



Intersex Awareness

What is intersex?

Intersex people are born with sex characteristics (such as sexual anatomy, reproductive organs, hormonal patterns and/or chromosomal patterns) that don't fit medical or social norms for male or female bodies. For some people these traits are apparent prenatally or at birth, while for others they may emerge later in life. Some chromosomal intersex variations may not be physically apparent at all. Intersex variations are present in just under 2% of the population.

It is crucial to recognise that intersex status is distinct from sexual orientation and gender identity. Intersex people vary in their gender identity and sexual orientation, as is the case for non intersex (endosex) people. An intersex person may identify themselves with whichever gender they find most comfortable, whether male, female, non-binary, or other gender identity. Variations in innate sex characteristics is neither gender diversity nor sexuality diversity.

Recognition and Visibility

- Each year, 'Intersex Awareness Day' is recognised on 26th October and 'Intersex Day of Remembrance' (or 'Intersex Solidarity Day') is recognised on 8th November. These are opportunities to raise awareness about the intersex community and to highlight issues faced by intersex people.
- Intersex Human Rights Australia (IHRA) is a national body by and for people with intersex variations and their families. IHRA works to prevent stigmatisation of intersex people and their bodies and to protect the rights of intersex people. IHRA and other advocacy groups are driving change nationally and internationally.
- Intersex people were recognised in Australian anti-discrimination legislation for the first time in 2013, with intersex status included as a stand-alone prohibited ground of discrimination in the Sex Discrimination Act. The Australian Senate has also carried out an official inquiry into the involuntary or coerced sterilisation of intersex people.
- The intersex flag was created in 2013 and is now used internationally to represent the intersex community. The intersex flag is now also represented on the Inclusive Pride Flag. Intersex is also often seen represented through the 'I' in LGBTIQA+.
- In March 2017, the '[Darlington Statement](#)' was developed by Australian and Aotearoa/New Zealand intersex organisations and independent advocates who set out to combat the many challenges faced by intersex populations through effective legislative protection.

Supporting our intersex community

Despite progress in education, awareness raising and protection of intersex human rights, intersex persons are often subjected to discrimination, negative behaviours and misconceptions about what it means to be intersex.

WSU aims to provide positive and inclusive learning and working environments for all people. We have a range of supports available to our student and staff community and we have put together some information on how you can support intersex students and staff.

- It is important to be aware of what is and isn't inclusive language. For example, instead of "disorder" or "condition", using terms such as Intersex variation is more accurate and inclusive.
- Recognise that sexual orientation, gender identity and intersex are different. Only use the "I" in LGBTIQ when you are intentionally referring to / including intersex people, rather than unintentionally grouping intersex with sexuality and gender diversity.
- It is best, as with every person, to use gender-neutral pronouns until you know which pronouns are preferred. An intersex person is most likely to identify themselves with whichever gender they find most comfortable.
- Don't make assumptions about a person based on their intersex status. All people are different and will have different experiences and perspectives.
- Don't ask an intersex person personal questions about their body.
- Report / provide support if you witness or become aware of discriminatory or adverse behaviours.

Further information is available through Intersex Human Rights Australia (IHRA)

[Intersex Human Rights Australia \(IHRA\)](#)

Some external intersex support services can be found through these links:

[interACT Youth](#)

[Intersex Human Rights Australia \(IHRA\)](#)

[Intersex Peer Support Australia \(IPSA\)](#)

Information in this factsheet was adapted from IHRA resources. This factsheet will be updated regularly as new information becomes available. For suggestions or additions, please reach out to Equity and Diversity.



Figure 1 - The Intersex Flag by Morgan Carpenter (2013) – By avoiding gender related colours and shapes, Morgan symbolises the right for Intersex people “to be who and how we want to be.”



Figure 2 - The Intersex-Inclusive Pride Flag by Valentino Vecchietti of Intersex Equality Rights UK (2021).