



TOILETS & CHANGEROOMS **FACTSHEET**

WHAT'S THE ISSUE?

Toilet facilities and changerooms can present a range of barriers for transgender, gender diverse, and intersex students, particularly when it comes to appropriateness, accessibility, and safety.

APPROPRIATENESS

Challenges related to toilet and changerooms generally stem from the appropriateness of the available facilities. Such challenges are often greatest for students who do not conform to binary gender norms or categorisation. Most schools have designated male/female toilets and/or changeroom facilities, with very few schools having gender neutral facilities in place.

As a result, non-binary and gender diverse students must either select a gendered toilet facility or utilise alternate arrangements such as a staff, first aid office or disability-accessible toilet. These options may not be seen as ideal or even appropriate for the student, raising concerns around safety, social isolation, difference or not feeling supported or affirmed. This is also experienced by binary transgender and intersex students where there is not a clear and considered school policy around facility access.

ACCESSIBILITY

These options also pose accessibility concerns around their ease of use and access. Key concerns include their proximity to classrooms and play areas and/or the need to seek additional permissions, keys, or a pass. Presenting to a member of staff for bathroom access can, in and of itself, pose an access barrier for some students, particularly if they are neurodivergent or experience anxiety.

This can be exacerbated by needing to disclose their identity to staff or from questioning from unfamiliar staff. Often, alternative facilities are not conveniently located, may be located in unsupervised areas of the school, or in staff spaces that can limit access to students.

If the school has multiple students who need access to these facilities this can also create an environment of competing needs, as such facilities tend to be limited to 1-2 stalls.

SAFETY

Safety is also a concern, due to bullying and harassment from other students and/or misuse or damage to gender .

WHAT WE KNOW

Recent statistics show a range of experiences when accessing these gendered facilities at school with up to 93% of Australian transgender and gender diverse students experiencing issues with bathrooms.

Further analysis indicated up to 86% avoid using toilets at school, up to 60% limit food/water to avoid needing the toilet at school, up to 82% feeling unsafe or uncomfortable in school toilets and up to 12.5% developed urinary tract infections or kidney issues from avoiding toilet use at school .

While there is no comparable data for intersex students, similar issues have been anecdotally reported.

HOW TO ADDRESS THIS ISSUE?

- Students must have access to toilet facilities at all times.
- It is best that these do not have a gatekeeper or extra steps to access them, unless there is no acceptable safe and accessible alternative.
- Single-stall gender neutral facilities are the best standard.
- Schools may consider re-designating gendered facilities to gender neutral ones.
- It is important to consider these needs for off-site activities such as excursions, sports days, and school camps.



References: La Trobe University (2020-2021) Writing Themselves in 4: 'The health and wellbeing of LGBTQA+ young people in Australia', Online at: latrobe.edu.au/arcshs/work/writing-themselves-in-4