

↖ Trans justice project.



Conversations for Trans Justice

A guide for trans people,
our loved ones, and allies.



We acknowledge the Traditional Owners of the lands on which we we live, work and organise.

We pay our respects to elders past and present. This land was stolen and sovereignty was never ceded.

We also pay our respects to the Sistergirl and Brotherboy communities across this continent.

Always was, always will be, Aboriginal land



Trans justice project.



We deserve to thrive

Our community deserves the freedom to be themselves, to feel safe in our communities, and to have the same rights and protections as everyone else.

Around the world right now trans and gender diverse people, our lives, rights, and health care, are under attack.

Over the last year in Australia we have seen a rapid rise in anti-trans hate, the platforming of disinformation by the mainstream media, and a number of new organisations forming with the express purpose of undermining our rights and freedoms.

This is no accident. It is part of a coordinated and well-funded campaign by an anti-trans lobby.

This lobby is not only a threat to the trans and gender diverse community, but also to the rights and freedoms of all people, and to our democracy.

However, by taking action now to have conversations with our friends, families, and colleagues about trans justice we can stop the anti-trans lobby gaining a foothold here in Australia.

Conversations and how we fight back

The anti-trans lobby relies heavily on lies and disinformation to try to turn the public against the trans community.

Face-to-face conversations are one of the most powerful tools we have for combatting disinformation because they create an opportunity for us to deepen relationships, build understanding, and create space for learning.

78% of Australians support trans and gender diverse people having the same rights and protections as everyone else.

However, only 11% of Australians know someone well who is trans [1].

The anti-trans lobby is exploiting this lack of familiarity that the general public has with trans and gender diverse people to spread dangerous lies about our rights, lives, and healthcare.

One of our most powerful strategies to combat the efforts of the anti-trans lobby is to build the general public's understanding and connection with the trans community.

In the same survey as above, people who know someone well who is trans [11%] were almost certain to support trans people having the same rights and protections as everyone else [97% of people].

To combat the efforts of the anti-trans lobby we need to do our best to build understanding, educate potential allies, and expose their hateful agenda.

One-to-one conversations are a powerful tool for helping to inoculate people against anti-trans disinformation and also to build people's understanding and empathy for the trans and gender diverse community.

[1] <https://equalityaustralia.org.au/new-research-shows-overwhelming-support-among-australians-on-trans-equality/>

This guide will equip you with the knowledge and skills you need to have powerful and persuasive conversations about trans justice with your friends, family, and the general public.

We hope that this will help you to:

- Build trust and human connection
- Explain why you care about trans freedoms, rights, and lives
- Deepen your knowledge about trans and gender diverse people
- Help to combat anti-trans disinformation

Please note that the advice and approaches contained within this guide are about how to be most effective in these conversations, but it is ok if you find these kinds of conversations too emotionally difficult to engage with. We hope you take what is useful from this guide and adapt it to meet your own needs.

The Spectrum of Support

Building a better world for trans and gender diverse people will require the support and active allyship of large sections of the general public.

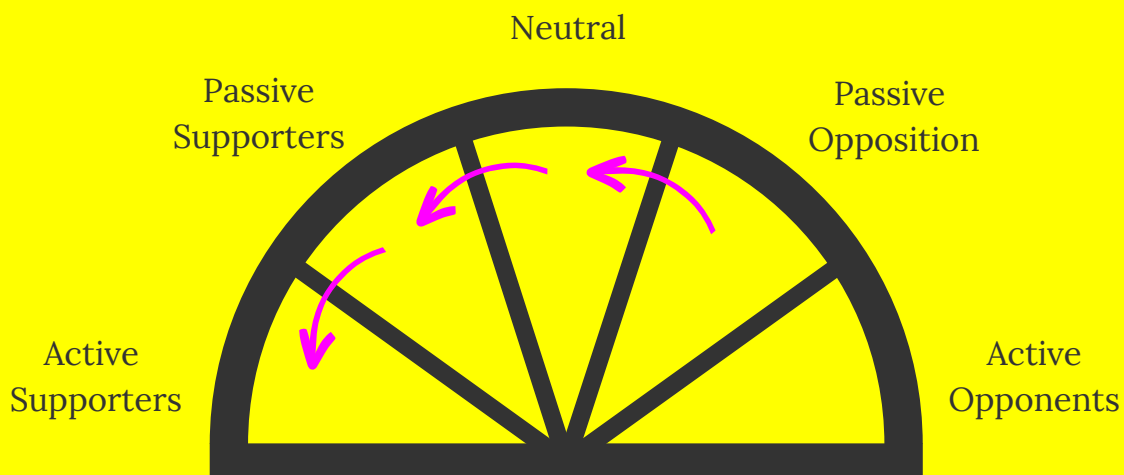
As change makers we might feel tempted to spend valuable time trying to 'call out' or convince our Active Opponents [e.g. anti-trans organisations] that they are wrong. But this is usually a waste of time. These groups are the least likely people to change their minds and often try to bait well-meaning people into debating them to build their own profile.

To be most effective we should instead focus on 'winning the middle'. That is - the largest section of people who are neither strongly against us or for us, but rather, the people who have not yet made up their minds.

This 'middle' group likely includes people who, to their knowledge, have never met a trans person before, have not got an opinion on any of the issues that affect us, and may have only heard about our community tangentially through the news or social media.

Social movements create change, not through convincing their active opponents that they are wrong, but rather by isolating them. Our job as change-makers is simply to get every group across the Spectrum of Support to take one step towards us, and one step away from our Active Opponents.

The Spectrum of Support



We want our Passive Supporters to become Active Supporters, the Neutral to become Passive Supporters, and the Passive Opposition to become Neutral. If we focus our conversations on the people that we can realistically move then we will be far more effective in building support for our cause.

This strategy called 'winning the middle'.

To effectively 'win the middle' we must choose tactics and methods of communication that can actually reach the people we want to speak to. You might want to try organising a workplace meeting, running a workshop at a conference, or even hosting a stall at the local markets to try and reach people who have the potential to be supportive.

With this strategy in mind, we have designed this guide to help you have conversations with people who know very little about trans people, who may have been exposed to the lies of the anti-trans lobby, but who have the capacity to be supportive if someone takes the time to have a genuine conversation with them.

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trans and gender diverse
people will require the support
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Five Strategies for Powerful Conversations

#1 Listen, ask questions, and empathise

Begin your conversations with generous curiosity by asking questions and listening to their answers.

Research has shown that once people become defensive they find it extremely hard to listen and to change their minds. This is why direct confrontation rarely works to convince people.

Instead, listen without judgement, and use 'open' questions that will allow the other person to explore their own thoughts, rather than 'yes/no' questions that will shutdown conversation.

Some questions you can try:

- What do you already know about being trans?
- Where did you learn about this from?
- What has your experience been with trans people?
- Will you tell me more about that?
- How does that make you feel?
- Would you be keen to hear a little bit about my experience?



#2 Share personal stories

Cognitive science has shown that facts don't convince people, stories do. This is because when we hear facts that don't fit with our existing 'paradigm' (our way of seeing the world), we will most likely reject them.

However, stories, since they activate different neural pathways, help the brain consider new information more effectively and openly.

Instead of directly refuting someone's views with a snappy fact or statistic, try sharing a story of your own experience, or the experience of someone you know.

Structure your story by explaining **how you used to feel** the same way, how your **mind was changed**, and **what you learned** through the process.

Trans Youth Health Care

"I think sixteen is too young to have access to hormones"

Example ally response:

I can understand that you might feel a bit uncertain if you haven't met a child who is trans before, I actually used to feel the same way. But what changed my mind was meeting my friend's child. She is 16 now and her name is Amber.

She recently started estrogen and it has really helped her to feel more confident and more at ease. She is happier, she is doing better at school, and she is excited for the future.

I was so happy for her the other day because she came home so excited and told me and her mum that she had been invited to a sleepover with a bunch of other girls. Most teenagers take these experiences for granted but it's been really hard for her to find friends who make her feel like she belongs.

What I have learned from watching her grow up is that it would be incredibly cruel to force her to stop being herself. The reality is that this is life-changing health care. It actually needs to be made more accessible and affordable so that everyone who needs it can get treatment and so that kids like Amber can have the freedom to just be themselves.

#3 Expose the agenda of the anti-trans lobby

Research shows that it is counter-productive to simply say that a claim is false, or to say what something is NOT [e.g. climate change is not a hoax]. Instead, we need to tell a counter-narrative that explains the issue from our perspective, ascribes blame to a specific person or organisation, explains their motivations, describes the harmful impact of their actions, and finally, what change we think should be made.

Tell them:

- Who is doing it
- What they are doing
- Why they are doing it
- What the impact is of their actions
- What should be done instead

Anti-trans Disinformation

Example community response:

"[Organisation] was started to spread lies about the trans community to try and undermine our access to health care.

Despite not having any connections with the trans community they think that they know us better than we know ourselves. They simply don't like that some people are trans and so are trying to stop us having a say over what we do with our own bodies and lives.

They are doing this by spreading lies to try to convince well-meaning people like you into supporting policies that will make life a lot harder for trans and gender diverse people like me.

To me this just shows why trans health care needs to be led by the trans community.

It is so important that our experiences, expertise, and needs are centered so that organisations like this aren't allowed to call the shots.

#4 Bridge the knowledge gap

Most people know very little about the trans community. Try asking what they already know and see if you can create a space where you can share your knowledge, and where they can feel comfortable to ask questions.

What is gender-affirming care?

Gender-affirming care helps trans people to thrive, and be their authentic selves by supporting them to align their gender with the way they are treated, related to, the cultural role/s they may inhabit, and/or the way they feel in their body.

It is a patient-led model of care that emerged in response to the previous 'gate-keeper' model which placed pathologizing and damaging restrictions on the kinds of trans people who were able to access care.

Gender-affirmation may include social [updating name, pronouns, presentation, voice training], legal [amending identification], and medical [puberty blockers, hormones, surgery]. Not all trans people affirm their gender, and no one's journey through gender-affirmation looks exactly the same.

While access to gender-affirming care is a key issue for trans and gender-diverse people, gender-affirmation is something that cis gender people do too. Whether it is going to the gym to get big muscles, the kind of relationships or partners you seek out, or the ways in which you choose to present yourself through dress, cis people are constantly doing things to affirm their gender.

Why are some people trans?

No one knows! Just like how some people are gay, some people are trans. It is a perfectly normal part of the spectrum of how humans experience gender.

What we do know is that trans people are generally happiest when they are able to acknowledge and embrace the truth of their lives, and feel safe to share it with those closest to them.

Why are there more trans people now?

There have always been trans and gender diverse people but it has only been in the last decade or two where it has been safe enough for trans people to live their lives more openly.

Previously, many trans people lived 'stealth' - choosing to keep their identity secret, moving cities, and cutting ties with their old life entirely to ensure that no one ever found out that they are trans.

As society has become more accepting of trans people more people have felt safe to come out and live their lives openly, particularly young people. This is a good thing and shows that society is a much safer place for trans and gender diverse people than it used to be.

Why do some people retransition?

Retransition or "detransition" as it is often called by anti-trans actors, is the process of someone re-identifying with the gender they were assigned at birth. Unfortunately, these narratives have been weaponised against the trans community to try and stop anyone, including adults, accessing gender-affirming care.

Access to gender-affirming care is a human right. As with any treatment there will be some portion of people who will regret accessing it. The data clearly shows that the overwhelming majority of trans people find access to gender-affirming care life changing, and in many cases life-saving.

Furthermore, we know that the majority of people who retransition more often do so because of discrimination, poverty, or difficulty finding work or housing as a trans person - not regret about the treatment itself. [2]

People who retransition still may require access to gender-affirming care so that they can reaffirm their gender in alignment with how they now experience it.

[2] <https://slate.com/human-interest/2023/01/trans-detransition-facts-research-study-atlantic.html>

What does 'trans justice' mean?

Trans justice is about repairing the historical and continuing harm that has been done to our community through centuries of marginalisation, pathologization, and hate.

It goes beyond asking for rights, and acknowledges that for the trans and gender diverse community to thrive we require long-term support, targeted interventions, and resourcing.

Trans justice is about doing what is necessary for trans people to one day have the same opportunity to build good lives as everyone else. It means working towards a future where trans and gender diverse people have equitable access to employment, housing, health, and community.

Finally, trans justice speaks to the need for trans people to have power over the decisions that affect our lives and health care, and our right to self-determination, bodily autonomy, and informed consent.

Trans justice is about repairing the historical and continuing harm that has been done to our community through centuries of marginalisation, pathologization, and hate.

#5 Stay connected

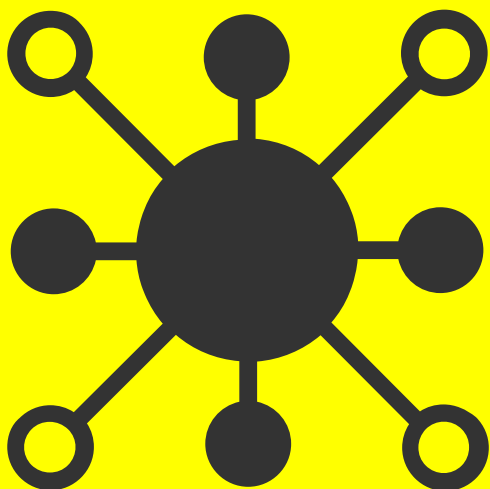
It's tempting to want to cut people out when they hold views that we find harmful or offensive. However, we know that social isolation is a key factor in how people become radicalised.

It has been noted that many activists in anti-trans circles may, due to their extreme beliefs, no longer have a relationship with their trans or gender diverse child, or their family.

Additionally, many anti-trans activists also hold a number of other fringe beliefs, like anti-vaccine or anti-semitic conspiracy theories, due to the ways in which these beliefs, online communities, and worldviews overlap.

While individually we can't do much about the spread of online conspiracy theories, we do know that one of the best forms of prevention against radicalisation is social connection.

You need to take care of yourself but if you are emotionally able to - try to stay engaged, stay respectful, and keep yourself open to having future conversations with them.



Social isolation is a key factor in how people become radicalised.

Final tips

You don't need to be an expert

Try not to get bogged down in debating over statistics and data, instead try to bring things back to the big picture – that trans people deserve to thrive, that we deserve to feel safe in our communities, and have the freedom to be ourselves.

Approach conversations with curiosity

People can sense when you are trying to convince them and nobody likes it. Rather than seeking out debates, try to create a real connection.

Be kind and respectful, even when they are not

If your conversation is on social media be aware that others might be reading your comments. Remain respectful and make sure that you can be seen to be acting in good faith to any onlookers. When people can't get a rise out of you it makes it harder to dismiss you.

Don't expect to convince them in one conversation

It can take a long time for someones beliefs to change. Your job is just to 'plant the seed', giving them something that they can keep thinking about long after the conversation is over.

Try to stay calm

Use breathing techniques to keep your heart-rate steady and lower your level of activation during the conversation. Try not to reply or post when you are feeling activated or angry.

Further resources

If you are looking for more information we have listed a number of resources below.

If you have additions or inquiries feel free to connect with us at info@transjustice.org.au.

General information

- [Transhub](#)

More information on challenging conspiracy theorists

- [Science denial: Why it happens and 5 things you can do about it](#)
- [How to talk to someone about conspiracy theories in five simple steps](#)

Challenging Medical Disinformation

- [Anti-trans disinformation is rife in Australia – and it's being spread by a small group of organisations](#)
- [How To Identify Dangerous Anti-Trans Disinformation](#)
- [Combating Anti-Transgender Disinformation](#)
- [Judge's Ruling Debunks Anti-Trans Claims Often Seen in Corporate Media](#)

Documentaries

- [The Dreamlife of Georgie Stone](#)
- [Queerstralia](#)
- [Disclosure](#)

Books

- [Transgender Australia: A History Since 1910](#) – Noah Riseman
- [The Transgender Issue: An Argument for Justice](#) – Shon Faye
- [Nothing to Hide: Voices of Trans and Gender-Diverse Australia](#) – Yves Rees, Sam Elkin, Alex Gallagher, Bobuq Sayed

Support services

If the content of this resource has raised difficult feelings for you or you are looking to support someone you love you can access free and confidential support.

Rainbow Door - 10am-5pm // every day

A free service for all LGBTIQ+ people in Victoria.

Phone: 1800 729 367

Text: 0480 017 246

Email: support@rainbowdoor.org.au

Visit: [rainbow door.org.au](http://rainbowdoor.org.au)

Connect with a Qlife - 3pm-midnight // every day

A free service for LGBTIQ+ people in Australia.

Phone: 1800 184 527

Webchat with Qlife

CHARLEE

A suicide prevention hub made by LGBTIQ+ people

Visit: charlee.org.au

Beyondblue on 1300 224 636 (available 24/7)

Lifeline on 13 11 14 (available 24/7).

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