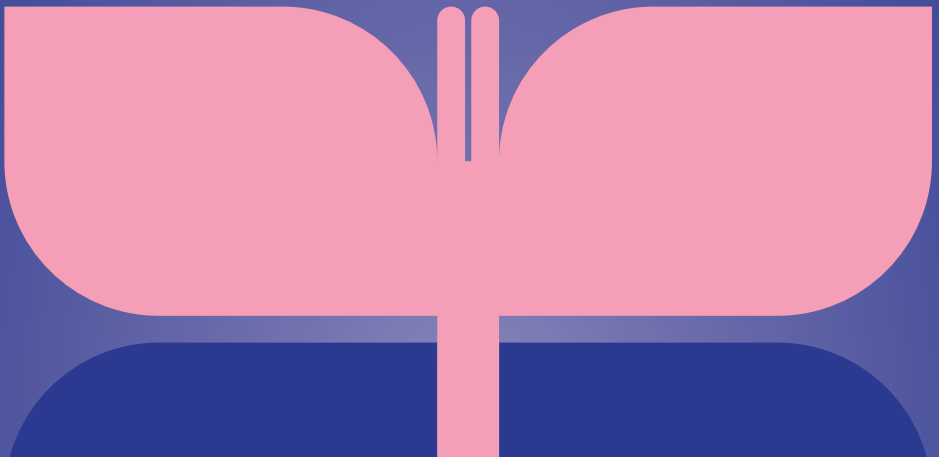


MYTHS ABOUT GENDER AFFIRMING CARE

A resource for parents and carers of a young person who identifies as transgender, gender diverse or non-binary, or who are questioning their gender identity.



Misinformation is information that is false or inaccurate.

Disinformation is deliberately false information designed to deceive.

This factsheet addresses some of the most common myths, misinformation and disinformation about gender affirming care.

Myth 1	Gender affirming care is only about medical treatment	<p>Fact: Gender affirming care is much broader than medical intervention.</p> <p>Gender affirming care includes everyday respect (such as using the correct name and pronouns), emotional and psychosocial support, family support, community connection, and inclusive schools and services. Medical care is only one possible part of gender affirming care and is not wanted or needed by everyone.</p>
Myth 2	All trans or gender diverse young people want medical treatment	<p>Fact: Not all young people want medical treatment, and that is completely valid.</p> <p>Some young people want social affirmation only. Some might want medical care later, or not at all. Some are still exploring what feels right. Gender affirming care is about supporting each person's wellbeing and choices, not about pushing a particular outcome.</p>
Myth 3	Gender affirming care "rushes" young people into decisions	<p>Fact: Gender affirming care is intentionally careful, staged, and individualised.</p> <p>Gender affirming care is just another form of healthcare and follows the same principles. Best-practice care emphasises time, exploration, information, and support. Decisions are made gradually, with the young person at the centre, and revisited as circumstances change. No one is forced to make decisions before they are ready.</p> <p>It is called gender affirming care because it is based on listening and believing, and working with the young person to understand their needs, like other areas of healthcare.</p>
Myth 4	Children are given hormones as soon as they express gender diversity	<p>Fact: This is not how care works. No medical discipline works like this, and gender affirming care is no different.</p> <p>For children, gender affirming care primarily focuses on support, wellbeing, and social affirmation. Medical options are considered only if/ when appropriate, based on age, individual circumstances, clinical guidelines, and informed consent processes. Many young people never access medical treatment at all.</p>

Myth 5

Being trans or gender diverse is a mental illness

Fact: Being trans or gender diverse is not a mental health condition.

Major medical and psychological bodies (national and international) recognise that gender diversity is a natural part of human diversity. Many trans, gender diverse and non-binary young people experience gender dysphoria or gender incongruence, which affects their mental health.

Other mental health challenges experienced by some trans young people are most strongly linked to stigma, discrimination, lack of support, and barriers to care.

Myth 6

Supporting a child's gender identity causes harm and encourages them

Fact: Support is one of the strongest protective factors for wellbeing.

Research consistently shows that when trans and gender diverse young people are supported by family, schools, and services, they experience better mental health, lower distress, and reduced risk of self harm and suicide. Lack of support and rejection cause harm, particularly when a young person is not listened to, their feelings are ignored, or they are told they are too young to know who they are.

Myth 7

Gender affirming care ignores parents and families

Fact: Family support is a core part of gender affirming care.

Good care supports both the young person and their family. Parents and carers are offered information, reassurance, and space to ask questions. Many services actively include families and recognise that parents may also need support while navigating unfamiliar systems. When parents or carers disagree or act to block care, the needs of the young person take priority. This is no different to any other area of healthcare.

Myth 8

Gender affirming care is experimental or unregulated

Fact: Gender affirming care follows established clinical standards.

In Australia, gender affirming care is guided by recognised clinical standards and professional guidelines. Care is delivered by qualified professionals and is subject to ethical, legal, and clinical oversight, just like other areas of healthcare. There are also international clinical standards. Standards are reviewed and updated regularly to keep up with research and best practice, like all other areas of healthcare.

Myth 9

If a young person is supported, they can't change their mind

Fact: Support allows exploration, not permanence.

Gender affirming care does not lock anyone into a fixed identity or pathway. It creates a safe environment for exploration, reflection, and growth. If a young person's understanding of themselves changes, care adapts with them.

Find out more:

The Raising Children Network has some excellent articles with information about gender affirming care:

<https://raisingchildren.net.au/pre-teens/development/pre-teens-gender-diversity-and-gender-dysphoria>

Kids Health Info, by the Royal Children's Hospital in Melbourne has some good information that explains Australia's approach to gender affirming care, including the clinical standards of care used by doctors in Australia:

https://www.rch.org.au/kidsinfo/fact_sheets/Gender_diverse_children_and_youth/

The Student Wellbeing Hub has lots of resources to help students, including a very important report called "*Writing Themselves In 4*" written by researchers from La Trobe University:

<https://studentwellbeinghub.edu.au/resources/writing-themselves-in-4/>

If you would like to see the full range of reports from La Trobe University, follow the link:

<https://www.latrobe.edu.au/arcshs/work/lgbtiq-health/writing-themselves-in-4>

Emerging Minds also has a range of resources with information about gender identity, mental health and gender affirming care:

<https://emergingminds.com.au/resources/supporting-trans-and-gender-diverse-children-and-their-families/>