The

MAKE LOVE LOUDER

Report

With Dr Shirleene Robinson,
for the

ABSOLUT
LOVE LETTERS
Project
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
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 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 activities

37%
of LGBT^ Australians aged 16+ have been diagnosed or treated for a mental disorder in the past three years
  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 lifetime

5X
Transgender and gender diverse people aged 18 and over are nearly five times as likely to be diagnosed with depression in their lifetime

10%
of LGBTI* Australians believe they have been refused employment or promotion as a result of their sexuality

“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

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

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
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.

“People are so toxic. Sometimes it physically hurts to be on social media.”
Alana, South Coast, New South Wales

“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
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 issue, 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 community.

“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
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.  

“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.”

“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
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

“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

*Study surveyed LGBTI people
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

95% of LGBTIQ+ Australians have seen or heard negativity or discrimination about their community

But neither is as high as the community themselves

“Public discussion about LGBTQI 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…

28%
…or contribute to feelings of isolation

“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
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.

Maybe it’s time to ask... 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.

Only 1 in 4 Allies & friends have ever asked LGBTIQ+ people in their circle how they would like to be supported.
SO WHAT ARE THE MOST POWERFUL WAYS TO VOICE SUPPORT?

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<tr>
<th>#1</th>
<th>Standing up against anti-LGBTIQ+ speech (84%)</th>
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<tr>
<td>#2</td>
<td>Using respectful language about the LGBTIQ+ community (81%)</td>
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<td>#3</td>
<td>Being accepting and considering your own prejudices (78%)</td>
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<td>#4</td>
<td>Helping LGBTIQ+ people and perspectives to be seen and heard (74%)</td>
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<td>#5</td>
<td>Listening to LGBTIQ+ people (73%)</td>
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<tr>
<td>#6</td>
<td>Expressing support for LGBTIQ+ people on social media (73%)</td>
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Jordan & Lavrence, brothers
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.
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

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


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)