

The
MAKE LOVE LOUDER
Report

With Dr Shirleene Robinson,
for the
**ABSOLUT
LOVE LETTERS**
Project

LOVE IS LOVE

but do we show our love enough?

The majority of Australians support the LGBTIQ+ community. But because most of us consider ourselves 'silent supporters', the loudest voices often come from the negative minority.

This report looks at how we can change that.

ABOUT THE RESEARCH

Absolut have been a supporter of the LGBTIQ+ community around the world for over 40 years. Last year, we celebrated marriage equality in Australia, with a campaign that featured 141 same-sex couples who had tied the knot. This year, we undertook intensive research and consulted with leaders in the LGBTIQ+ community to understand how we could provide even more meaningful support and impact.

So we partnered with Dr Shirleene Robinson, a leading researcher, author and LGBTIQ+ advocate to conduct a study of 1000+ LGBTIQ+ Australians and 904 heterosexual allies, friends and supporters (allies & friends) of the community across Australia, to understand the importance of being a vocal supporter for the LGBTIQ+ community. This study Make Love Louder, underpins the Absolut Love Letters project. You can find out more about this project on page 19.

Leading advocacy and research organisation just.equal were a critical partner in working with the LGBTIQ+ community to gain their valuable insights for this study, and we are very grateful for their support.

“Understanding the needs of LGBTIQ+ Australians is critical to effective representation and advocacy. This is why research underpins everything the just.equal volunteer advocates do. We continue the tradition with this recent research piece with Absolut, expanding on our own research in 2019 which showed the LGBTIQ+ community are hurting right now. This new research explores the power of allies and champions finding their voice and joining us in the work in progressing equality and elevating the dignity of all.”

Ivan Hinton-Teoh, co-founder, just.equal



Research reference: The Make Love Louder report, with Dr Shirleene Robinson for the Absolut Love Letters Project, January 2020

FOREWORD



Dr Shirleene Robinson

Australia's
LGBTIQ+
community have
fought long and

hard for equality. However, the struggle is far from over and the LGBTIQ+ community should not carry the burden alone.

The Make Love Louder report highlights the power of support from people outside the LGBTIQ+ community, as friends and allies. For most, that support is silent, and this research explores why vocal support could make a huge difference to LGBTIQ+ people at a time when they most need it. It supplements research that found the postal survey period of 2017 was an intensely traumatic time for many LGBTIQ+ people. It also shows current debates around the religious freedom bill is taking a heavy toll.

This toll is particularly intense because an overwhelming majority of LGBTIQ+ people believe that the government is the institution with the greatest capacity to reduce LGBTIQ+ discrimination. Rather than debating a Religious Freedom Bill that would introduce new forms of discrimination, LGBTIQ+ people want the government to lead efforts against prejudice.

While the LGBTIQ+ population is undergoing a particularly difficult time with discrimination and scrutiny, people who support the rights of this community are often not fully aware of this. Supporters of the LGBTIQ+ community are people who believe in equal rights for LGBTIQ+ Australians, referred to as 'allies & friends' in this study.

Allies and friends are also not fully alert to the important role they can play in opposing discrimination and prejudice.

The overwhelming majority of LGBTIQ+ Australians feel that it is 'extremely' or 'very' important that they hear and see allies and friends publicly showing their support when they see the LGBTIQ+ community experiencing negativity and discrimination.

Encouragingly, there are allies and friends ready to be more fully engaged and show their support. A significant amount of allies and friends described themselves as 'silent supporters'. However, over half agreed that they would be more likely to speak up and show their support for the LGBTIQ+ community publicly if they knew how much of a positive impact it had on this group.

This study shows that this support matters deeply.

We are stronger together. Now more than ever, it is important that LGBTIQ+ allies speak up to make Australia a fairer place for everyone.

THE PROBLEM

3 IN 4

LGBTIQ+ Australians
have personally experienced
negativity or discrimination
relating to their LGBTIQ+ status

1 IN 4

sees or hears negativity
or discrimination
on a daily basis

For transgender/gender
diverse Australians this is

4 IN 5

While

2 IN 5

sees or hears negativity
or discrimination
on a daily basis

Yet only

1 IN 4

allies and friends
voice their support
for the community.
The rest are
'silent supporters'

So while we quietly **think** love,
what's **heard** is hate

HATE HURTS

67%

of LGBTI* Australians say fear of prejudice or discrimination has caused them to sometimes modify their daily activities¹

37%

of LGBT^ Australians aged 16+ have been diagnosed or treated for a mental disorder in the past three years²
2x more than the general population

3X

LGBT^ Australians aged 16+ are more than three times as likely to be diagnosed with depression in their lifetime²

5X

Transgender and gender diverse people aged 18 and over are nearly five times as likely to be diagnosed with depression in their lifetime²

10%

of LGBTI* Australians believe they have been refused employment or promotion as a result of their sexuality¹

“LGBTIQ+ people can experience a number of other intersecting types of prejudice too—such as racial prejudice or prejudice against people with disabilities.

These statistics show that rates of abuse and discrimination towards LGBTIQ+ people in Australia are **endemic**. They are deeply concerning and they need to be addressed as an **immediate priority**.”

Dr Shirleene Robinson

^{*}Study surveyed LGBTI people

[^]Study surveyed LGBT people

PUBLIC DEBATE BRINGS NEGATIVE VOICES TO THE FOREFRONT

The 2017 YES vote for same-sex marriage was a major step towards equality for the LGBTIQ+ community in Australia

YES 62%

NO 38%

While the postal survey provoked an outpouring of love, it also amplified negative voices

“Fighting for equal rights in a public forum **caused significant trauma and distress** to an already vulnerable population, where an unnecessary postal survey asked all Australians whether same-sex couples should have the right to marry.”

Dr Shirleene Robinson

NEGATIVE VOICES ARE DAMAGING

Increased exposure to negative messages about same-sex marriage was found to be associated with **higher levels of depression, anxiety and stress** for LGBTIQ+ Australians during the postal survey period.³

More than

70%

of LGBTIQ+ people reported feeling negative or very negative during the postal survey period before marriage equality was passed⁴

just.equal research

“There was a ‘secret’ Whatsapp group created by a member of my partner’s very Pentecostal family during the plebiscite. A nephew said the both of us were “going to hell”. It meant a lot to the both of us that the other nephews and nieces stood up for us.”

Adrian, Fitzroy, Victoria

“People are so toxic. Sometimes it physically hurts to be on social media”

Alana, South Coast, New South Wales

TODAY, THE PUBLIC DEBATE IS ABOUT THE RIGHT TO DISCRIMINATE

When Australia voted for marriage equality, it voted decisively for fairness and against discrimination. Yet now, despite the fact just

1% of Australians say religious freedom is a priority issue⁵

there's currently a debate raging on new legislation that would introduce new forms of lawful discrimination against LGBTIQ+ people.

More than

80%

of LGBTIQ+ people report feeling worse during the current debate than when marriage equality was won

More than

43%

of LGBTIQ+ people feel Australia is not accepting of their community⁴

just.equal research

"This is particularly significant because this report shows that an overwhelming majority of LGBTIQ+ people (93%) believe that the government is the institution with the greatest capacity to reduce LGBTIQ+ discrimination."

Dr Shirleene Robinson

THERE'S POWER IN POSITIVITY

While these debates cause significant harm, the same research also found **personal and public support could provide degrees of protection against the negativity that raged during the same-sex marriage debate.**³

“The family and friends of same-sex attracted people appear to play an important role—and seem to even **offset some of the harm done** by the negative side of these debates—**by openly supporting LGBT rights.**”¹

“LGBT rights and mental-health organisations also have an important role to play by continuing their public support of minority issues. **Their public messages of support appear to improve the psychological well-being of same-sex attracted people who require it most.**”

**Stefano Verrelli, report author,
University of Sydney**

AND ALLIES HELP SHARE THE LOAD

These findings support wider research which has consistently found that the broader community matters, particularly for LGBTI* people who may be alienated from their family of origin.¹

“It is exhausting when it feels like I’m defending my place in society all the time. When allies activate in defence of my right to be me, I feel less isolated. I feel validated and, significantly, liberated from defending who I am. It’s a lifting of a weight, a burden I am conscious of. I can get on with my life, knowing someone else sees me, my humanity and, importantly, is fighting to affirm my dignity and right to a fair and equal space in the community.”

**Ivan Hinton-Teoh, OAM,
co-founder, just.equal**

*Study surveyed LGBTI people

“When I came out my best friend said it was fine & said I had nothing to worry about. That took away a lot of my shame & fear... feeling accepted by someone important to me.”

Abby, survey respondent

THE LGBTIQ+ COMMUNITY HAS LOTS OF SUPPORTERS

Yet

63%

of Australians are allies, friends or supporters of the LGBTIQ+ community

73%

consider themselves to be 'silent supporters'

93%

of LGBTIQ+ Australians have at least one personal ally in their lives

"It is extremely encouraging to know that there are supporters of the LGBTIQ+ community all across this country. **Now, more than ever, we need those voices to be active and to speak up and support their LGBTIQ+ family members and friends.** This study shows that Australians overwhelmingly believe in decency. They want to play a positive role in shaping a fairer and more equal country. **There is a real opportunity here to make a difference at a time when it is really needed."**

Dr Shirleene Robinson

SUPPORTERS HEAR THE NEGATIVITY TOO

60%

of allies & friends report
seeing or hearing negativity
or discrimination to an
individual or the community

79%

For those aged 25–34
this is much higher

But neither is as high
as the community themselves

95%

of LGBTIQ+ Australians
have seen or heard negativity
or discrimination about
their community

“Public discussion about LGBTIQ people that doesn’t actually
involve us is particularly corrosive. We have to hear ourselves
spoken about by people who don’t even know us.”

Genevieve, Bowral, New South Wales

BUT DON'T ALWAYS UNDERSTAND THE IMPACTS

1 IN 5

allies & friends believe this debate has no detrimental effects at all.

Though most allies & friends (59%) acknowledge the negative impacts of the current public debate could cause harm

Of these

32%

recognise that negativity in the public debate can trigger stress, depression or anxiety...

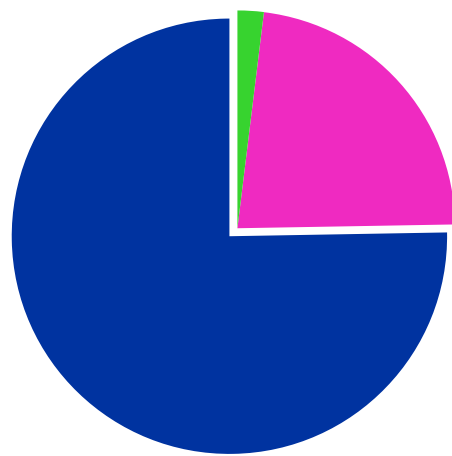
...or contribute to feelings of isolation

28%

“While most allies and friends acknowledge the potential impact on the LGBTIQ community, they don’t fully appreciate just how damaging such debates could be. By broadening their awareness and increasing levels of support shown publicly, we have an opportunity to protect the health and well-being of a vulnerable community.”

Dr Shirleene Robinson

MAYBE THAT'S WHY, TOO OFTEN, ALLIES & FRIENDS REMAIN SILENT



73%

are 'silent supporters'

22% are vocal
2% of allies & friends
consider themselves
to be 'activists'

Why?

82%

The majority of allies
& friends have questions and
concerns about their support

Of which

45%

are not sure what
is really helpful

29%

are not sure
it's their place
to speak up

29%

are afraid
they will say the
wrong thing and
offend someone

MAYBE IT'S TIME TO ASK

Only

1 IN 4

Allies & friends have ever asked LGBTIQ+ people
in their circle how they would like to be supported

After all, the community wants
to hear more positive voices

92%

of LGBTIQ+ Australians feel that
it is extremely or very important that they
hear and see allies, friends, and supporters
speaking up publicly against negativity
and discrimination

Foremost from friends and family

LGBTIQ+ Australians say having
public support from these categories
is extremely or very important:

94%

friends and family

93%

government

89%

media

88%

community organisations

85%

general public

61%

brands and corporations

SO WHAT ARE THE MOST POWERFUL WAYS TO VOICE SUPPORT?



Jordan & Lavrence, brothers

#1

Standing up against anti-LGBTIQ+ speech (84%)

#2

Using respectful language about the LGBTIQ+ community (81%)

#3

Being accepting and considering your own prejudices (78%)

#4

Helping LGBTIQ+ people and perspectives to be seen and heard (74%)

#5

Listening to LGBTIQ+ people (73%)

#6

Expressing support for LGBTIQ+ people on social media (73%)

MOST KNOW THERE'S STILL A WAY TO GO

3 IN 4

Allies & friends believe there's still a long way to go beyond marriage equality to achieve equal rights for LGBTIQ+ Australians.

Speaking up is one important way to show your support, and show love really is louder than hate.

Check out ACON's Count Me In Mini Ally Guide for some other ways to get behind our incredibly talented, diverse, extraordinary and much loved LGBTIQ+ community in Australia.

It's just \$2.20 to download, and helps to fund their amazing work.



ABSOLUT LOVE LETTERS

This report underpins Absolut Love Letters, a project which aims to gather one of the largest collections of positive messages Australia has ever seen for the LGBTIQ+ community.

These messages will be shared publicly around the country.

To get involved, share your message of love, support and positivity for the community with us on social and help us **make love louder**

   #AbsolutLoveLetters

 absolut.com/loveletters

'There will be resistance to every step
we take, but love will overcome hate.

We will engage in everyday acts
of resistance, we will not go away,
or be quiet. Thanks for your support.'

Mark, Carlton, Victoria

REFERENCES

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2. Leonard, W., Lyons, A. and Bariola, E. (2015) A Closer Look at Private Lives 2: Addressing the mental health and wellbeing of LGBT Australians Australian Research Centre in Sex, Health and Society, La Trobe University, Melbourne accessed LGBT health alliance website https://lgbtihealth.org.au/statistics/#_ednref22
3. Verrelli, S., White, F., Harvey, L. and Pulciani, M. (2019). Minority stress, social support, and the mental health of lesbian, gay, and bisexual Australians during the Australian Marriage Law Postal Survey. Australian Psychologist, 54(4).
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5. ABC News. (2020). Environment trumps economy as voters' top concern ahead of election. [online] Available at: <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2019-04-17/vote-compass-election-most-important-issues/11003192> [Accessed 31 Jan. 2020].



Khanyisa and Eloise, Allies



Khanyisa and Eloise, Allies

If reflecting on your treatment
as an LGBTIQ+ person reading this report
caused you any distress, please contact
the following organisations:

Beyond Blue 1300 224 636
(available 24/7)

QLife 1800 184 527
(3pm-midnight 7 days a week)