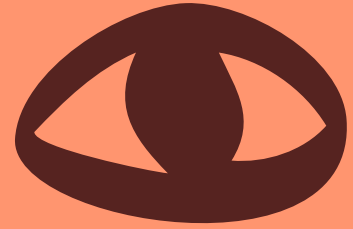


YOUR GUIDE TO SPOTTING ANTI-RIGHTS CONTENT



Anti-rights narratives are becoming a lot more common across the news and social media – and a lot of this content is looking to, at minimum, influence how we think and, at worst, outright mislead us. Whether we realise it or not, anti-rights groups are distorting public opinion, shaping how we understand certain issues and intentionally spreading confusion, fear and hatred within our communities for their own ends.

In our view, there are some common tactics used by anti-rights actors, and groups who intersect with their agenda, to achieve this.

Here's how to spot the most common anti-rights narratives and tactics you might come across in your daily life...

1/ BE WARY OF ANY TALK ABOUT “RADICAL GENDER IDEOLOGY”

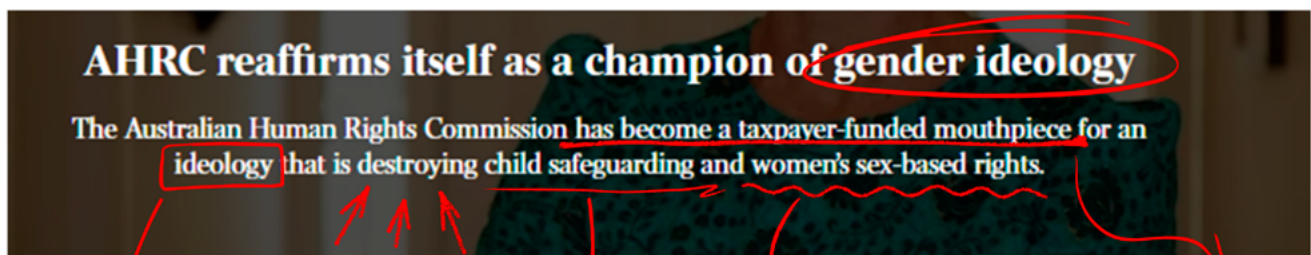
For feminists, gender is an essential lens through which to understand society. More than a simple one-to-one with biology, gender is socially constructed through cultures and norms, and looks different across time and place. It is one of many factors that can influence how we think someone ‘should’ behave, what kind of activities they ‘should’ enjoy or what clothes they ‘should’ wear.

Transforming these ideas is at the core of working towards gender equality.

But for anti-rights groups, challenging the concept of gender itself has become a powerful weapon, and opposing ‘gender ideology’ is now their rallying cry. This highly malleable concept has been embraced by all sorts of ‘gender critical’ anti-rights groups, who believe that a person’s assigned sex at birth is the only thing that matters.

For some groups, this looks like reinforcing outdated rules about how people should act based on a fixed binary, and claiming these are ‘common sense’. That’s why you’ll often hear these groups talk about ‘restoring biological truth’. They’ll present any attempt to ensure we can all access the same rights regardless of our genders as not just ludicrous, but outright dangerous.

For others, including parts of the LGB and women’s rights movements (who might hold progressive views on some social issues and not view themselves as part of the broader anti-rights movement), it looks like working to drive divisions between cisgender women and the trans community, and ultimately denying trans people their rights. These groups – sometimes called Trans Exclusionary Radical Feminists or TERFs – will often use phrases like ‘sex-based rights’ as a way to exclude trans people from conversations about women’s rights.



Reducing advocating for women and LGBTQIA+ rights to ‘ideology’ is a really powerful way to delegitimise the whole concept and imply the AHRC’s work isn’t based on evidence

Designed to make you think that innocent children are somehow at risk to create worry, fear, and eventually, a moral panic

What is this headline actually about? The ARHC shortlisting a doctor for a human rights award, based on their work ensuring young people have access to life-changing and life-saving healthcare

Dog-whistle that tries to frame trans people as an existential threat to cisgender women’s rights simply for accessing same basic freedoms that belong to all of us

rights ≠ zero-sum game

Framing that’s all about stopping you from thinking about this issue in terms of people and their rights and instead about money (and how an organisation tasked with protecting our basic rights and freedoms is ‘wasting’ it)

Source: The Australian

Groups and individuals pushing anti-rights ideas will also use this idea of a dangerous ‘gender ideology’ to **whip up moral panics** – for example by falsely arguing that LGBTQIA+ rights or sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) are somehow a threat to children (despite evidence showing that empowering children to feel confident in their bodies and their identities, and to understand and claim their rights, actually prevents abuse).

Through this rhetoric, anti-rights groups are aiming to reframe the idea of children having a real, age-appropriate understanding of sexuality, gender diversity and healthy relationships as harmful instead of what it really is: life-changing, and often life-saving, progress that is making it possible for children to be their true selves and grow up healthy, happy and safe.¹

DID YOU KNOW?

- 91% of Australians agree or strongly agree that trans people should have the freedom and choice to live their lives in the way that makes them happy.²
- 75% of religious people agree that transgender people deserve the same rights and protections as other Australians.³
- 71% of Australian women agree that transgender young people should be able to access healthcare that supports them to live as their true selves.⁴
- Australians are among the most supportive around the globe when it comes to the belief that LGBT+ people should be protected from discrimination in areas like employment and housing.⁵

2/ PAY ATTENTION TO WHAT KINDS OF ‘RIGHTS’ ARE BEING PROMOTED

Human rights provide us with the tools to demand we all be treated with dignity and respect, regardless of our genders, backgrounds, or where we come from. They are not only universal and inalienable, but also indivisible and interrelated to each other. That means that no one set of rights can be ignored or framed as less important than another.

That is, unless you’re an anti-rights actor looking to muddy the waters and advance your own agenda. In the words of one-such network, they want to “use the weapons of our opponents and turn them against them”.⁶

Enter the **co-option and redefining of human rights language** by anti-rights groups, who have become experts at couching their aims and concerns in these terms to boost their legitimacy.

In this re-framing:

- Attacks on abortion rights become about defending the **‘rights of the unborn’** or **‘the right to life from conception’**;
- The idea of **‘parental rights’** or **‘the protection of the family’** is used to undermine the rights of children in favour of the families’ (i.e. the parents’) **‘collective right’** to unilaterally make decisions that limit or disregard children’s autonomy;
- Existing rights are re-defined beyond their original scope, like the right to **freedom of thought, conscience and religion** being applied to an ever-widening circle of healthcare providers and institutions to make abortion access impossible in practice, even in places where it is legal.

In some cases, appeals to these rights come from sincerely held views and beliefs. In others, they are deceitfully used by anti-rights groups to confuse otherwise well-meaning people into supporting policies that are – at their core – about denying people’s access to fundamental rights.

DID YOU KNOW?

- 76% of Australians aged 16-74 support access to abortion.⁷
- Over 80% of Australian parents support the inclusion of gender and sexual diversity content in relationships and sexual health school curriculums.⁸

1. Evidence Brief: Gender-affirming Hormone Therapy; UNFPA (2026), [10 myths – and truths – about comprehensive sexuality education](#).

2. Equality Australia (2025), [Australian voters reject Clive Palmer’s divisive ads: new poll shows](#).

3. Ibid.

4. Ibid.

5. Ipsos (2025), [Ipsos LGBT+ Pride Report 2025: A 26-country Ipsos global advisor survey](#).

6. Neil Datta (2018), [Restoring the Natural Order: The religious extremists’ vision to mobilize European societies against human rights on sexuality and reproduction](#); Angela Giuffrida & Flora Garamvolgyui (2022), [The network of organisations seeking to influence abortion policy across Europe](#).

7. Ipsos (2021), [Global Views on Abortion in 2021: Favorability towards abortion in 28 countries](#).

8. Jacqueline Ullman, Tania Ferfolja & Lucy Hobby (2021), [Parents’ perspectives on the inclusion of gender and sexual diversity in K-12 schooling: results from an Australian national study](#).

1. Subtly defines women's rights as being only about cisgender women
2. Aims to reframe 'gender critics' as the 'real' victims, rather than the people they vilify

The word 'radical' is used to paint the city (and therefore anyone who agree with this decision) as 'extremist'

Gender critic slams Melbourne as 'most radical' for silencing women's rights

A prominent gender identity critic has called Melbourne one of the most "radical" places in the world when it comes to silencing women's rights and shutting down debate on transgender issues, after her speaking tour was cancelled by the City of Melbourne.

'Gender identity critic' is a phrase that aims to sanitise what is actually being peddled: dangerous lies about the trans community

1. Designed to immediately make you think of 'cancel culture'

2. In reality, just one event was affected, when organisers were told by the City of Melbourne they would have to pay for additional security because of safety concerns. They chose not to proceed, and held the event elsewhere.

Language that tries to frame denying someone's existence and actively blocking them from their rights as a neutral 'debate'

Source: Herald Sun

Underpinning this tactic is the **false idea that rights are somehow a zero-sum game** where one group has to lose if another group exercises the basic freedoms we are all born with. You might have seen this play out in arguments made by some trans-exclusionary women's rights groups trying to block trans women from accessing services and opportunities by framing it as a threat to their '**sex-based rights**'.

Recognising this tactic doesn't mean we can't acknowledge the role biology plays in our lives, or have nuanced conversations about the similarities and differences in the experiences and needs of cisgender and transgender people. It also doesn't exclude the fact that many people are still learning about trans identities, and have genuine questions they want to understand.

But by arguing that the oppression women face is determined solely by sex, these anti-trans groups are actually forcing all of us into restrictive boxes based on our assigned sex at birth. Despite claiming to fight for (cis)women's safety, they're sowing harmful divisions between trans- and cis-gender women while upholding patriarchal systems that are not only making all of us less safe, but are also robbing trans people of the opportunity to thrive simply because of who they are.

3/ LOOK OUT FOR WHO IS PRESENTED AS THE 'VICTIM', WHO IS A 'THREAT' AND WHO IS BLAMED FOR EVERYTHING

The truth of the matter is, anti-rights actors will often choose to target some of the most vulnerable members of our communities to justify and manufacture support for their agenda. They'll play on stereotypes and tap into underlying prejudice to vilify and scapegoat people that already face higher levels of discrimination and lack the structural power to have their voices heard.

But for the purpose of their manufactured moral panics, anti-rights groups instead like to frame traditional society and the 'silent majority' as the victims of **angry feminists**, **'the trans lobby'** or **'leftist woke mob'** looking to silence, marginalise and discriminate against them.

Attempts at leveling the playing field for women become an attack on men. Laws designed to protect LGBTQIA+ students from discrimination and harassment are repackaged as attacks on faith-based education. And any historically marginalised group is reframed as a threat to those who anti-rights groups claim to represent.

Through these constructed threats, anti-rights groups aim to leverage feelings of fear to mobilise people against a common enemy and muddy our sense of who actually needs safeguarding. The very idea of **'protection'** becomes **weaponised to justify oppression** and the need to defend certain rights or individuals becomes, in practice, a way of **maintaining the status quo**.

Founder of a right-wing conservative think-tank (points to Douglas Murray)

tries to flip the script and frame a historically marginalised group as the ones in power (points to 'trans bullies')

The truth? Trans people - especially trans women - experience some of the highest rates of violence and harassment (points to 'trans bullies')

7 in 10 trans people actually report experiencing a spike in abuse after media coverage of this kind (points to 'trans bullies')

Douglas Murray brutally rips into trans bullies for pushing warped ideology

Author Douglas Murray slams parts of the transgender community for attempting to 'terrorise' the community with warped ideology.

Breaking news: people speaking out against harm and asking to be treated with the respect and dignity we all deserve does not, in fact, equate to 'terrorising' someone (points to 'terrorise')

Sneaky way to subtly tell you trans people and their allies are not part of the 'community' and their real concerns are just 'ideology' (points to 'community' and 'ideology')

Source: Sky News Australia

4/ BE MINDFUL OF HOW FAMILY, CULTURE AND TRADITION IS FRAMED

Populist politicians and authoritarian leaders like to present themselves as **defenders of everyday people** to argue that anyone advocating for equality is a danger to **'traditional' society and the family**. Weaponising the idea of an imagined simpler time grounded in traditional family values allows anti-rights groups to rationalise policies that are essentially all about reasserting patriarchal norms, undoing legal protections for previously-ignored groups and attacking people's ability to participate in public life freely.

You might have also seen this idea promoted in online spaces, where ultra-traditional ideas of compliant, domestic womanhood have become romanticised through **tradwife influencers** and men are being called to re-embrace dominant forms of masculinity via the **manosphere**. Against a backdrop of growing dissatisfaction and anxiety about the future, these online spaces become part of covertly selling young people on a return to 'traditional' values as the only answer to their problems. While not always formally connected to the broader anti-rights movement, content of this kind offers a **softer entry-point into conservative thinking** that anti-rights groups can leverage to normalise more extreme agendas.

In other contexts, appeals to culture and tradition are used to **frame feminism and LGBTQIA+ rights as 'Western' or 'foreign'**. Co-opting the language of decolonial struggles, anti-rights actors will frame Majority World⁹ cultures as static and monolithic and argue that human rights should be rejected as foreign impositions. By the same hand, local advocates are villainised as **agents of 'foreign power'** looking to dangerously influence the development of their countries and undermine their culture and tradition from the inside. These attacks ignore the fact that diverse gender identities and sexual orientations have existed across all cultures throughout history, that the gender binary can actually be traced back to colonialism and that human rights, by their nature, are universal.

NOT SURE IF THE CONTENT YOU'VE JUST COME ACROSS IS TRYING TO MANIPULATE YOU? HERE'S SOME KEY QUESTIONS TO KEEP IN MIND:

- Does the piece feel heavy on emotive language but light on facts?
- Who are the sources named? What groups or organisations are they connected to?
- Whose rights are being promoted, or positioned as 'under threat'?
- Who is being blamed for the problem?
- Is the solution aimed at changing systems of power, or targeting specific (often marginalised) people?
- Ultimately, who benefits from me believing this?

9. IWDA chooses to use the term Majority World instead of 'developing world' or 'global south', and Minority World instead of 'developed world' or 'global north'. This is a political choice, as using this language demonstrates that 'global south' populations and cultures make up the global majority. This term challenges the notion that so-called 'developed nations' sit at the top of a global hierarchy of power.

LOOKING TO GET INFORMED AND TAKE ACTION?

IWDA

Attacks from the anti-rights movement are vocal, persistent and well-resourced. But when it comes to real support for their views, the numbers are on our side.

So, what is the most powerful thing we can do to resist them? Come together to **drown out their hate and organise for hope**.

Check out our other factsheets:

- ➔ **WHAT IS THE ANTI-RIGHTS MOVEMENT?**
- ➔ **HOW YOU CAN TAKE ACTION**
- ➔ **ANTI-RIGHTS STRATEGIES AT PLAY**