

Media, Entertainment & Arts Alliance Factsheet: Reporting on LGBTQIA+ issues and people



This factsheet is designed to be read alongside the MEAA Journalist Code of Ethics

MEAA'S GUIDELINES ON REPORTING ON LGBTQIA+ ISSUES AND PEOPLE

Our laws and institutions might increasingly recognise the fundamental human rights that belong to everyone, including LGBTQIA+ people, but our workplaces, schools, community and social media spaces have become increasingly intolerant, and at times hostile to, their presence.

Journalists can find themselves in a challenging position when reporting on or about LGBTQIA+ people and groups, and identifying the right voices to provide accurate and responsible perspectives on issues impacting this community.

This document was created to help journalists, editorial staff and others produce ethical reporting that is guided by the MEAA's Code of Ethics. We wish to discourage and prevent the publishing or broadcasting of transphobic, homophobic, queerphobic and/or other harmful or stereotyping content as news and which may misinform audiences.

Our [Code of Ethics](#) specifically states that journalists should not '*place unnecessary emphasis on personal characteristics including race, ethnicity, nationality, gender, age, sexual orientation, family relationships, religious belief or physical or intellectual disability*'.

MEAA encourage all journalists to recognise the rights and freedoms of all lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, queer, intersex, asexual and other people represented by the rainbow flag.

We've adopted the term LGBTQIA+ as an umbrella term for people with diverse sexual orientations, gender identities and expressions and sex characteristics.

We encourage users to carefully and critically think about the story before they start writing and whether it is relevant to refer to gender or sexual orientation at all.

If you feel uncomfortable about being instructed to cover, broadcast or publish an anti LGBTQIA+ perspective, seek advice from MEAA.

ETHICAL JOURNALISM

Media freedom is underpinned by ethical journalism. An ethical journalist is never transphobic, homophobic, queerphobic, and they should not convey harmful stereotypes of people who identify as such.

Our guidelines which are published at meaa.org/meaa-media/code-of-ethics/lgbtqia-guidelines/ encourage journalists to recognise some important principles:

1. The population of LGBTQIA+ people is large and very diverse, and represented by a wide array of groups, communities and individuals with different ways of identifying. All however share common experiences of prejudice, trauma and discrimination. MEAA's guidelines support LGBTQIA+ people by recommending the use of preferred terms for specific sexualities, gender identities or sex characteristics.
2. Always seek the perspective and responses of LGBTQIA+ people or organisations when reporting on issues which affect them. Improve accuracy by asking your subjects about their preferred pronouns and other terms.
3. Consider the Code of Ethics, and also Australian and state laws in terms of the responsibilities of journalists to avoid publishing discriminatory content, especially when quoting or citing the views of others.
4. Consider the potential for bigoted responses to stories you write, publish or broadcast including those which may attract comments on social media networks. Consider including links to support services in your story or disabling comments sections to avoid negative impacts.
5. Resist directions to report in negative or unethical ways and seek MEAA's support if you encounter editorial pressure to do so.

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MEAA Media members should have the right to withhold their labour on the grounds of their obligations under the Code if their employers are providing a platform for vilification, harassment, intimidation or incitement of violence against LGBTQIA+ people.

We encourage you to back your colleagues who may be subject to discriminatory speech to support a safe workplace. Don't allow your workplace to promote values that makes work colleagues feel uncomfortable

or targeted.

Editors must ensure that the coverage of LGBTQIA+ issues are placed in a social and ethical context that observes the relevant laws and ethical guidelines.

We encourage journalists to scan the QR code below and visit the full set of LGBTQIA+ guidelines which can provide some hints and tips, approaches and resources to help cover the issues in line with the MEAA Journalist Code of Ethics.



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