



NATIONAL CENTRE for
**AUSTRALIAN
CHILDREN'S
LITERATURE^{Inc}**



BOOKS THAT CELEBRATE GENDER DIVERSITY AND CHALLENGE GENDER ROLES

These books were selected and annotated by the UC Ally Network representatives for the IDAHOBIT Day celebrations.

PICTURE BOOKS

ARC-DEKKER, Tamara. Illustrated by Jenny Boettcher
Bedtime for Baby Teddy Rainbow Babies Books, 2002

A comforting night-time read for babies and young children, this picture book opens a window into the familiar night-time routines of children and their lesbian parents.

In 2016, author Tamara Arc-Dekker and her partner Linda fought to have both their names listed as “mother” on the birth cert of their youngest child, in Victoria, applying to the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal (VCAT).

BEER, Sophie
Love makes a Family. Little Hare Books, 2018

What makes a family? The answer is clear in the title of this pre-school read, and award-winning Brisbane-based illustrator Sophie Beer makes it known that whether a family has two dads, two mums, one of each, or one of; it's love that makes a family.

This book was longlisted for the 2019 ABIA Picture Book of the Year.

GREEN, Bernadette. Illustrated by Anna Zobel
Who's your real Mum? Scribble, 2020

Kids have questions – like Nicholas, who really wants to know which of Elvi's two mums is her “REAL” mum. Elvi gives her friend lots of clues – her REAL mum is a circus performer, and a pirate and even teaches spiders how to spin their webs. But Nicholas still needs a little help working it all out ... and Elvi guides him with loving patience.

This picture book is written with empathy and understanding, gently nurturing a child's curiosity and encouraging learning, empowerment and kindness. It's also very clear in its message that parenting is about a lot more than biology.

HIRST, Jo. Illustrated by Libby Wirt

The gender fairy. Oban Road Publishing, 2015

A great book for children ages four and up – who may be navigating gender diversity or know other kids who are – *The Gender Fairy* is a simple story about two children feeling the relief of being heard and living as their true selves.

It's also purportedly Australia's first book for transgender children. Author Jo Hirst is a former primary school teacher, who grew up in a family that didn't believe in gender stereotyping – so Jo grew up believing a world of possibilities, acceptance and celebration.

Jo has two young sons of her own, one of whom transitioned when he was six, with the loving support of family and friends – this book sprang from faith and hope, that every child should have the same safe, nurturing environment in which to thrive.

The Gender Fairy was written to be read aloud, and you'll find discussion and learning notes for parents and teachers at the very end – these were written in collaboration with gender and sexuality researcher Roz Ward from the Australian Research Centre in Sex, Health and Society at La Trobe University in Melbourne.

HOPKINS, Rosalind & WINTER, Natalie. Illustrated by Cara King

Mummy and Mumma get married. Captain Honey Pty Ltd, 2016

With trusty sidekick Biscuit the cat, Phoebe attempts to organise a surprise wedding for her two mums – and soon, the whole town is in on it! This is a lovely book with a joyous message but is also useful in the larger context of addressing diversity within families and attitudes to marriage equality, with children.

Written by Roz Hopkins and her partner Natalie Winter – both from Byron Bay – *Mummy and Mumma Get Married* was dreamed up by Roz when she was trying to get their daughter Dixie to sleep – on the same night that the Irish referendum saw the country become the first to legalise same sex marriage.

WALTON, Jessica. Illustrated by Dougal MacPherson

Introducing Teddy: a story about being yourself. Bloomsbury, 2016.

A book about identity and friendship. Errol and Thomas, the teddy play together every day. But Thomas would secretly rather be called Tilly. Will Errol understand – and can they still be friends?

Supporters of this book raised \$20,161 via Kickstarter to bring it to life, and its back story is just as lovely as the one in its pages – author Jessica Walton watched as her dad transformed into Tina, “the woman she had always been on the inside”.

Tina is a wonderful, loving grandma to Jessica's son Errol – and Jessica wrote this picture book so that her son's bookshelves would include reflections of his own life and family, with transgender and genderfluid characters.

Fiction for Older Students

EDWARDS, Hazel & KENNEDY, Ryan

F2m: the boy within. Ford Street, 2010.

Sensitive and compelling, *f2m* tells the story of Skye, guitarist for the all-female indie band Chronic Cramps ... and the emotional, social and physical challenges he faces in transitioning to Finn.

How do you tell your feminist bandmates you're about to undertake gender reassignment surgery and treatment? Skye/Finn finds that the answer might lie in family secrets.

Co-authors Hazel Edwards and Ryan Kennedy collaborated via Skype to write this book; Ryan is a transgender writer and musician, who brings a particularly personal take.

F2m also inspired a graphic novel, *The Boy Within*, created by Ryan and Sam Orchard, who is also a transman.

LONESBOROUGH, Gary

The boy from the Mish. Allen & Unwin, 2021.

Jackson is looking forward to summer as usual, hanging out with his friends and seeing his Aunty and cousins from the city. Only this summer, they bring a mysterious boy with them ... and Jackson has to face a secret that he thought he'd buried, which could change his relationship with family, friends and community.

The Boy from the Mish is a queer Indigenous YA novel set in a rural Australian community, and Yuin author Gary Lonesborough's much-lauded debut novel – a sweet, tender and honest story about love of all kinds – first love, the love of family and friends, and the love of culture – navigating your identity and holding on to self-belief.

The Boy from the Mish has been shortlisted for a plethora of awards, including 2022 CBCA Book of the Year, Older Readers; 2022 Victorian Premier's Literary Awards, Indigenous Writing Prize; 2022 NSW Premier's Literary Award, Indigenous Writers' Prize; 2022 Adelaide Festival Awards, Young Adult Fiction Award; and the 2021 QLD Literary Awards, Griffith University Young Adult Book Award.

PAUSACKER, Jenny

What are ya? Angus & Robertson, 1987.

Purportedly Australia's first lesbian YA novel, *What Are Ya?* follows Barb and Leith, two 16-year-olds navigating relationships, sexuality and the difficulties of being an outsider, as they take their first steps into adulthood.

Jenny Pausacker is a Melbourne-based author who has written 72 children's and YA books – from picture books to crime novels. She has also written under the pen names Jaye Francis, Jade Forrester, Mary Forrest and Rosa Tomaselli.

What Are Ya? won the Angus and Robertson Junior Writers Fellowship and was short-listed for two State awards.

SHEPPARD, Holden

Invisible Boys. Fremantle Press, 2019

When you grow up gay in a small town, can you let people see who you really are? Rocker Charlie, AFL hopeful Hammer and shy over-achiever Zeke are all about to find out what happens when you stop hiding your real self.

Invisible Boys is raw and honest, and focuses on issues including sexuality, masculinity, anger, trauma, bullying and suicide. It's a highly lauded, important read, and one that is confrontational and affecting.

Holden Sheppard is an award-winning author from Geraldton, Western Australia; *Invisible Boys* was his debut novel, and in interviews, he has said he drew a lot of the book from personal experience. *Invisible Boys* has won multiple awards, including the 2018 City of Fremantle Hungerford Award and the 2019 Western Australian Premier's Book Prize for an Emerging Writer.

THOMSON, Hayli

The Comedienne's Guide to Pride. HarperCollins, 2022

Everyone knows that Taylor is wickedly funny – but nobody knows that she's gay. When she becomes a finalist for a diverse writers' internship at *Saturday Night Live*, Taylor realises that she'll have to come out twice over – as an aspiring comedian and a lesbian – if she's going to have a shot at winning. And the stakes are raised even further when Taylor falls hard for her classmate, out-and-proud Charlotte Grey.

A queer YA rom-com and a great coming out story, *The Comedienne's Guide to Pride* is charming, hilarious and heart-warming.

WILDE, Rhiannon

Henry Hamlet's Heart. University of Queensland Press, 2021

Love is wonderful – and terrifying. As Henry Hamlet is about to find out. Henry is in his final semester of Year 12, and he has no idea what he wants to do next. The only thing he's sure of is his best friend Len – until Henry suddenly falls in love with the last person he would have expected.

This is author Rhiannon Wilde's debut novel; it won the Queensland Literary Awards Glendower Award for an Emerging Queensland Writer, was shortlisted for the NSW Premier's Literary Awards – Ethel Turner Prize for Young People's Literature, longlisted for an Indie Book Award and was a CBCA Notable Book. Rhiannon is a former high school teacher in Brisbane.

ZISIN, Nevo

Finding Nevo. How I confused everyone. Black Dog Books, 2017

A deeply personal "autobiography about gender and everything that comes with it," *Finding Nevo* is by Nevo Zisin, a young activist, student, writer and speaker who works with a focus on gender, sex and sexuality. Assigned a female identity at birth, Nevo transitioned to present as male at 17, and today identifies outside the male/female binary.

Finding Nevo is an honest, heartfelt coming-of-age story – equal parts humorous, empathetic and raw, it the meaning of identity and the overcoming of pressures and prejudices encountered on a journey of self-discovery.

NON-FICTION BOOKS

COOK, Rachel

Closets are for Clothes. A History of Queer Australia. Black Dog Books, 2010

If you'd like to understand a bit more about queer history in Australia, this is a fabulous springboard. Some of the first white Australians were queer – both settlers and convicts, with the latter often deported due to their sexual identities. This book paints a colourful history, “from floggings and hangings to cross-dressing and the Mardi Gras” – and shows how we got to where we are today.

This is part of Black Dog Book's "Drum" imprint, which features fictionalised first-person accounts of history, and is recommended for ages 14 and up.

ZISIN, Nevo

The Pronoun Lowdown. Demystifying and celebrating gender diversity. Smith Street Books, 2021

A celebration of trans and gender diverse identities, this book shines a light on gender itself – linguistically, and both historically and in a contemporary sense – around the world, its content interwoven with author Nevo Zisin's personal experiences.

Nevo is a young activist, student, writer and speaker who works with a focus on gender, sex, sexuality and inclusivity, and who identifies as non-binary. In addition to drawing on their own experiences, they also salute the work of many other LGBTQIA+ trailblazers and activists.

Written with sensitivity and humour, this is a great book for people navigating their identities – as well as friends and family who would like to better understand and learn how best to support someone who is.