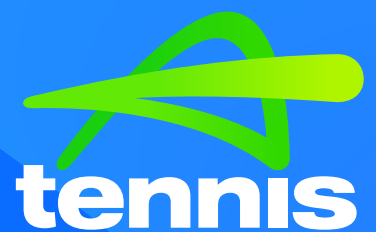




LGBTQIA+ Engagement *Guide*



Open4all

Tennis is committed to embracing diversity by making our sport and events welcoming, safe and inclusive for everyone.

Everyone should have the opportunity to be included and engaged through tennis in a way that is positive and meaningful for them, regardless of their sex, sexuality, gender identity, sex characteristics or any other defining characteristics. Inclusion is about providing choice for people to participate in sport in a way that they feel comfortable. As well as mainstream tennis opportunities, there are a variety of LGBTQIA+ specific initiatives that people can choose to participate in.

According to “Game On” research by Dr Ryan Storr, 2020, “For those LGBTQIA+ people outside of major cities and metropolitan areas, being socially and physically isolated was a key barrier. For many LGBTQIA+ people, if they cannot access a LGBTQIA+ specific club, or inclusive and LGBTQIA+ friendly tennis club, then they are unlikely to play.”

The purpose of this guide is to equip you with the foundational knowledge and confidence to help your club and coaches connect with a key segment of the community – people who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTQIA+). In this guide you will find:

- Information on the leading research around LGBTQIA+ inclusion in sport and why it is important
- Tips on how you can be more inclusive
- Case studies from LGBTQIA+ champions
- Contact information for organisations who can provide support to your club

A few small changes at your club can make huge differences that will ensure local community members feel welcomed, safe and included.

“Tennis Australia proudly live the values of equality, inclusion and diversity”

Craig Tiley,
CEO Tennis Australia

Grow your club

Around 10% of Australians are part of the LGBTQIA+ community

The LGBTQIA+ community reflects a range of races, ethnicities and ages, proving that Australia is truly a diverse country. By being inclusive of all people particularly those who identify as LGBTQIA+ we invite a large section of our community to participate in our sport.

Role models who have participated in tennis at elite levels such as Billie Jean King, Casey Dellacqua and Renee Richards have inspired many people with their stories of courage, bravery and pride to be themselves through tennis.

Local tennis clubs, such as Collaroy Tennis Club in New South Wales, are examples of how to open doors to be inclusive of people who are LGBTQIA+. You can read about their story in this guide and share the benefits of their approach.



Game on:

LGBTQIA+ inclusion in Australian Tennis

BACKGROUND

Tennis Australia together with Western Sydney University researchers explored the positive benefits of playing tennis for LGBTQIA+ communities, and explore how to ensure LGBTQIA+ people feel welcome, safe and included in tennis environments across Australia. The research methodology included:

3 FOCUS GROUPS **44** IN-DEPTH INTERVIEWS

50+ HOURS OBSERVATION AT TENNIS EVENTS ACROSS AUSTRALIA

WHAT WE FOUND



Overall, LGBTQIA+ people had positive experiences of playing tennis in Australia, in both mainstream and LGBTQIA+ specific clubs and tournaments.



LGBTQIA+ people have a strong desire to be included in Tennis clubs, to feel a sense of belonging and be socially connected to other people within their communities.

WHAT CAN BE DONE TO PROMOTE LGBTQIA+ INCLUSION IN TENNIS?



Create and promote welcoming, inclusive and supportive tennis environments (safe spaces), which celebrate and encourage LGBTQIA+ people to be their authentic selves.



Zero tolerance approach to homophobia, biphobia, transphobia and anti-intersex and anti-asexual prejudice, where LGBTQIA+ people can play tennis free from discrimination.



Increase visibility of LGBTQIA+ inclusion, tennis pathways, symbols and events e.g. rainbow flags, celebrating Wear it Purple day.

Take a stand!

People who are part of the LGBTQIA+ community do not feel safe participating in sport due to the fear of discrimination and exclusion. This is where clubs can be part of the solution, so that members of the LGBTQIA+ community can participate in tennis without discrimination.

According to the 2024 Free to Exist Report; 53% of young LGBTQIA+ people have witnessed discrimination; 44% of LGBTQIA+ young people living in rural areas experienced discrimination compared to 35% in metro areas, 37% of LGBTQIA+ young people currently play social sport while 33% play competitive sport

It is important to offer choices for participants as well as create welcoming, safe and inclusive sporting opportunities in tennis clubs across Australia.

Tennis Australia proudly collaborates with the Gay and Lesbian Tennis Alliance (GLTA) with supporting the annual Glam Slam event during the Australian Open. Over 200 LGBTQIA+ participants from 30 countries take part in this tournament. The Glam Slam finals were first held in Melbourne Park at the 2019 Australian Open.

Tennis is one of the most popular sports at the Gay Games, a global sporting event held every four years and attended by 10,000 participants from around the world.

“My Club opened my eyes to the fact that you don’t have to fit a certain box, you can be whoever you want to be, and you’re still in the club, and you’re still loved and accepted. And tennis to me was the area where I got that awareness that I didn’t have to change, I could just be me.”

Research Participant

How will my club benefit?



Help improve attitudes of community members towards your club, as well as set a positive example to your sporting peers.



Enhance your understanding and experience of diversity by being open and inclusive. This will also help boost your club membership.



Grow your club's programs by engaging with the LGBTQIA+ community. The more people you have, the better range of volunteers and skills to call on.



Strengthen your relationship with local councils, businesses and potential sponsors.



Increase your Club's reputation in your community as a welcoming and inclusive venue.



Top 10 tips on how to be inclusive

1

Add a welcoming, safe and inclusive club statement to your website and promotional materials.

2

Welcome new members with a smile. It is important to provide a friendly first experience for new participants.

3

Find out about the participant's needs and what they are hoping to get out of tennis.

4

Reach out to communities that assist LGBTQIA+ groups to increase networks that can support your club.

5

Educate your club members about being inclusive of all participants, including appropriate and non-discriminating language.

6

It is encouraged that your club restrooms are accessible for all. This means including signage to indicate the restroom is "All Gendered". Doing this provides a safe environment for everyone.

7

Respect that people do not transition to gain a competitive advantage in sport. People transition to live a life as their true and authentic selves.

8

Be informed of Tennis Australia's Membership Protection Policy and your state's anti-discrimination legislation. For more information contact inclusion@tennis.com.au

9

Share positive stories about your club's successes and achievements as an inclusive community.

10

Why not add some decorative rainbow bunting and flags!

Margaret River Tennis Club

Margaret River Tennis Club is situated in the South West of Australia, in a town that's most famous for great wine and surfing. With your average local being laid back and easy going, it's a beautiful place to live, and to feel accepted by the people around you.

The Margaret River Tennis Club is committed to showing our continuing support of LGBTQIA+ individuals, as well as always being willing to learn more and evolve. We hope to inspire other sporting clubs in the region, as well as other tennis clubs, to show their pride.

Margaret River Tennis Club members are grateful and continually appreciative to be playing and supporting each other on Wadandi Boodja (Land of Saltwater People)

“I’m so proud to be a member of a club who are committed to showing that they are also proud of me. By joining up with Tennis Australia and Pride Cup we’ve had the tools to show newcomers that they are joining a club who won’t stand for homophobia, on or off the court”

Lucy Curtin

Margaret River Tennis Club

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Partnering with Tennis Australia and Pride Cup
- Hosting information sessions to educate our members on LGBTQIA+ issues in sport
- Hosting events to bring the club together, proudly and publicly showing our commitment
- Connecting with other local sports clubs to highlight the importance of diversity and inclusion in our local sporting community
- Connecting to local LGBTQIA+ group - Margi Pride - to provide more information pathways for members

Collaroy Tennis Club

Collaroy Tennis Club has woven progressive policies embracing Diversity, Gender Equity and Inclusion into the Club's DNA. Collaroy has been named an 'Inclusion Development Hub' by Tennis Australia – one of only three in NSW. The Club has hosted annual Pride events as well as participated in the 2025 Australian Pride in Sport Festival.

Collaroy Tennis Club has a collaborative partnership with local LGBTQIA+ advocacy group Fusion Pride Northern Beaches where they launched regular social tennis programs for LGBTQIA+ players called 'Rainbow Racquets'. In 2025 the Club was awarded Silver Tier Status within the Pride in Sport Community Index.

“We really don’t see what we’re doing at Collaroy as anything particularly special... surely all sporting and community clubs should embrace and respect diversity. We welcome everyone to our club and want all members to feel like they belong as well as play the sport we all love in a friendly, safe and non-judgemental environment. Inclusion is very much part of who we are as a Club and our fast-growing membership suggests that this reputation works for us – certainly not against us.”

Dave Keogh
Management Committee - Inclusion Officer
Collaroy Tennis Club

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Partner with a relevant, local organisation to achieve optimal success
- Ensure that your club's Inclusion Policy is genuine and has support from the management committee and all members
- Spread the word far and wide via every touchpoint with the local community, as well as members
- Seek out local businesses keen to support your Inclusion Policy
- Seek out key influencers to champion your events / programs
- Hold regular events / programs to maintain momentum

Royal Park Tennis Club

Royal Park Tennis Club's commitment to supporting the LGBTQIA+ community has been demonstrated through hosting the Serving Pride initiative. It also included hosting a Pride Cup activation in collaboration with Pride Cup. Hosting these events provides an opportunity to celebrate inclusion, community and the love of tennis, while showing continued support for the LGBTQIA+ community.

This also brings together a fantastic mix of players, friends and allies for some friendly competition, great conversations and plenty of smiles both on and off the court.

By hosting events that also support the LGBTQIA+ community, Royal Park Tennis Club demonstrates their steadfast commitment to making tennis welcoming for all — a place where everyone can play, belong and be themselves.

“Hosting the Pride Cup activation wasn’t just about tennis as it is about community. We want everyone to feel they belong here and that their identity is celebrated both on and off the court.”

Vignesh Wilkinson
Royal Park Tennis Club

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Delivered the Serving Pride Initiative with support from local LGBTQIA+ tennis group VicTennis
- Collaborated with Pride Cup to deliver workshops
- Proudly hosted 50 participants at our Pride events in safe and welcoming spaces
- Hosted fun Round Robin format plays which encouraged participants to enjoy
- Provided BBQ gatherings to create connection and networking opportunities

Be a champion

Welcoming a new member to your club and ensuring they are feeling comfortable is a great way to demonstrate how inclusive your club is. This was the case when a tennis club in Perth had no hesitation in welcoming Allison, a new player, who informed the club she was an intersex trans female participant. While the club sought formal confirmation from Tennis West that there would be no issue with her participating in their upcoming summer competitions, the club's interaction with Allison was focused solely on discovering what Allison's tennis interests were from a social and competitive tennis perspective.

Based on her interest, the club was able to recommend to Allison that she participate in their internal Tuesday night social competition where she is now playing in addition to Tennis West's Saturday ladies competition.

“Tennis is my outlet. My emotions can get too much for me to handle and that's why I love tennis so much because it converts my emotion into power, letting me release them in a positive rather than a negative manner. Finding an accepting place to let me play is hard, but I've found one.”

Allison



KEY TAKEAWAYS

- The club treated Allison like they would any other new participant
- The focus was on finding out player's interest so that the club could support her to participate in tennis in a way that meets her interest
- Consulted with Tennis West for clarification to ensure participant can compete without barriers
- Participant is now playing on a regular basis in both social and competitive opportunities at the club

Get started with an LGBTQIA+ event!

Why not reach out to your local LGBTQIA+ group and celebrate an event? Below are LGBTQIA+ events that happen throughout the year:

Transgender Day of Visibility

31 March

Lesbian Day of Visibility

26 April

IDAHOBIT (International Day Against Homophobia, Biphobia, Interphobia and Transphobia)

17 May

Pan (Pansexual and Panromantic) Visibility Day

24 May

Pride Month

1-30 June

International Non-Binary Peoples Day

14 July

Wear it Purple Day

Last Friday in August

Celebrate Bisexuality Day

23 September

Bisexual Awareness Week

**Week surrounding
23 September**

International Lesbian Day

8 October

International Pronouns Day

Third Wednesday in October

Intersex Awareness Day

26 October

Asexual Awareness Week

Last week in October

Intersex Solidarity Day

8 November

Transgender Day of Remembrance

20 November

World AIDS Day

1 December

Partner up!

Why not reach out to your Member Association or an LGBTQIA+ organization to collaborate with or obtain resources to assist your club or venue with creating inclusive and safe spaces for all.

Tennis ACT

www.tennis.com.au/act

Tennis NSW

www.tennis.com.au/nsw

Tennis NT

www.tennis.com.au/nt

Tennis QLD

www.tennis.com.au/qld

Tennis SA

www.tennis.com.au/sa

Tennis TAS

www.tennis.com.au/tas

Tennis VIC

www.tennis.com.au/vic

Tennis West

www.tennis.com.au/wa

Pride in Sport

www.prideinsport.com.au

Pride Cup

www.pridecup.org.au

Proud 2 Play

www.proud2play.org.au

Minus 18

www.minus18.org.au



Glossary of Definitions

Tennis Australia acknowledges that language and terminology can have an impact (positively and/or negatively) on people who play our sport. According to Pride in Sport Australia, there are four key aspects we must consider when understanding how people identify, these include:

- Sex (biology)
- Gender identity (brain)
- Gender expression (culture)
- Sexuality (orientation)

Society has historically viewed these characteristics as being neatly segregated into male and female characteristics, also known as 'heteronormative'. It is important to note that these characteristics exist on a spectrum and are not binary.

- **Trans and gender diverse:** These are umbrella terms that describe people who identify their gender as different to what was assigned to them at birth. Some trans people position 'being trans' as a history or experience, rather than an identity, and consider their gender identity as simply being female, male or a non-binary identity. Some connect strongly with their trans experience. The processes of transition may or may not be part of a trans or gender diverse person's life. Terms such as 'cross dresser' and 'transvestite' aren't typically used by trans and gender diverse people to describe their gender experience.
- **Non-Binary:** This is an umbrella term for any number of gender identities that sit within, outside of, across or between the spectrum of the male and female binary. A non-binary person might identify as gender fluid, trans masculine, trans feminine, agender, bigender etc.

- **Transition/Gender Affirming:** The personal process or processes a trans or gender diverse person determines is right for them in order to live as their defined gender identity and so that society recognises this. Transition may involve social, medical/surgical and/or legal steps that affirm a person's gender.

- i. Social transition is the process by which a person changes their gender expression to better match their gender identity. This may include changing their name, pronouns, and appearance.
- ii. Medical transition is the process by which a person changes their physical sex characteristics to align with their gender identity. This may include hormone therapy, surgery or both.
- iii. Legal transition is the process by which a person changes their identity documents, name, or both, to reflect their gender identity. This may include changing their gender marker on a passport or birth certificate or changing their name on a driver's license or bank card.

- **Cisgender:** A term used to describe people who identify their gender as the same as what was assigned to them at birth (male or female). 'Cis' is a Latin term meaning 'on the same side as'.
- **Gender Experiences:** Trans, transgender, gender diverse, cis and cisgender are all experiences of gender and are distinct from male, female and non-binary gender identities.
- **AFAB/DFAB:** Assigned female at birth/ Designated female at birth
- **AMAB/DMAB:** Assigned male at birth/ Designated male at birth

- **Gender Dysphoria:** The distress or unease sometimes experienced from being misgendered and/or when someone's gender identity and body personally don't feel connected or congruent. Gender dysphoria does not = being trans or gender diverse, many trans and gender diverse people do not experience gender dysphoria and if they do, it may cease with access to gender affirming healthcare (if medical transition is desired). The trans and gender diverse experience is not a mental illness.
- **Legal sex:** The marker or classification recorded when a child's birth is registered. In NSW, this is either M or F. This marker can be amended to either M, F or X.
- **Sex characteristics:** Physical parts of the body that are related to body development/ regulation and reproductive systems. Primary sex characteristics are gonads, chromosomes, genitals and hormones. Secondary sex characteristics emerge at puberty and can include the development of breast tissue, voice pitch, facial and pubic hair etc. 'Sex characteristics' is more accurate than 'biological sex', 'biologically male' or 'biologically female'. Body parts do not have genders.
- **Cisgenderism/Cissexism:** A view that the trans experience doesn't exist or is something to be treated. That gender identity is determined at birth and is fixed based on sex characteristics (or 'biology') and that only binary (male and female) identities are valid and real.
- **Intersex Status:** 'Intersex' people have innate sex characteristics (physical features relating to sex, including chromosomes, genitals, gonads, hormones, and other reproductive anatomy, and secondary features that emerge from puberty) that don't fit medical and social norms for female or male bodies.
Intersex traits include a wide range of different underlying variations. These can be determined prenatally, at birth, during puberty and at other times. Each trait has its own characteristics and differing degrees of expression. The term intersex is best described as an umbrella. Intersex people are diverse, and do not share any one identity. Intersex people old enough to freely express an identity can be heterosexual or not, and cisgender (identify with their sex assigned at birth) or not.'
- **LGBTQIA+:** This is an acronym for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex and asexual. It is used to refer collectively to these communities. Lesbian, gay, bisexual and asexual relate to the attribute of sexuality and sexual identity; transgender relates to gender identity; intersex refers to people with innate variations of sex characteristics; while queer can relate to either, or both, gender identity or sexuality.
- **Pronouns:** 'Pronouns' are a grammatical means of referring to a person or persons. Some people prefer to use gender neutral pronouns, such as 'she/her/hers', 'he/him/his' and 'they/ them/their'. The pronoun a person uses to describe themselves generally reflects their gender identity.

"WHICH PRONOUNS DO YOU USE?"

IDENTITY	PRONOUN	EXAMPLE
Identifying as male	He/Him/His	He won the set
Identifying as female	She/Her/Hers	I play with her in doubles
Identifying as neither	They/Them/ Theirs	That is their tennis racquet

Acknowledgements

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