

Liesl Albion – Student Wellbeing

At Elevation we work to create a safe and inclusive environment by supporting members of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex (LGBTI+) school community. We have supported IDAHOBIT as part of this but it is important that the conversation continues at home. We do this because research shows that 10% of people are same sex attracted, 4% are gender diverse and nearly 2% of people are intersex. This means that chances are, if your child is not part of the LGBT community they will know a friend who is part of it. When they are unsupported at school and home, LGBTI+ young people face a lot of challenges, including negative health and wellbeing, experiencing homophobic abuse, increased risk of homelessness, poor mental health and increased risk of suicide. Family acceptance and support is the greatest key to the safety, health, protection and wellbeing of LGBTI+ young people.

Research has found that people are coming out at younger ages and people often come out in their teenage years. Coming out and speaking to your families about it is a very big deal for children, they might be feeling nervous, scared, confused, trapped or excited. They often have no idea how their family will respond, although are hoping for acceptance and love. For parents, learning that your child is LGBTI+ can feel very overwhelming.

Below we have listed some suggestions for how parents can support their LGBTI+ children and family members:

- Listen to them and try to understand what they are going through. Everyone's experience is different.
- Make time to have conversations and communicate together.
- There are lots of misconceptions around LGBTI+ people and their lives, for example, that being gay is a choice. You can do research and educate yourself about the happy and fulfilling lives that LGBTI+ people lead.
- Link them in with supports – young people need safe and appropriate spaces to work through their feelings. There are a range of supports available for young people in the community.
- Encourage them to meet other LGBTI+ young people
- Show them that you support them
- Affirm their identity by making sure that you use their correct pronouns and name.
- Being aware that it will take time for you to process and understand what it means for you and your family – be patient with yourself and reach out for support if you need it.
- If you or your child needs support, please call the school to speak to me for a confidential conversation.

Some key resources to use in the community are:

The Brave Network: Provides support and resources for LGBTIQ people of faith and their families - <https://thebravenetwork.org/>

Parentline: Parents and caregivers can call Parentline on 13 22 89 for free counselling and information on a range of parenting issues.

Headspace: Headspace offers mental health support to young people aged 12 to 25. Headspace is located at Craigieburn Central, call 8338 0919 to book an appointment or head to <https://headspace.org.au>

QLife: Provides free LGBTI+ peer support and referrals over the phone or via webchat. Visit [www.qlife.org.au](http://www qlife.org.au).

Switchboard: Provides free peer-based and volunteer-run phone counselling and webchat support for LGBTI+ people and their families. Call 1800 184 527 (3pm to midnight) or visit www.switchboard.org.au

Minus 18: Minus 18 is the largest youth-led organization for same sex attracted and gender diverse youth in Australia. They run free events and have resources for young people aged 13 – 25. You can contact them at info@minus18.org.au