

Game on: LGBT+ inclusion in Australian Tennis

Background

Australian Tennis is committed to creating safe, welcoming and inclusive environments that are open for all. We know however, that LGBTQ+ people face unique barriers within sport.

Researchers at Western Sydney University explored the positive benefits of playing tennis for LGBTQ+ communities, and explore how to ensure LGBTQ+ 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, LGBTQ+ people had positive experiences of playing tennis in Australia, in both mainstream and LGBTQ+ specific clubs and tournaments.



LGBTQ+ 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.



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

LGBTQ+ inclusion in sport

This is one of the first pieces of Australian research focused on the positive impact that playing sport, specifically tennis, has on the lives of LGBTQ+ people.



Around three quarters of LGBTQ+ people experience or witness some form of discrimination within sport.



10%

For context, it is estimated that LGBTQ+ people make up around 10% of the Australian population.



Australian Sport has a history of discrimination towards LGBTQ+ people and abuse, homophobia, biphobia and transphobia continues to exist today.



This has led to some LGBTQ+ people feeling unwelcome, unsafe and anxious to participate in sport and sporting events.

What can be done to promote LGBTQ+ inclusion in Tennis?



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



Zero tolerance approach to homophobia/ biphobia, and transphobia, where LGBTQ+ people can play tennis free from discrimination.



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

Key take-away messages



It highlights the importance to create tennis environments where LGBTQ+ people can play tennis without fear of judgement and hostility, and to be themselves.



Tennis is well positioned to emerge from the COVID-19 pandemic as an inviting and accessible sport for millions of LGBTQ+ people in Australia.



The sport of tennis is a great way to reconnect LGBTQ+ people with their local communities and other LGBTQ+ people.



Overall, LGBTQ+ people who play tennis in supportive and welcoming environments report increased mental, social, and physical wellbeing.



WESTERN SYDNEY UNIVERSITY

Inclusive club cultures can help people develop new social networks and make new friends.



The research showed that those who play tennis in safe spaces and supportive club cultures reported improvement in their overall health and wellbeing, with a specific focus on social connections and support networks.

Tennis has the opportunity to shift the dial and change the sporting narrative from exclusion and discrimination, to inclusion and belonging for LGBTQ+ Australians.



Melbourne Park
Olympic Boulevard,
Melbourne Park,
Melbourne, Vic 3000
Private Bag 6060
Richmond South, VIC 3121



WESTERN SYDNEY UNIVERSITY

School of Health Sciences
Western Sydney University
Parramatta South Campus
Locked Bag 1797
Penrith, NSW 2751