

# **LGB** ALLIANCE AUSTRALIA



## **A New International Gender Equality Strategy**

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# **About LGB Alliance Australia**

## **Our Vision**

Lesbians, gay men and bisexuals living free from discrimination or disadvantage based on their sexual orientation.

## **Our Mission**

### **To advance lesbian, gay and bisexual rights**

We advance the interests of lesbians, gay men and bisexuals, and stand up for our right to live as same-sex attracted people without discrimination or disadvantage.

We will ensure that the voices of lesbians, gay men and bisexuals are heard in all public and political discussions affecting our lives.

### **To highlight the dual discrimination faced by lesbians**

We amplify the voices of lesbians and highlight the dual discrimination experienced by lesbians as women who are same-sex attracted in a male-dominated society.

### **To protect children who may grow up to be lesbian, gay, or bisexual**

We work to protect children from harmful, unscientific ideologies that may lead them to believe either their personality or their body is in need of changing. Any child growing up to be lesbian, gay or bisexual has the right to be happy and confident about their sexuality and who they are.

### **To promote free speech on lesbian, gay and bisexual issues**

We promote freedom of speech and informed dialogue on issues concerning the rights of lesbians, gay men and bisexuals. We assert that different opinions, even those we may disagree with, should be heard as part of the public debate.

You can find out more about us on our website – [www.lgballiance.org.au](http://www.lgballiance.org.au)

You can get in contact with us on email – [contact@lgballiance.org.au](mailto:contact@lgballiance.org.au)

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## A New International Gender Equality Strategy

### Introduction

The LGB Alliance Australia is grateful for the opportunity to participate in the submission process for DFAT's new International Gender Equality Strategy. It is important at the outset to have a clear definition of gender, since it is a highly ambiguous term variably serving as a synonym for "sex", a descriptor of sex stereotypes (including sex roles), and a short-hand for "gender identity".

In this submission, we treat "gender" as a synonym for "sex". "Gender equality" therefore means sex equality. However, for clarity and to avoid confusion, we use the terms "sex" and "sex equality" wherever possible. Consistent with this understanding, we also adhere to the following definitions.

**Male:** In sexually reproducing species, "male" denotes an individual which is organised to produce one of two types of gamete (sperm) involved in sexual reproduction.

**Female:** In sexually reproducing species, "female" denotes an individual which is organised to produce one of two types of gamete (ovum) involved in sexual reproduction.

**Man:** "Man" refers to an adult human male. A man typically has male reproductive organs, including testes, and typically has XY chromosomes.

**Woman:** "Woman" refers to an adult human female. A woman typically has female reproductive organs, including ovaries, and typically has XX chromosomes. "Girl" refers to a non-adult human female.

These definitions correctly acknowledge both women's and girls' oppression as being due to their sex. Furthermore, they recognise that sex – i.e., the distinction between males (men, boys) and females (women, girls) – is not a culturally or historically specific belief, and is therefore the only sound foundation on which Australia can advocate effectively for women's and girls' rights and sex equality internationally.

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### 1. What are international gender equality priorities?

There are several common priorities and areas of focus that are widely recognised in the global effort to promote sex equality. Some of these priorities include:

- 1. Ending Sex-Based Violence:** A top priority is addressing and preventing all forms of violence against women and girls, including domestic violence, sexual harassment, and human trafficking.
- 2. Equal Access to Education:** Ensuring that girls and women have equal access to quality education and opportunities for learning is critical. This includes addressing barriers like early marriage, cultural norms, and lack of resources that can limit girls' access to education.
- 3. Economic Empowerment:** Promoting women's economic participation by closing the sex pay gap, increasing women's representation in leadership and decision-making roles, and supporting women entrepreneurs and workers.
- 4. Healthcare and Reproductive Rights:** Ensuring access to healthcare, including sexual and reproductive health services, and addressing issues such as maternal mortality and female genital mutilation.
- 5. Legal and Policy Reforms:** Advocating for changes in laws and policies that discriminate against women and girls, as well as working to enforce existing laws related to sex equality.
- 6. Sex-Responsive Budgeting:** Integrating considerations of sex into budgeting processes to ensure that government expenditures benefit women and men equally and address sex disparities.
- 7. Sex-role Stereotypes and Social Norms:** Challenging and changing harmful sex-role stereotypes and social norms that perpetuate inequality and discrimination.
- 8. Women's Participation in Peace and Security:** Increasing women's participation in peace negotiations, conflict prevention, and post-conflict reconstruction, as well as addressing sexual and sex-based violence in conflict zones.
- 9. Access to Technology:** Ensuring that women and girls have equal access to and representation in the fields of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM).

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**10. Intersectionality:** Recognising that sex equality priorities intersect with other forms of discrimination, such as those based on race, ethnicity, disability, sexual orientation and addressing these intersections.

These priorities are often reflected in international agreements and initiatives, such as the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly Goal 5, which focuses on achieving sex equality and empowering all women and girls. However, it is essential to note that the specific priorities and strategies may vary from one region or country to another based on their unique social, cultural, and economic contexts.

### 2. What are the most effective approaches for achieving gender equality globally?

Achieving sex equality globally is a complex and ongoing process that requires a combination of strategies and approaches. While the effectiveness of these approaches can vary depending on the context, here are some of the most effective and widely recognised approaches for promoting sex equality worldwide:

**Legal Reforms:** Enact and enforce laws and policies that promote sex equality, protect women's rights, and address sex-based discrimination. This includes laws against sex-based violence, workplace discrimination, and unequal pay.

**Education and Awareness:** Promote education and awareness programs that challenge gender stereotypes and norms from an early age. Encouraging girls to pursue education in traditionally male-dominated fields can also be effective.

**Economic Empowerment:** Support women's economic participation through initiatives such as equal pay for equal work, access to credit and financing for women entrepreneurs, and policies that promote work-life balance.

**Women's Political Participation:** Encourage women's participation in politics and decision-making roles at all levels of government. Implementing quotas and other affirmative action measures can help increase women's representation.

**Healthcare Access:** Ensure women have access to quality healthcare, including sexual and reproductive health services, maternal healthcare, and mental health support.

**Sex-Responsive Budgeting:** Integrate sex considerations into budgeting and resource allocation to address disparities and promote sex-sensitive policies and programs.

**Ending Sex-Based Violence:** Implement comprehensive strategies to prevent and respond to sex-based violence, including awareness campaigns, support services for survivors, and legal measures to hold perpetrators accountable.

**Engaging Men and Boys:** Encourage men and boys to become allies in the fight for sex equality by challenging harmful stereotypes and promoting respectful relationships.

**Data Collection and Research:** Collect and analyse sex-disaggregated data to better understand and address sex disparities and inequalities in various sectors.

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**Support for Grassroots Movements:** Empower and support grassroots organizations, women's groups, and civil society movements that advocate for sex equality and women's rights at the local and national levels.

**International Cooperation:** Collaborate with international organisations, governments, and NGOs to share best practices, resources, and expertise in advancing sex equality on a global scale.

**Sex-Responsive Education and Training:** Ensure that education and training programs are designed to be sex-responsive, addressing the specific needs and challenges faced by women and girls.

**Media and Communications:** Encourage responsible media representation of women and promote positive portrayals that challenge stereotypes and bias. This includes not portraying as bigots women who stand up for their sex-based rights.

**Legal Aid and Access to Justice:** Provide legal aid and support services to women and girls who face discrimination or violence, ensuring access to justice.

**Intersectional Approaches:** Recognise and address the intersecting forms of discrimination that affect individuals, considering factors such as race, ethnicity, disability, sexual orientation, and gender identity.

**Sustainable Development Goals:** Align efforts with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, particularly Goal 5 (Gender Equality), and monitor progress through the collection of sex-disaggregated data.

Effective approaches for achieving sex equality often require collaboration among governments, civil society, the private sector, and individuals. Tailoring strategies to the specific needs and challenges of different regions and communities is crucial for success in the global pursuit of sex equality.



### **3. How can Australia best support efforts to achieve gender equality internationally?**

Australia, like many other countries, can play a significant role in supporting efforts to achieve sex equality internationally. Promoting sex equality is not only a matter of social justice but also contributes to sustainable development and global peace. Here are some ways Australia can best support these efforts:

#### **1. Diplomacy and Advocacy**

- Use diplomatic channels to advocate for sex equality in international forums, such as the United Nations, G20, and regional organisations.
- Support and sponsor resolutions and initiatives that promote sex equality, women's empowerment, and the elimination of sex-based violence.

#### **2. Foreign Aid and Development Assistance**

- Allocate a significant portion of foreign aid and development assistance to projects that specifically focus on women's and girls' rights and empowerment, including access to education, healthcare, and economic opportunities.
- Support initiatives that address sex-based violence, child marriage, and other harmful practices affecting women and girls in developing countries.

#### **3. Capacity Building**

- Invest in capacity-building programs to strengthen the role of women in governance, leadership, and decision-making processes in partner countries.
- Provide technical assistance and training to women entrepreneurs, especially in sectors where they are underrepresented.

#### **4. Healthcare and Reproductive Rights**

- Promote access to quality healthcare, including sexual and reproductive health services, for women and girls in developing countries.
- Advocate for the removal of barriers to family planning and reproductive rights.

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### **5. Education and Skills Development**

- Support initiatives that ensure equal access to education for girls, including scholarships, school infrastructure improvements, and teacher training.
- Encourage programs that provide vocational training and skills development for women and girls, enhancing their employability.

### **6. Economic Empowerment**

- Promote women's economic empowerment through microfinance, access to credit, and entrepreneurship programs.
- Encourage businesses to adopt sex-inclusive policies, such as equal pay for equal work and family-friendly work environments.

### **7. Data Collection and Research**

- Support research and data collection on sex-related issues in partner countries to better understand the challenges and tailor interventions accordingly.
- Use evidence-based approaches to design and evaluate sex equality programs.

### **8. Cultural Sensitivity**

Recognize and respect the cultural context of partner countries while promoting sex equality, avoiding imposition of values, and working collaboratively with local communities.

### **9. Engage Civil Society and NGOs**

Collaborate with local and international non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and civil society groups that are actively working on sex equality issues.

### **10. Lead by Example**

Implement and uphold sex equality policies and practices within Australia, demonstrating a commitment to the cause.

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### **11. Legal and Policy Frameworks**

Advocate for the adoption and implementation of sex-responsive legal and policy frameworks in partner countries to protect and promote women's rights.

### **12. Awareness and Education**

Promote awareness about sex equality issues through public campaigns and education programs both domestically and internationally.

Australia's efforts to support sex equality internationally should be ongoing, collaborative, and responsive to the unique needs and circumstances of each partner country. Additionally, Australia should engage in partnerships and alliances with other nations and international organisations to amplify the impact of its initiatives.

### 4. What should the government/DFAT consider when developing the new international gender equality strategy?

As stated in our Introduction, it is important to have unambiguous definitions of sex and gender. Women from various strata of society must be consulted. Women have differing and various needs depending on their level of education, socioeconomic circumstances, ethnicity, etc. These must all be taken into account and the Government must listen to what women are saying.

- 1. Clear Definitions:** As previously mentioned, having distinct and unambiguous definitions of sex and gender is crucial. This will help ensure that policies and programs are targeted accurately and effectively. Definitions should be based on internationally accepted standards.
- 2. Consultation and Inclusivity:** It is vital to consult with a wide range of stakeholders, especially women from diverse backgrounds. This includes women from different socioeconomic backgrounds, ethnicities, age groups, sexual orientations, and abilities. Their voices and experiences should inform the strategy.
- 3. Intersectionality:** Recognise and address the intersectionality of sex with other factors such as race, ethnicity, class, and disability. Women's experiences and needs are influenced by multiple aspects of their identity, and policies should reflect this complexity.
- 4. Data Collection and Analysis:** Collect and analyse data that capture the unique challenges faced by different groups of women. These data should be disaggregated by sex, and other relevant factors to identify disparities and design targeted interventions.
- 5. Empowerment and Participation:** Promote women's participation in decision-making processes at all levels, both domestically and internationally. Support initiatives that empower women to become leaders and agents of change in their communities.