

The following information has not been provided as a script, but rather an idea of how to respond to any questions, oppositions or assumptions that you might hear about LGBTI inclusion in the workplace.



Won't this be offensive to people of differing religious, cultural or conservative backgrounds?

LGBTI inclusion is absolutely **not** about trying to change individual values or beliefs. It **is** about workplace behaviour and how we interact with each other in a working/professional relationship.

The very nature of diversity means that people will have cultural, religious and attitudinal differences. But there is a key point to be made here:

Diversity = difference

Inclusion = working with all differences respectfully

People's personal views, values and beliefs are their own. It's behaviour that inclusion initiatives target.

It's also against the law to discriminate against individuals because of their individual difference.

By supporting LGBTI workplace inclusion, we're not only saying this is a workplace where all employees can thrive, but also that harmful, discriminatory or exclusive behaviour targeting those who do identify, will not be tolerated.

Sexual orientation is a personal thing; it doesn't belong in the workplace.

You might hear something along the lines of *"I don't talk about my sex life at work, so why should they be allowed to flaunt theirs?"*

Every single person has a sexual orientation, for most people it's heterosexual. The difficulty is that for many heterosexual people, their orientation doesn't even come into question. It's such an incredibly innate part of who they are that it doesn't even occur to them that their orientation is on display for others to see 24/7.

We talk about our families, we bring our partners to events, we may have a photo on our desk or on display in our wallet. Yet, if someone mentions the name of a same-sex partner or if they tell someone they're gay, then suddenly that part of their persona takes over. From here on in they're known as the 'gay lawyer' instead of the 'great lawyer'. It's odd isn't it? We wouldn't dream of talking about that 'heterosexual woman' that just started on Level 1.

While most of us go through daily life without giving our orientation a second thought, many lesbian, gay and bisexual people go through daily life safeguarding that part of themselves. Why? Because at the end of the day, that small piece of information can be detrimental to workplace, social and family relationships.

You cannot divorce a person from their orientation. If people are encouraged to bring their whole selves to work then sexual orientation, regardless of what it is, is very much a workplace issue.



I don't believe in preferential treatment, raising one group above another.

This is not what diversity and inclusion initiatives are about.

Academics refer to 'heterosexual privilege'. It's that privilege that heterosexuals enjoy that they don't even know they have – because it's the way it's always been.

For example:

The majority of people can talk freely about their family – *the majority of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people can't*.

The majority of people don't hesitate when filling out forms asking for their sex or gender – *the majority of transgender and intersex people do*.

This is not about giving a group special treatment. It is about creating an even playing field where people are welcomed into the workplace for the skills they bring and the contributions that they make. And once they're there, it's about allowing everyone (without exception) the privilege of coming to work, doing their job and not worrying about how their diversity may impact their relationships, their work and their career.

We shouldn't be forcing people to come out.

LGBTI inclusion is not about forcing people to come out and it is definitely not about trying to find all the LGBTI employees and drag them in as spokespeople, advocates or insist that they have their photographs taken for diversity websites or inclusion posters.

There will be many enthusiastic employees regardless of how they personally identify who would love to get involved in inclusion initiatives but equally there will be many who just want to sit on the sidelines, enjoy the benefits and stay out of the spotlight.

Under no circumstances should we imply that it would not be ok to do otherwise.

We don't have enough LGBTI people here to warrant the time and effort.

The most probable answer to that is, yes you do.

For many people the risk of being out in the workplace is too great. There are not enough messages of inclusion to convince someone that their orientation, gender identity or intersex status wouldn't be an issue. As a result, a significant number of people spend copious amounts of time and energy editing conversations, fictionalising personas and avoiding any real workplace relationships or conversations for fear of being found out.

The numbers are there, you just don't know they are.

LGBTI inclusion isn't about forcing people into the open, but it is about creating a work environment that, regardless of whether or not someone is out, they are assured that it wouldn't be an issue if they were.

