



# TOILETS & CHANGEROOMS FACTSHEET

## WHAT'S THE ISSUE?

Toilet facilities and changerooms can present a range of barriers for transgender, gender diverse, and intersex students, particularly when it comes to appropriateness, accessibility, and safety.

## APPROPRIATENESS

Challenges related to toilet and changerooms generally stem from the appropriateness of the available facilities. Such challenges are often greatest for students who do not conform to binary gender norms or categorisation. Most schools have designated male/female toilets and/or changeroom facilities, with very few schools having gender neutral facilities in place.

As a result, non-binary and gender diverse students must either select a gendered toilet facility or utilise alternate arrangements such as a staff, first aid office or disability-accessible toilet. These options may not be seen as ideal or even appropriate for the student, raising concerns around safety, social isolation, difference or not feeling supported or affirmed. This is also experienced by binary transgender and intersex students where there is not a clear and considered school policy around facility access.

## ACCESSIBILITY

These options also pose accessibility concerns around their ease of use and access. Key concerns include their proximity to classrooms and play areas and/or the need to seek additional permissions, keys, or a pass. Presenting to a member of staff for bathroom access can, in and of itself, pose an access barrier for some students, particularly if they are neurodivergent or experience anxiety.

This can be exacerbated by needing to disclose their identity to staff or from questioning from unfamiliar staff. Often, alternative facilities are not conveniently located, may be located in unsupervised areas of the school, or in staff spaces that can limit access to students.

If the school has multiple students who need access to these facilities this can also create an environment of competing needs, as such facilities tend to be limited to 1-2 stalls.

## SAFETY

Safety is also a concern, due to bullying and harassment from other students and/or misuse or damage to gender.

## WHAT WE KNOW

Recent statistics show a range of experiences when accessing these gendered facilities at school with up to 93% of Australian transgender and gender diverse students experiencing issues with bathrooms.

Further analysis indicated up to 86% avoid using toilets at school, up to 60% limit food/water to avoid needing the toilet at school, up to 82% feeling unsafe or uncomfortable in school toilets and up to 12.5% developed urinary tract infections or kidney issues from avoiding toilet use at school.

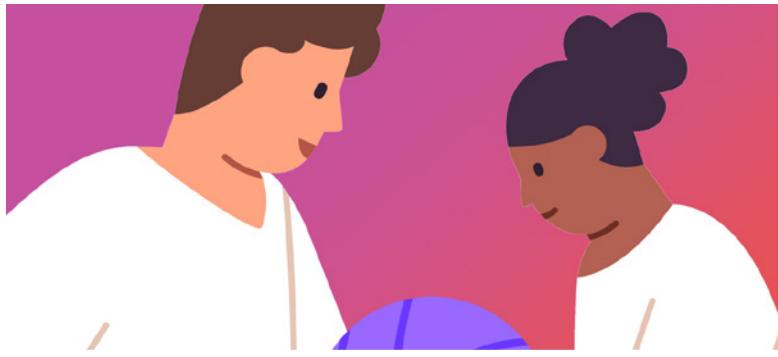
While there is no comparable data for intersex students, similar issues have been anecdotally reported.

## HOW TO ADDRESS THIS ISSUE?

- Students must have access to toilet facilities at all times.
- It is best that these do not have a gatekeeper or extra steps to access them, unless there is no acceptable safe and accessible alternative.
- Single-stall gender neutral facilities are the best standard.
- Schools may consider re-designating gendered facilities to gender neutral ones.
- It is important to consider these needs for off-site activities such as excursions, sports days, and school camps.



References: La Trobe University (2020-2021) Writing Themselves in 4: 'The health and wellbeing of LGBTQIA+ young people in Australia', Online at: [latrobe.edu.au/arcshs/work/writing-themselves-in-4](http://latrobe.edu.au/arcshs/work/writing-themselves-in-4)



## SCHOOLS SPORTS & CARNIVALS FACTSHEET

### WHAT'S THE ISSUE?

Sports and Physical Education have a range of benefits for all individuals and have been shown to improve mental health, social and emotional wellbeing alongside physical health and skills development.

Transgender, nonbinary, gender diverse and intersex students should be supported to access the same benefits from these activities as their peers.

Research shows that most transgender, nonbinary and gender diverse people want to participate in sport but only a few do so, due to perceived barriers, lack of acceptance, harassment, and bullying.

Elite, competitive sports pose the strictest regulations which may exclude transgender, nonbinary, gender diverse and intersex students.

Many sporting bodies and competition organisers have their own internal regulations, guidance documents and policies that govern participation for transgender, nonbinary, gender diverse and intersex students.

### WHAT GUIDANCE ALREADY EXISTS?

Physical Education in the school context does not generally require sex/gender segregated approaches as the primary focus is on the development of physical skills, movement, and participation.

Where activities are gender segregated, students should be able to opt into the group/activity that reflects their gender identity and/or preferences.

The Australian Curriculum states clearly that students' gender and sexuality should be affirmed in physical education 2. Sporting activities also follows this guidance when students are aged 12 and under.

Over the age of 12, organised, inter-school sporting competitions and representative sport may need to follow gendered rules established by external organisations.

### HOW TO ADDRESS THIS ISSUE?

Students should be supported to participate in the way that best aligns with their affirmed gender identity wherever possible. This support should be extended to uniform options and access to facilities such as changerooms. Sports uniforms and safety equipment should also be gender-neutral, flexible, and comfortable wherever possible.

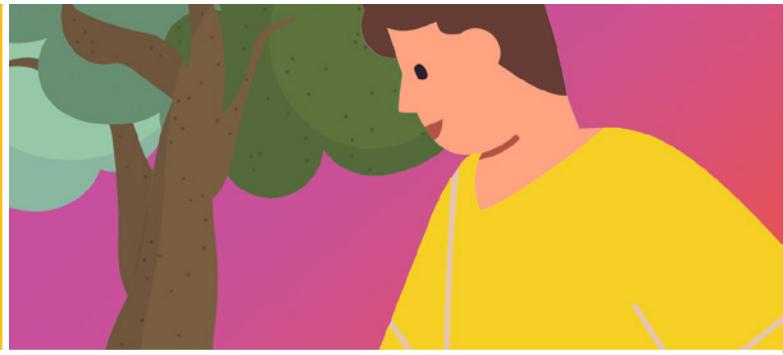
Visit our fact sheet on uniforms for more guidance. Similarly, school carnivals such as swimming carnivals, athletics carnivals or cross-country events also do not require sex or gender segregation. Races and events can be run in mixed groups with each student getting their own individual qualifying times.

One way to organise races is by year level or class such as "Year 5 races", "Ms Smith's English class" etc. rather than boys' and girls' races. This can also help to streamline the event and may cut down on administrative time.

### THINGS TO CONSIDER

- Physical education classes offer a range of activities to all students including mixed team sports.
- Students are supported to participate in sports, physical education, and carnivals as their affirmed gender.
- School carnivals consider the organisation and division of events and races. Where single-sex/gender events exist, a 'mixed' or "all in" category is made available.
- Limitations and expectations of representative, competitive, or elite sports are made known to students and their participation is supported where possible.

References: ACT Government, Sport and Recreation Services (2014) 'The Sport Experiences of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Intersex People in the Australian Capital Territory', sport.act.gov.au • ACARA, Australian Curriculum, Health and Physical Education (2023) 'Same-sex attracted and gender-diverse students' Australiancurriculum.edu.au



## SCHOOLS CAMPS & EXCURSIONS FACTSHEET

### WHAT'S THE ISSUE?

School camps and excursions can present a range of barriers for transgender, gender diverse, and intersex students. Sleeping arrangements, access to showers, toilets, and changeroom facilities, clothing/uniform options for set activities, and the formation of groups may need to be considered to support students in these settings.

Without consideration and appropriate accommodations, school camps and excursions may be considered too challenging or distressing for transgender, gender diverse, and intersex students. These students may feel that they are required to participate in ways that do not respect and uphold their identity.

They also may feel the need, or expectation, to wear clothing they find uncomfortable or restrictive, which may not correspond with their gender (such as fitted swimwear, climbing harnesses, etc.).

### SLEEPING ARRANGEMENTS

Sleeping arrangements are often the presenting issue for school camps. Traditionally, most student accommodation is sex-segregated, and while this is appropriate for most students, it does not universally offer the best or safest options for everyone. Students may need special consideration regarding sleeping arrangements for many reasons, including medical monitoring, bed-wetting, night terrors, trauma, cultural or religious reasons, bullying and harassment, as well as gender identity, experiences of gender dysphoria or gender affirmation.

Students who affirm their gender may engage in affirmation practices involving tight or restrictive garments. These minimise the appearance of breasts ('binding') or genitals ('tucking'). Ideally this is achieved using specialised undergarments such as binders, tucking underwear or specialised adhesive tapes.

Many young people however, may use unsafe methods such as compression bandages or other adhesive tapes.

These garments are not designed to be worn while sleeping or during rigorous exercise, and guidance states to not exceed ~8 hours of continuous use. Exceeding this risks physical damage to the skin, muscles, bone and internal organs.

For students using options such as these, safe and comfortable sleeping arrangements are essential to allow them to take breaks and sleep safely.

### HOW TO ADDRESS THIS ISSUE?

Suitable sleeping arrangements may include a small private room or a cabin with their close, supportive friends (with parental permission). This may involve a mixed-gender group or a gendered group of peers that may differ from a sex-segregated approach and does not need to apply to all students.

Our fact sheets on **Uniforms, School Sport and Physical Education & Toilets and Change Facilities** may also be useful.

### THINGS TO CONSIDER

- The needs of transgender, gender diverse and intersex students are considered in school camp and excursion policies.
- Camp and excursion facilities have been thoroughly researched and key staff are aware of the available facilities and amenities.
- Communication with the student and their family/caregivers has occurred prior to the excursion, camp, or activity to discuss their options and preferences, arrangements for the activity and any accommodations that may be required.
- The organisation of sleeping arrangements accounts for the full range of student needs. This process allows a clear and direct pathway for those who require alternate arrangements.
- Transgender, gender diverse and intersex students are supported to be accommodated in, and to access the facilities that align with their gender identity or other preferences.



## SCHOOL UNIFORMS FACTSHEET

### WHAT'S THE ISSUE?

Uniforms can present a structural barrier for some transgender, nonbinary, gender diverse and intersex students, especially when schools have gendered dress-codes. These may inadvertently (or sometimes explicitly) require students to comply with a dress code that is at odds with their gender.

This is a particular issue when a gendered dress code is based on the legal sex marker on a student's record student record, rather than a student's identified gender.

Such requirements can establish a negative association with administrative interactions and can mean that students are less likely to engage with their school, or are more likely to perceive the school as a hostile environment.

Importantly, uniform policies that require students to present in a way that is incongruous with their gender may not comply with existing Federal and ACT anti-discrimination legislation.

Wearing incongruous uniform options can make students feel deeply uncomfortable, acutely distressed or may even be something the student is unable to engage in altogether, impacting their ability to be present, engaged, and supported at school.

### WHAT GUIDANCE ALREADY EXISTS?

In the Australian Capital Territory, all government schools are required to have a school uniform policy that does not place any gendered requirements or restrictions on items of the school uniform.

This is specified in more detail in the ACT Education Directorate's Dress Standard and Uniforms in Canberra Public Schools Guideline

Non-government schools have a range of approaches to uniforms, and subsequently diverse policies, so it is important to check what is available at your school.

### HOW TO ADDRESS THIS ISSUE?

Options should be available across all school uniforms including sports uniforms and swimwear. Loose-fitting options and options with more coverage such as rash shirts and board shorts (to wear with swimmers) should be included.

Visit our factsheet **SCHOOL SPORTS AND CARNIVALS** for more guidance on sports and PE.

### THINGS TO CONSIDER

- Does the school's uniform policy and related guidelines allow for a range of uniform items that can be worn by all students, irrespective of their gender?
- Are students provided with various uniform options that account for a range of needs and preferences (accessibility, mobility, comfort, gender)?
- Is cultural and religious diversity in the school community reflected and accommodated in the uniform policy (i.e. hijab, turbans, kippah and other head coverings, rosaries and other religious jewellery, cultural practices such as bindi, braids, locs, mehndi etc.)?
- Are students supported to wear uniform options that are comfortable and appropriate?
- If your school does not have a uniform, is the dress-code inclusive and affirmative of the needs of transgender, nonbinary, gender diverse, intersex, disabled, culturally diverse and religious students?



#### DRESS STANDARDS AND UNIFORMS IN CANBERRA PUBLIC SCHOOLS POLICY

References: ACT Government, Education Directorate (2016) 'Dress Standards and Uniforms in Canberra Public Schools Policy', Online: [education.act.gov.au](http://education.act.gov.au)