

A woman with short red hair is shown from the chest up, holding a large transgender flag. The flag features horizontal stripes of light blue, pink, and white, with a diagonal stripe of light blue and pink. She is looking down and to the right. The background is a rough, grey stone wall.

# Gender affirmation at work **mini-guide**



**WAIHANGA ARA RAU**  
Construction and  
Infrastructure  
Workforce Development Council





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# Introduction

People are the most important part of our industry - and over the next few years, we'll face a major shortage of workers in construction and infrastructure.

It's important to create welcoming job sites where everyone feels valued, supported, and motivated to stay.

These guidelines have been developed to help you support employees as they change genders at work.

Rainbow/queer/LGBTQIA+ are used as blanket terms for all sexual minorities, including people transitioning gender. Sexual minorities have existed for thousands of years.

Gender affirmation (often referred to as transition) is the process where a transgender or gender diverse person takes steps to socially, legally, and/or physically feel more aligned with their gender identity as distinct from the sex they were assigned at birth. Gender affirmation in the workplace is about the support systems put in place to support authentic presentation for trans/non-binary individuals - both those who are settled (already transitioned) and those who are transitioning.

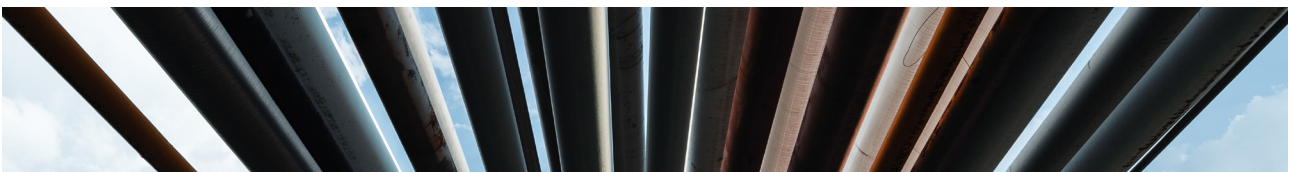
"For people who are affirming their gender, having it recognised at work is often an integral part of this process and creates a safe, inclusive and supportive environment for people of all genders to thrive."

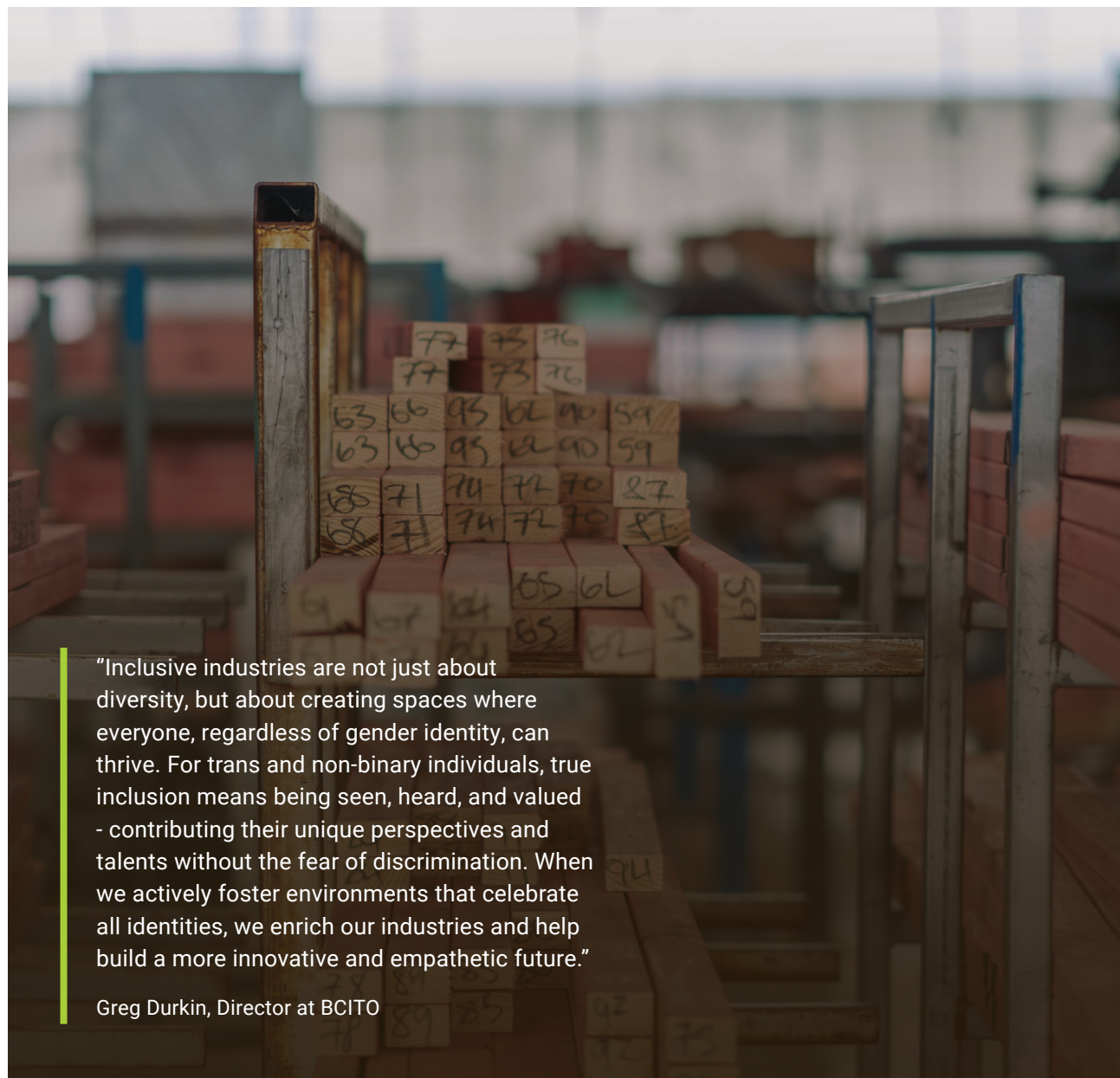
Martin King, Pride Pledge

**Sex** (male, female, intersex) assigned to a child at birth, refers to biological differences between individuals, primarily focused on physical and physiological characteristics like chromosomes, hormones, and reproductive organs.

**Gender**, on the other hand, is a social construct that encompasses the roles, behaviours, expressions, and identities of individuals, influenced by cultural norms and societal expectations.

The number of employees identifying as trans or non-binary (gender diverse) is on the rise with 6% of Gen Zs compared to less than 1% of baby boomers (2023 Ipsos LGBT+ Global Pride Survey). Gen Zs make up 1.1 million Kiwis and therefore more than 60,000 Kiwis may require support in a range of ways from their workplaces and these need to be protected and explicit in policy.





"Inclusive industries are not just about diversity, but about creating spaces where everyone, regardless of gender identity, can thrive. For trans and non-binary individuals, true inclusion means being seen, heard, and valued - contributing their unique perspectives and talents without the fear of discrimination. When we actively foster environments that celebrate all identities, we enrich our industries and help build a more innovative and empathetic future."

Greg Durkin, Director at BCITO

Everyone needs to feel supported through the transition process, including the person who is transitioning as well as supervisors, team leaders, workmates and clients. And every person's transition will be unique to that individual based on their personal, social and health needs. For this reason, these guidelines provide information, tips and resources that you may find useful, but you should use your discretion and use the bits that you think apply best to your business.

It can feel like a lot to take in, so make sure to start with respect and keep these simple tips in mind:

# Top five tips

## for supporting gender affirmation at work

- 01 Listen.**  
Listen to the employee and be guided by how they want to approach their transition at work.
- 02 Make a plan.**  
Make a transitioning plan together with the employee who is transitioning (see section below).
- 03 Educate workmates before the transition.**  
Educate workmates about gender transitioning, so there are no misunderstandings.
- 04 Promote acceptance and belonging.**  
As a team leader/supervisor show visible support for the employee transitioning by shaking their hand or sharing friendly banter in front of the team.
- 05 Relax.**  
If you're unsure of anything, respectfully ask for guidance from the employee transitioning – they will usually be happy to support you back!



# For employers

## Privacy

First up it is important to know that maintaining privacy around this issue is critical. Takatāpui, transgender and gender diverse workers have the right to decide when, with whom, and how much to share their private information.

Ensure that team leaders, supervisors and workmates know that they should not talk about or disclose information that may reveal an employee's gender or gender non-conforming presentation to others without the consent of the employee.

## Planning for transition

When an employee lets you know they're going to transition to another gender your job is to listen and be supportive of their wishes. The employee has been sitting with this major life decision for some time. You are in a very privileged position to be brought into this journey and it might take you some time to get your head around it. If you have questions or concerns, raise these with your manager (or organisation's Rainbow network or HR department if you have them).

Transitioning experts recommend developing a plan to facilitate a smooth transition process and to reduce uncertainties. Communication is key throughout this process. Just like we communicate plans and updates on a construction site, we've got to keep the conversation flowing with our transitioning team member. That way, we can address any concerns, make adjustments as needed, and ensure everyone feels respected and valued.

A transitioning plan will provide everyone involved with a common road map to follow and minimise miscommunication and misunderstandings about the process and the goal outcomes.

The speed of transition and support required for transitioning employees will vary on an individual basis. Each transitioning employee will have different needs and may not want or need support with every aspect covered in the suggested plan below, so it is important to have a conversation first to establish what the needs of the individual are before getting started.

## Employers and support team - what you can do

Building support for our team members who are embarking on a journey of transition is the best thing we can do. Take the time to understand what they need, how we can support them, and what their goals are. Establishing a level of comfort in the team as to what the transition is and why it is happening is important for minimising the risk of misunderstandings.

There are two key principles to keep in mind:

### Provide assurance

- » Affirm your support of the transitioning employee.
- » Make it clear that your conversation will be held in confidence to the extent possible and make note of anything you may need outside guidance on.

### Get the employee's input

- » Ask the transitioning employee for suggestions on what you can do to help and discuss how you can assist them during their transition.
- » Ask if they want to inform their team leader, co-workers and clients themselves, or if they'd prefer this be done on their behalf.
- » Ask if they have a new name and/or pronoun, and when they would like you to begin using them.
- » The employee may feel more comfortable working in a different environment during their transition. If this is a possibility, ask if they have any preferences.
- » If they are married or partnered, ask how you should refer to that person throughout and after the transition, e.g., partner, wife, husband, etc.

"Creating an inclusive workplace for trans and gender-diverse communities starts with intentional policies that affirm identity, alongside a culture that actively supports and uplifts individuals. Employers can lead the way by implementing clear gender affirmation guidelines, normalising pronoun use, and fostering safe, respectful environments where everyone belongs."

Shayde Young, Executive Director, Gendaffirm



## Transition plan template

(for employee to work through with their manager)

Name:	
Pronouns:	
How I'll be presenting myself:	
How I want people to be informed:	
When people can be informed:	
What I want people to know:	
How I want my manager to show their support in front of other employees:	
What I'd like people to do if they make a mistake with my name and/or pronouns:	
People I will go to if I have any concerns:	



## Here's some key things to consider when developing a transition plan:

### 1 Support team development

- » Support the employee in creating a transition plan that is appropriate for both the employee and the company.
- » Be an active member of the employee's support team.

### 2 Engagement plan

- » Identify key stakeholders within the company who need to be engaged during the employee's transition.
- » Plan how to support the employee in communicating with these stakeholders.

### 3 Client communication

- » Assist the employee in planning how and when clients will be informed about their transition.
- » Ensure clients are informed in a way that respects the employee's preferences and maintains professional relationships.

### 4 Transition timeline

- » Work with the employee to create a flexible transition timeline.
- » Include key dates such as legal name changes and other significant milestones

### 5 Document updates

- » Support the employee in updating professional licences and credentials
- » Allocate time and resources for making changes to employment records, including internal computer systems, security cards, Kiwisaver, IRD, staff lists, company intranet, and external websites. Make sure that old records, e.g. emails addresses, are properly deleted.

### 6 Education and awareness

- » Allow time for educating the team and other stakeholders about the transition process. One way of doing this is for a team leader or supervisor, with consent from the transitioning employee, to arrange a team meeting to announce the transition and arrange a briefing session on takatāpui/transgender issues (from a professional). This helps promote a positive work environment for all employees.
- » Provide training or resources to ensure understanding and support within the company (see organisations who provide this below).

### 7 Work adjustments

- » Discuss with the employee any changes needed in their work during the transition.
- » Plan for adjustments such as changes to email addresses, directories, access cards, and system accesses. Make sure that old names and photos aren't going to pop up in the future, and that the employee can still access shared files

### 8 Addressing issues

- » Address specific issues such as uniform changes or bathroom facilities if relevant.
- » Ensure that these changes are implemented smoothly and respectfully.
- » Address bias promptly as per existing discrimination, harassment and bullying policies. Make sure you and your team knows what bias can look like, and that everyone has a responsibility to call it out.

## 9 Communication strategy

- » Assist the employee in communicating their transition to the team, either directly or through the Team Leader. A lack of knowledge about takatāpui, transgender and gender diverse issues has the potential for creating misunderstanding and tension in the workplace. It is often helpful to provide a forum for employees to ask questions and learn about transitioning at work from a professional (see organisations at end).
- » Plan how and when to inform other teams and clients, ensuring respect for the employee's preferences.

## 10 Online and media presence

- » Support the employee in identifying and updating online presences and electronic media.
- » Facilitate the process of making necessary changes to ensure consistency with the employee's new identity.

## 11 Leave and policies

- » Anticipated time required away from work for medical treatment and ID change appointments, if relevant.
- » Explain your leave policies and how they might apply to the situation (Pride Pledge recommends 10 days discretionary leave).
- » Clarify that the employee is covered by existing policies (if you have these in your business). E.g. bullying and harassment, uniform, diversity and inclusion.

## 12 General wellbeing support

- » Transitioning gender is usually a big phase in someone's life. Going through such important change might affect overall health and wellbeing and it's important that our transitioning employees feel supported. This might mean offering more flexible working options and been open to the possibility of providing any further support your employee might be asking for.

# Surgeries

The process of transitioning may include one or more surgeries. It is important to understand though, that transitioning gender does not necessarily include surgery and an employee may or may not have these surgeries for any number of personal reasons. Furthermore, surgery in and of itself is not the goal of a gender transition.

The team leader and transitioning employee should discuss and plan for the leave that might be necessary for surgery and the subsequent recovery period.

As with other aspects of a transition, plans should be discussed and communicated only with affected parties to manage expectations and to minimise disruption to the business. Medical information, including surgery plans communicated by an employee, should be treated confidentially.



# For employees who are transitioning

It can be a good idea for transitioning employees to:

## 01

### Create a support team

- » Identify supportive colleagues and your team leader to develop an appropriate transition plan.
- » Consider involving a mentor or an external support person if necessary.
- » Don't hesitate to reach out for help. Talk to your support people whenever you need to, they are there to help you.

## 02

### Engage people within the company

- » Identify key individuals you may need to engage during the transition.
- » Decide how and when to inform your immediate team about your transition.
- » If you are considering a name change, plan how to communicate your new name and pronouns

## 03

### Consider client engagement

- » Determine if and when clients need to be informed about your transition.
- » Work with your Team Leader to plan the communication strategy for clients to ensure a smooth transition.

## 04

### Build a transition plan and timeline

- » Create a very flexible timeline for your transition, acknowledging that changes may be needed.
- » Include important milestones such as legal name change dates and transition milestones



## 05

### Update professional documents

- » Plan for updating professional licences and credentials.
- » Consider how long it will take to make changes to key documents and plan accordingly.

## 06

### Identify potential roadblocks

- » Review potential challenges and develop strategies to overcome them.
- » Think about any changes needed in your work during the transition and discuss these with your team leader.

## 07

### Think about communication preferences

- » Decide how you want your team to be informed about your transition (e.g., letter, face-to-face meeting, individual discussions).

## 08

### Review your online presence and social media

- » Search for your current name on websites and other electronic media.
- » Identify pages that need to be altered or removed and determine who to contact for updates.

# Rights and obligations

Everyone has rights, and everyone has responsibilities. It's like a handshake agreement between us all, making sure we're all on the same page and playing by the same rules.

We all have the right to be treated with respect, fairness, and dignity

That's non-negotiable.

Whether you're swinging a hammer or crunching numbers in the office, everyone deserves to feel valued and heard. It's especially important when someone is transitioning.

## Māori transgender rights

Māori who are transgender and identify as male, female or across the spectrum of genders have guaranteed rights that are supported and protected by Te Tiriti o Waitangi. For more information check out <https://takatapui.nz/>.

## Employment records

A transitioning employee may request that their employment records and photographs on display around the workplace be updated to reflect their new gender.

In most companies a court-ordered name or gender change is not required other than for a change to a person's last name. If an employee wishes to change their last name they are usually required to provide supporting documentation.

Supporting documentation can include:

- Current NZ Drivers licence (showing the new name)
- Current passport (showing the new name)
- Marriage or civil union certificate (if you are changing name because you got married)
- Dissolution of marriage or civil union order or certificate of annulment (if you are reverting back to your birth name)
- Deed poll certificate, change of name certificate, or birth certificate showing the new name and all previous names
- Statutory declaration confirming your name change has been registered with Births, Deaths and Marriages

It is useful to find out how names and gender can be changed in the systems your company uses and to record this in a 'how to' guide so that employees transitioning gender, or changing names and pronouns for any other reason, can easily navigate the process.

In addition, employees may need to inform their Kiwisaver and/or insurance provider(s) of their name change and gender change, as well as IRD.

## Names and pronouns

All employees should be addressed by their chosen name and chosen pronouns (he/him, she/her, they/them, ia, etc.) upon request.

The intentional and persistent refusal to respect an employee's gender identity (for example, intentionally referring to the employee by a name or

pronoun that does not correspond to their gender identity) may constitute discrimination, bullying or harassment. If you are unsure what name or pronoun(s) an employee would like to go by, politely ask them for guidance.

## Change room and bathroom accessibility

Employees should be allowed to use the change room and toilet facilities corresponding to their gender or ideally have access to gender neutral facilities.

## Dress code

All employees have the right to follow the organisation's dress code in a way that aligns with their gender identity. If a uniform or safety gear is required, the employee can choose what they wear, as long as it meets safety requirements.

## Discrimination and harassment

It is unlawful to treat any person less or more favourably (including, but not limited to, recruitment, promotion, or termination of employment) because of their actual or perceived gender identity.

Most employers want to provide a safe work environment for their workers, including employees

who are transgender, gender diverse or gender non-conforming. Any incident of discrimination, harassment or bullying based on gender identity or expression should be dealt with swiftly and effectively.

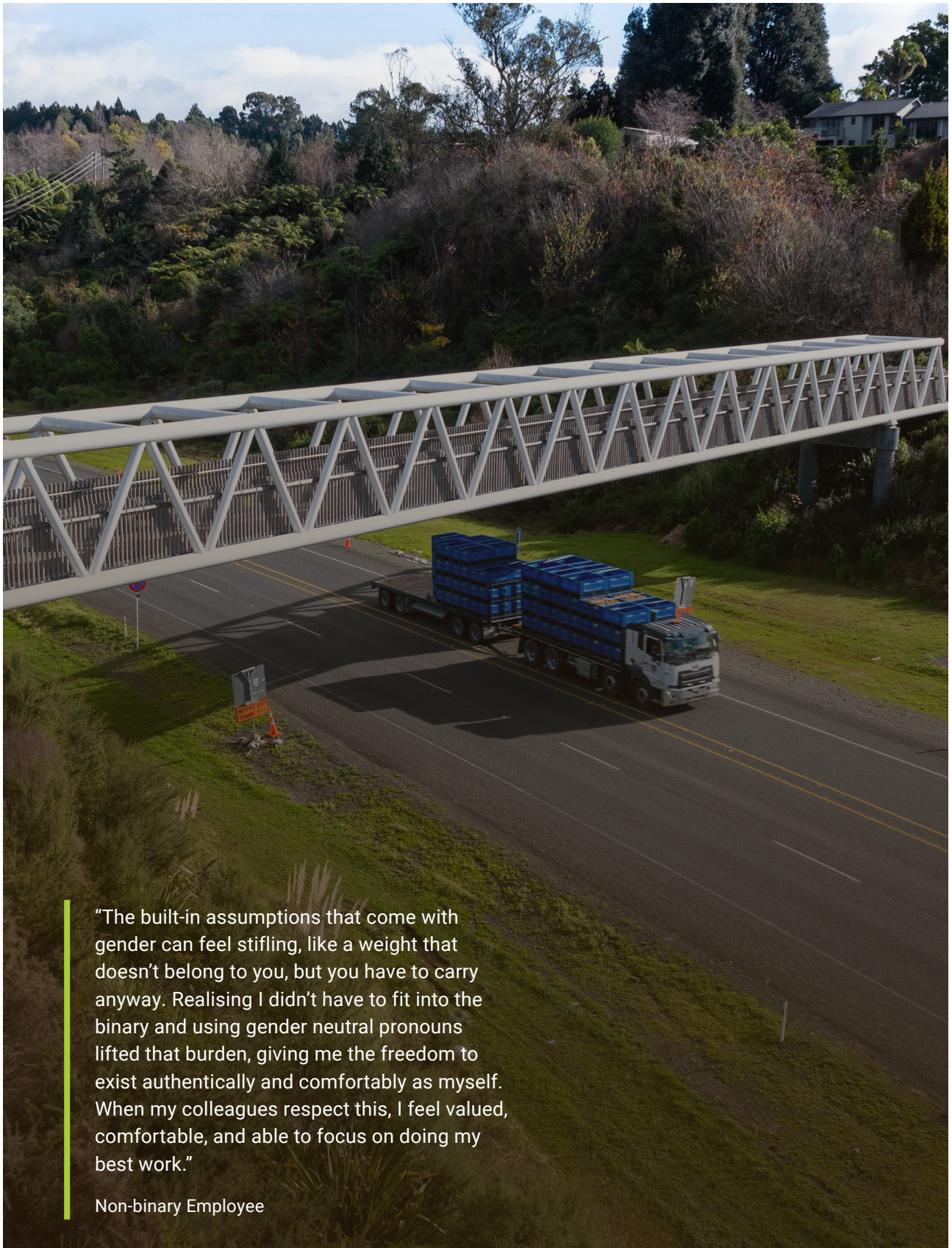
Breaches, such as discrimination, bullying and harassment, should be regarded as serious misconduct and it is important you promote a culture of speaking up in your workplace. This ensures people remain safe, and that good employees stay.

## Legal obligations

Most employers want to do right by their employees, but for those that don't, there are laws protecting workers who are trans or planning on transitioning genders:

- The Human Rights Act 1993 states that discrimination in employment matters is unlawful. Section 21 of The Human Rights Act also sets out the prohibited grounds of discrimination. Everyone should be aware of the prohibition on discrimination set out in the Human Rights Act and conduct themselves accordingly.
- The Employment Relations Act 2000 has several relevant provisions including flexible working (the employee's rights and the duties of the employer); entitlement to leave and support; the issue of discrimination in employment and the prohibited grounds of discrimination.





"The built-in assumptions that come with gender can feel stifling, like a weight that doesn't belong to you, but you have to carry anyway. Realising I didn't have to fit into the binary and using gender neutral pronouns lifted that burden, giving me the freedom to exist authentically and comfortably as myself. When my colleagues respect this, I feel valued, comfortable, and able to focus on doing my best work."

Non-binary Employee

# Gender affirmation

## key definitions

TERM	MEANING
<b>Sex</b>	For the purposes of these guidelines, sex refers to the sex a person was assigned at birth.
<b>Gender</b>	One's internal sense of being male or female, neither of these, both, etc.
<b>Sexual orientation</b>	Sexual orientation describes a person's romantic and/or sexual attraction to others.
<b>LGBTQIA+</b>	An inclusive umbrella abbreviation to encompass a range of diverse sexualities, genders and sexes including lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, queer, intersex, asexual, gender diverse and questioning.
<b>Takatāpui</b>	A Te Reo Māori term, which is used similarly to "rainbow person" or "rainbow community", in a similar way to LGBTQI+. When speaking te reo Māori, the word for LGBTQI+ people is takatāpui, so one would use this word to refer to both Māori and non-Māori. However, usually only Māori people would call themselves takatāpui when speaking English.
<b>Fakaleitī (or leiti or fakafefine or lady)</b>	A Tongan individual, assigned male at birth, who has a feminine gender expression. The term fakaleitī is made up of the prefix faka- (in the manner of) and the borrowing lady from English. Fakaleitīs themselves prefer to call themselves leiti or ladies.
<b>Fa'afafine and fa'afatama</b>	In Samoa, there are four recognised cultural genders: women, men, fa'afafine, and fa'afatama. Fa'afafine and fa'afatama are fluid gender roles that move between masculine and feminine worlds. Other terms include Fakafifine (Niue), Akava'ine (Cook Islands), Mahu (Tahiti and Hawaii), Vakasalewalewa (Fiji), Palopa (Papua New Guinea).
<b>Transgender/trans/ gender diverse</b>	These are umbrella terms that describe people who identify their gender as different to what was assigned to them at birth. Some trans people position 'being trans' as a history or experience, rather than an identity, and consider their gender identity as simply being woman, man or non-binary.



# Gender affirmation

## key definitions *cont.*

TERM	MEANING
<b>Gender non-conforming</b>	Gender variance, or gender non-conformity, is an expression or identity of gender that does not align solely with either the male or female gender. People who exhibit gender variance may prefer to be referred to as gender variant, gender non-conforming, gender diverse, or gender non-binary.
<b>Intersex</b>	A term for people born with atypical physical sex characteristics. There are many different intersex traits or variations including genetic, hormonal or physical characteristics which are not exclusively 'male' or 'female'. Intersex people may identify as either men, women or non-binary.
<b>Gender transition</b>	The process of changing from one gender to another. Transition may involve social, medical/surgical and/or legal steps.
<b>Social transition</b>	Coming out, changing pronouns, changing name, changing outward appearance such as clothing.
<b>Medical transition</b>	Hormone replacement therapy, gender affirmation surgery, or other medical procedures.
<b>Legal transition</b>	Changing one's name and gender on systems and documents.
<b>Ally</b>	Someone who supports and stands in solidarity with groups facing discrimination.



# Where to get more information and support

Diversity Agenda	<a href="https://diversityagenda.org">diversityagenda.org</a>
Takatāpui	<a href="https://takatapui.nz">takatapui.nz</a>
Pride Pledge	<a href="https://pridepledge.co.nz">pridepledge.co.nz</a>
GendAffirm	<a href="https://gendaffirm.org.nz">gendaffirm.org.nz</a>
Rainbow Tick	<a href="https://toitutakatapui.co.nz">toitutakatapui.co.nz</a>
Counting Ourselves	Counting Ourselves is an anonymous health survey designed by and for trans and non-binary people living in Aotearoa New Zealand. <a href="https://countingourselves.org.nz">Counting Ourselves   Aotearoa New Zealand Trans and Non-Binary Health Survey</a>
Rainbow Youth	Provides support, information, resources & advocacy for Aotearoa New Zealand's queer, gender diverse, takatāpui and intersex youth. <a href="https://ry.org.nz">ry.org.nz</a>
Outline NZ	Confidential, free, all-ages support line, rainbow specialist counselling and trans peer support. <a href="https://outline.org.nz">outline.org.nz</a> 0800 OUTLINE (6885463)
United Nations Human Rights	UN Human Rights carries out monitoring, advocacy, technical cooperation and public information campaigns towards ending violence and discrimination against LGBTI people <a href="https://ohchr.org">ohchr.org</a>
Diversity Works NZ	Diversity works is a government funded organisation tasked with increasing diversity in the workplaces and supporting organisations to achieve this. <a href="https://diversityworks.nz">diversityworks.nz</a>
Gender Minorities Aotearoa	Gender Minorities Aotearoa is a nationwide transgender organisation. It is run by and for transgender people; including binary and non-binary, intersex, and irawhiti takatāpui. We support transgender people of all ages, cultures, and backgrounds, and provide one-to-one peer support and information nationwide. <a href="https://genderminorities.com">genderminorities.com</a>
The Gender Centre	The Gender Centre develops and provides services and activities to enhance the ability of transgender and gender diverse people to make informed choices. Its website contains articles and other educational material for the public about the needs of transgender and gender diverse people. <a href="https://gendercentre.org.au">gendercentre.org.au</a>
Human Rights Commission	The Human Rights Commission publishes yearly reviews as well as regular articles about social research regarding LGBTIQ individuals, as well as publishing corporate equality indexes every year. The website provides workplace specific educational material, as well as contemporary guides to discussing and understanding equality. <a href="https://hrc.org">hrc.org</a>



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