



Australia's Surf Life Savers not only help and assist all beachgoers, but they also represent all of us through their diversity of members.

**Out on the Fields** (2014) undertook research involving nearly 9500 LGBT people and identified the following statistics from its Australian results;

- 80% have witnessed or experienced homophobia in sport
- 75% believe an openly gay person would not be very safe as a spectator at a sporting event
- The most likely location of homophobia is watching sport from the sidelines
- 50% of gay men and 48% of lesbians have been personally targeted in sport
- Of those targeted 85% have heard verbal slurs such as "Faggot" or "Dyke"
- 34% of gay men, and 19% of lesbians have been bullied within their sport
- 80% believe that sport is more homophobic than the rest of society
- 70% believe youth (under 22 years) team sport is not safe for LGBT people, and
- 80% of young LGBT people are completely or partially in the closet while playing sport, fearing discrimination from players and officials

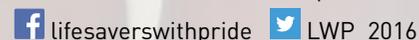
LWP is actively ensuring that lifesaving is not a contributor to these statistics by working with key stakeholders and administrators.

Lifesavers with Pride is the LGBT advocacy group within the surf life saving community. We represent gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender lifesavers and want to show lifesaving as a welcoming, progressive and inclusive organisation.

We have two goals;

- We want to encourage more LGBT community members to join the lifesaving family, to harness their good will and community spirit, and ensure that lifesaving truly represents the community that it serves, and
- We want to be sure that surf clubs and the organisation itself provides a secure, safe and embracing environment for their LGBT members.

Our goals can only be reached when all our clubs work towards creating an embracing environment, and ensuring that all members of our community strive for our young LGBT members to feel included, valued and welcome. Let's all do our part and be the change we want. The ocean doesn't discriminate, why should we?



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

Australian lifesaving is an iconic brand that has grown over the years to include women, nippers, cultural diversity, indigenous representation and the LGBT community. So what you see in the red and yellow caps is a reflection of everyone else down on the beach.

**Lifesavers with Pride** (LWP) works with the national and state offices of lifesaving as well as surf clubs to ensure we are making lifesaving a progressive, inclusive and welcoming organisation for our LGBT members and any potential LGBT recruits.

So why should your club reach out and embrace LGBT members? Here's where we are at the moment



There's no research out about LGBT inclusion in Emergency Services organisations but we get a good idea from research into LGBT inclusion in sport.

**Play by the Rules'** article *Breaking down the barriers of homophobia* identified that sledging and slurs referring to sexuality marginalise LGBT people and create an atmosphere where they feel they have no place, particularly young people. It tells them that there is something wrong with their identity and they do not belong, that they are 'not right'.

With the **National LGBT Health Alliance** identifying a suicide rate for under 27yo LGBT five to eleven times the national rate, anything that contributes to young people feeling unwelcome needs to be addressed. We should be a leveller, not a divider – it belongs to us all.

The *Inside Sport Survey* by the **ACT Government** (2014) identified that most people participate in physical activity for general fitness, with key themes, being part of a team or community, being accepted and welcomed, opportunity to broaden life experiences, have fun and develop friendship and provide a positive contribution.

But it also identified that LGBT people have felt unsafe in a sporting environment, had experienced homophobia and been harassed. Crucially it identified that 16% of men, and 10% of women had identified a sport in which they would like to participate but do not due to their sexuality. Of those, 70% identified swimming based sports.



The **Australian Government's Independent Sport Panel's** *The Future of Sport in Australia* (2009) identified an increasing number of same sex attracted young people indicate they feel discriminated against due to their sexuality, with sport identified as an unsafe environment. Those who suffered abuse or discrimination fared worse on every indicator of health and well being.

Sporting clubs and bodies can play an important role in working to better understand the issues and be more inclusive.

The **Australian Sports Commission** funded *Fair Go, Sport* (2013) to address the results of the Panel's report. This was designed to increase awareness of sexual and gender diversity in sports, promote safe and inclusive environments in sports and clubs, and develop models of engagement.

It identified that while the notion of sport as an important arena for culture change is widely accepted within public health circles, sportspeople often don't see their clubs – or sport – in the same way.



**Beyond Blue** and **Victoria University** released their report *The Impact of Homophobic Bullying during sport – the Equal Play Study* (2014) in which they identified that LGBT youth, regardless of being 'out', have reported higher levels of mental health and wellbeing concerns than heterosexual youth.

Whilst verbal homophobic abuse in sporting settings was strongly attributed to these findings, it was noted that a strong protective factor was unconditional self-acceptance. Targeting self-acceptance within sport can only strengthen resilience, which allows them to enjoy the many physical, mental and social health benefits of participation

**Vic Health** and **Victoria University** released the study *Come Out To Play* (2010) identifying that whilst sport plays a significant role in Australian society, it is a place where LGBT Australians are largely invisible. It identified that participants were often labelled as "sissies" or "poofs" as a shameful insult to propel them to try harder, resulting in many leaving sport. This results in only 45% of men and 62% of women playing team sports later in life.

It identified that team sports offer opportunities for intimacy and emotional expression, which can only occur safely if all members present as heterosexual. This leaves LGBT players with two options; either stay in the closet or leave the sport. Remaining LGBT players who witness slurs and abuse become galvanised in their intentions to remain hidden.

**INCLUSIVE**

**PROGRESSIVE**

**WELCOMING**