks and did our hair together before jumping on a train into the city.

Walking up to the club my stomach dropped a little bit as my nerves got the better of me. It then dawned on me that amongst all the excitement of my big night out, I actually didn't have a clue about what to expect. Ahem.

Well, it turned out that after being there for an hour, one of the friends-who-I-kind-of-knew had a few too many drinks, and lucky me got to look after him on a couch. Real mood killer let me tell you. It wasn't the last time a friend (or I) would do something stupid while out at night, but having less than perfect friends did teach me a thing or two.

## Go out with your mates

A) You'll have people to hang around with, and help each other out. B) It's kind of lame to go out on your own anyway, don't you think? Besides, they can totally help you:

## Plan how to get home

Getting home can be a complete pain, especially when you live a fair distance from the city. Staying at a friend's house with mates and sharing a cab home with them is a good way to keep the cost down. It also means you can wake up together and recap on the details from the night before. There's the option of 24 hour public transport like the Nightrider

in Melbourne, or if you're lucky like me, your parents might even pick you up at a certain time. Love you Dad!

## Drink in moderation

Munting in a toilet or alleyway behind a club is probably the least charming thing you can do. Being that drunk is also going to make it more difficult for your friends to keep an eye on you, and you're more likely to wake up in the morning with a handful of regrets. Predrinking too much before heading out is a pretty common way for people to get drunk and ruin their night before they even get there. So chill it on the shots.

## Drink water, eat food

A big cheeseburger is probably your best friend at 1am, and a few bottles of water throughout the night'll make life sweet too. Not only will it stop you vomiting all over the back seat of the cab, but it'll help reduce your hangover. Bonus!

## Ambulances aren't the enemy

If you or a friend do party a bit too hard, or something goes wrong and you need help - don't hesitate. Ambulance officers are there to help you, not judge you or turn you into the police. Calling an ambulance might save a life - so worrying about getting in trouble shouldn't stop you from getting help.

*Need support with your partying habits? Check out some of the organisations on page 32 ↗*

A close-up, warm-toned photograph of a person sitting on a boat deck. The person's legs are crossed, and they are wearing dark shorts and sandals. A hand is resting on their right knee. The background shows the boat's railing and bright sunlight filtering through, creating a soft, golden glow. The text is overlaid in the center in a bold, white, italicized font.

***HERE'S SOME  
OTHER STUFF  
YOU MIGHT  
FIND HANDY***

# new words.

If you're new to all this, some of the words are probably new too. Stress less, though! Here are some of the descriptions we have for you.

## Gay

Someone who likes people of the same sex. Gay usually refers to boys liking boys, but a lot of girls use it too.

## Lesbian

A girl who likes girls (physically or emotionally).

## Bisexual

Someone that is attracted to both guys and girls. Bisexuals aren't usually "going through a phase" and they aren't being greedy. Some like guys and girls equally, and some have a preference.

## Same Sex Attracted (SSA)

Same sex attracted is exactly what it says. It describes someone who is physically or emotionally attracted to someone of the same sex. This term's used more and more these days as it's a much better way to describe people who are not straight.

## Gender Diverse (GD) / Genderqueer (GQ)

Describes a person who feels that their gender identity does not fit into the "categories" associated with their biological sex. For example, someone who is born a female 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 gender diverse or genderqueer, rather than (or as well as) male or female.

## Transgender

Sometimes gender diverse people feel that their gender doesn't match their sex, ie - someone born with a penis might feel like a woman on the inside - this is referred to as transgender. Sometimes trans people change their name, their clothes, or their sex. Sometimes they don't.

## Heteronormativity

The assumption that everyone is straight. It's pretty easy to do, especially when you don't know many SSA or GD people. It's also the assumption that you have to act a certain way because of your gender.

## Intersex

People are born with different kinds of bodies. Intersex is an umbrella term, often associated with a medical diagnosis of DSD, that describes people who have natural variations that differ from conventional ideas about 'female' or 'male' bodies, including genital, chromosomal and a range of other physical characteristics.

## Queer

Some people identify as queer to mean different, or not aligned to stereotypes. For some, queer means same sex attracted, for others, it means gender diverse. For some, it simply means different.

## Pansexual

Someone who is attracted to people of all identities. Pansexuals are generally attracted to the person inside. Unlike people who are bi, pansexuals aren't really concerned with a person's gender.

## Questioning/Unsure

Most people will question their sexual or gender identity at some point throughout their life. Even if you're straight, it can be confusing stuff, but it's also pretty normal.

## Stereotyping

Generalising that all people belonging to a particular group have certain characteristics. Like believing that all gay men like Lady Gaga. [OK bad example! But you get the idea].

## Gaydar

The "ability" to tell if someone's gay. Unless you see someone sucking face with their same sex partner, or they tell you their sexuality, your gaydar isn't going to be exactly accurate. Assuming someone's sexuality or gender identity can actually be pretty sucky.

## Homophobia

The fear, hatred or ignorance towards same sex attracted people and people who are attracted to more than one gender. Homophobia usually leads to discrimination or abuse, like using the phrase "that's so gay."

## Transphobia

The fear and hatred of gender diverse or transgender people, their desires and behaviours, that often leads to discriminatory actions or abuse.

## Discrimination

Treating someone like crap, or less than equal because they have a certain characteristic, like a school not allowing same sex partners to the formal. Discrimination due to sexuality or gender identity is nearly always illegal in Australia.

# more places to go.

## australia wide.

### SAFE SCHOOLS COALITION AUSTRALIA

Nationally convened by the Foundation for Young Australians (FYA), Safe Schools Coalition Australia is proud to create change in schools to build safer and more inclusive environments for same sex attracted, intersex and gender diverse students, teachers and families. FYA is a national independent non-profit organisation dedicated to all young people in Australia.

Safe Schools Coalition Australia partners are being established in every state and territory. Ask your school to get involved.

[safeschoolscoalition.org.au](http://safeschoolscoalition.org.au)

### MINUS18

Australia's national organisation for LGBT youth, Minus18 is young people leading change, building social inclusion and advocating for an Australia free of homophobia and transphobia.

Jump on to the website, get to know other same sex attracted and gender diverse young people, access resources and advice, and get info on upcoming events.

[minus18.org.au](http://minus18.org.au)

### HEADSPACE

Headspace is the national youth mental health foundation and supports young people who need someone to talk to or who are going through a tough time. Check out their website to find your nearest headspace centre or for online mental health support.

[headspace.org.au](http://headspace.org.au)

### QLIFE

QLife is a counselling and referral service for people of diverse sex, genders and sexualities. QLife provides nationwide, peer supported telephone and online chat support to LGBTI people of all ages.

1800 184 527 [qlife.org.au](http://qlife.org.au)

### OII AND AISSG

Organisation Intersex International Australia and Androgen Insensitivity Syndrome Support Group Australia (AISSG) provide support and education by and for intersex people.

[oii.org.au](http://oii.org.au)

[aissg.org.au](http://aissg.org.au)

## act.

### SEXUAL HEALTH AND FAMILY PLANNING ACT

SHFPACT is a health promotion charity supporting schools to deliver relevant and effective sexuality and relationships education for ALL students.

[shfpact.org.au](http://shfpact.org.au)

### BIT BENT

Bit Bent is a social support group held in Belconnen and Woden for young people who want to hang out with other LGBTIQ or questioning young people, in a safe and friendly space.

## vic.

### FAMILY PLANNING NSW

Family Planning NSW provides reproductive and sexual health services as well as information and health promotion for doctors, nurses, teachers and other health, education and welfare professionals.

[fpnsw.org.au](http://fpnsw.org.au)

### TWENTY10

Twenty10 is a community organisation working with and supporting people of diverse genders, sexes and sexualities, their families and communities in NSW of all ages. It incorporates the Gay and Lesbian Counselling Service NSW, including specialised services for young people.

[twenty10.org.au](http://twenty10.org.au)



**nt.**

### **NORTHERN TERRITORY AIDS AND HEPATITIS COUNCIL**

NTAHC provides a range of programs supporting LGBT health, with a particular focus on preventing transmission of HIV, Hepatitis C, STIs and minimising the physical and social impact of HIV/AIDS and Hep C.

[ntahc.org.au](http://ntahc.org.au)

**qld.**

### **FAMILY PLANNING QUEENSLAND**

Family Planning Qld provides sexual and reproductive health clinical services across QLD. They also provide education and training to health professionals, teachers and community leaders.

[fpq.com.au](http://fpq.com.au)

### **OPEN DOORS YOUTH SERVICE**

Open Doors provides counselling and support services to young people who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual and/or transgender. They also provide support to families.

[opendoors.net.au](http://opendoors.net.au)

**sa.**

### **SHINE SA**

SHine SA (Sexual Health Information Networking and Education SA) works in partnership with government, health, education and community agencies, and communities, to improve the sexual health and wellbeing of South Australians.

They are the SA provider of Safe Schools Coalition Australia.

[shinesa.org.au](http://shinesa.org.au)

**tas.**

### **WORKING IT OUT**

Working it Out provides services designed to meet the needs of people negotiating their sexuality and/or gender identity and intersex status through individual counselling and support, support groups, student education, workplace training, and community education.

[workingitout.org.au](http://workingitout.org.au)

**vic.**

### **SAFE SCHOOLS COALITION VICTORIA**

SSCV is a coalition of schools, staff and students dedicated to supporting gender and sexual diversity and challenging discrimination in all Victorian schools.

They are the VIC provider of Safe Schools Coalition and based out of GLHV.

[sscv.org.au](http://sscv.org.au)

### **MINUS18**

In addition to its national activities, Minus18 in Victoria runs the annual Same Sex Formal, social and dance events, Stand Out workshops and an online social network for same sex attracted, and gender diverse young people.

[minus18.org.au](http://minus18.org.au)

**wa.**

### **FREEDOM CENTRE**

Freedom Centre is an organisation and drop in centre for young people to support each other and their communities to be informed, happy and healthy about their sexuality, sex and gender.

[freedom.org.au](http://freedom.org.au)

# standing out.

So you might be asking “what next?” If you’re looking to take things another step, you might want to think about Standing Out against homophobia and transphobia.

Standing Out against homophobia and transphobia, especially at school and uni won’t just be amazing for you, but goes a pretty long way to making sure everybody feels like they belong.

There’re a bunch of different ways to Stand Out. In fact, we’ve got a whole magazine on them.

## Find out where your friends can get support

Your friends *might* be too shy to talk to others about being queer; it can sometimes be pretty intimidating. A lot of the time they might feel like they have to ‘out’ themselves, which they might not be ready to do. Finding out which teachers at school are supportive, or websites / places they can go to meet people is a pretty easy but awesome thing for you to do - especially since we’ve given you a head start at the back of this mag.

## Don’t let people get away with being jerks

Don’t let people be jerks. It’s pretty simple. Report people who bully, or harrass others, and when they make ignorant comments, call them out on it. Stopping words like *fag*, *poof* or *dyke* or phrases like *that’s so gay* ist a good place to start.

## Get people talking

Talking about sexuality and gender identity is a pretty decent way of getting other people to talk about it too. Think school assignments, putting posters up, guest speakers at school - that sort of thing. Get your student leaders / student council to run events that raise awareness for queer youth. Rainbow casual clothes days and recognising days like International Day Against Homophobia and Transphobia - Just a few to get you started.

## Help start, or join in a Stand Out group

Some schools/unis have Stand Out or diversity groups - places for queer and straight students to hang out and chat about what’s going through their mind, and to talk about what things they can do together to change things in the school. If your school doesn’t have one, you could be the awesome person that starts it.

## Be counted

Create change in your school and become a member of Safe Schools Coalition Australia. You’ll need your principal to join - visit [safeschoolscoalition.org.au](http://safeschoolscoalition.org.au) to find out how.



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**DOWNLOAD STAND OUT!**

[minus18.org.au](http://minus18.org.au)  
[safeschoolscoalition.org.au](http://safeschoolscoalition.org.au)  
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**CREATED BY**

**MINUS18**

Australia's national organisation for LGBT youth, Minus18 is young people leading change, building social inclusion and advocating for an Australia free of homophobia and transphobia.

Jump online for support, chat, events and resources.

[WWW.MINUS18.ORG.AU](http://WWW.MINUS18.ORG.AU)

**ENDORSED BY**

**SAFE SCHOOLS COALITION AUSTRALIA**

Nationally convened by the Foundation for Young Australians, Safe Schools Coalition Australia creates change in schools to build safer and more inclusive environments for same sex attracted, intersex and gender diverse students, teachers and families.

[WWW.SAFESCHOOLSCOALITION.ORG.AU](http://WWW.SAFESCHOOLSCOALITION.ORG.AU)



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