

Woolworths Pride campaign sparks calls for boycott

In recognition of global Pride Month, Woolworths has launched a campaign to highlight its support of the LGBTQIA+ community and encourage people to "Be an Ally".



Source: Woolworths

The campaign comprises online and in-store elements as well as the sale of a small collection of [Pride merchandise](#) - including t-shirts, a hat and a tote bag. A portion of the proceeds from the sale of the Pride collection will be donated to LGBTQIA+ support organisations.

Woolworths also roped in a few voices from the [LGBTQIA+ community](#) to share their thoughts around allyship and how people can support the cause with awareness and compassion.



Adidas reveals Pride collection and campaign in partnership with Rich Mnisi

15 May 2023



Late last week, Woolworths announced the campaign on its social media platforms in a post that read: "It's International Pride Month! At Woolies, we celebrate the LGBTQIA+ community year-round, and we're continuously working to better serve our LGBTQIA+ people and customers. Here are a few things we've done in this space in the last year:

"We established an internal W.Pride task team to give voice to and address issues faced by the LGBTQIA+ community. We've adapted our working wardrobe policy to recognise everyone's unique preferences to style, cultural or religious needs and gender identity or expression.

"We've created a range of Pride merchandise and are donating funds to LGBTQIA+ support organisations. We know that there's always more to be done, and we'll keep looking for ways to enable, uplift and celebrate the LGBTQIA+ community."

“ It's International Pride Month! 🏳️‍🌈🏳️‍🌈🏳️‍🌈🏳️‍🌈

At Woolies, we celebrate the LGBTQIA+ community year-round, and we're continuously working to better serve our LGBTQIA+ people and customers. pic.twitter.com/8hcf0uOzOj — Woolworths SA (@WOOLWORTHS_SA) [June 1](#).

Social media divided

The campaign has divided social media users, with some celebrating the retailer's support for LGBTQIA+ rights and acceptance, and others calling for a boycott of the company. The latter group has accused Woolworths of being too "woke" and "political", of marginalising religious communities and their beliefs, and supporting the supposed "erosion of families".

Woolworths trended on Twitter throughout the weekend as a result of the backlash, which grew stronger when the retailer began deleting comments and blocking users who tweeted their disapproval of the campaign. The retailer was subsequently criticised for its intolerance of opposing viewpoints.

Woolworths tweeted in response, "A reminder that our community guidelines don't allow for hate speech or discrimination. Our values are firmly in favour of kindness and inclusivity, and we do our best to actively moderate our comment section to reflect that."

It added in a separate tweet: "Every person has the right to dignity regardless of their identity - this is a fact enshrined in our constitution. It is not up for debate."

Despite the backlash, the campaign has also drawn positive sentiment. LGBTQIA+ advocates on social media noted that support for this minority community is particularly important in a country where people are killed over their sexual orientation.

Many consumers praised Woolworths for using its platform to celebrate LGBTQIA+ pride and further the drive for allyship among customers and within the retailer's own workforce.

In a statement shared with *Bizcommunity*, Woolworths said the response to the Pride campaign has been largely positive and it appreciates the support received from South Africans, however it added that the retailer is “deeply saddened” that the campaign has been negatively received by some and it was never the intention to cause division.

It further stated, “At Woolworths, we take seriously our responsibility to build diverse, inclusive and safe environments for all our people and our customers around the world. We are committed to promoting spaces in which everyone is accepted, protected, respected and celebrated, regardless of where they come from, what they look like, who they love, or how or whether they worship. During International Pride Month, our WPride campaign acknowledges the extent to which certain groups in our society are marginalised by celebrating the LGBTQIA+ community.

“The WPride campaign forms part of the Woolworths Inclusive Justice Initiative, a group-wide strategy aimed at realising our bold transformation vision to inspire inclusive growth for all our people and our commitment to ‘leave no one behind’. We believe our organisation plays a crucial role in the lives of our employees (and their families), our suppliers and the communities in which we operate.”

Anti-Pride brigade

Woolworths is not the only big brand that has been caught in the anti-Pride firing line. Abroad, outdoor gear and apparel brand The North Face has [faced criticism](#) for its latest Summer of Pride campaign, which features drag queen [Pattie Gonia](#) as the spokesperson.

Meanwhile, sales of Bud Light beer have plummeted in the US due to [a boycott sparked](#) after the brand hired transgender influencer [Dylan Mulvaney](#) as a spokesperson for a promotion in April. US retailer Target also ended up pulling some LGBTQIA+ merchandise off the shelves ahead of Pride Month after [intense backlash](#) which led to the destruction of in-store displays and threats to the well-being of staff.

View some of the Twitter discourse around the Woolworths Pride campaign below:

“ *Boycott [@WOOLWORTHS_SA](#) . Protect your children. [pic.twitter.com/jotgZVfs8](#)— Giddywids (@Giddywids) [June 2, 2023](#)* ”

“ *I was not sure what to have for lunch until I saw the thread - especially this tweet!*


Thanks [@WOOLWORTHS_SA](#) for reminder that my dignity and humanity are non-negotiable [#PrideMonth](#) 💎💎💎 [https://t.co/oxal3aDvZ7](#) [pic.twitter.com/3M6o6cuy69](#)— Thembaletu Seyisi (@Justice_Seyisi) [June 4, 2023](#) ”

“ *[@WOOLWORTHS_SA](#) why don't you have a private party for the people you are so proud of? Just remember what happened to bud beer and Dischem where unacceptable behaviour was punished by normal people. Now block me as you do to people who do not share your woke ideas. [pic.twitter.com/uicaoX0h89](#)— Gustav Meyer (@gumamey) [June 3, 2023](#)* ”

“ *To the people frothing at [@WOOLWORTHS_SA](#) pride campaign and asking why don't we celebrate straight people, why do they get a whole month, it's only a small % of the population etc; because it's VERY important in a country where people are murdered only because they are LGTBQ [pic.twitter.com/VBCvGNUcSq](#)— Shan Mo (@ShanMoff) [June 3,](#)*

2023 ”

“ Dear [@WOOLWORTHS_SA](#), thank you for your display of [#Pride](#) in your stores. Good to know you are an ally in [#SouthAfrica](#). Let the haters hate, WW just WON my vote all over again! [#Pride2023 pic.twitter.com/mDRo3JQfRu](#)— Ferdie du Toit (@FerdzFenix) [June 2, 2023](#) ”

“ Surely, peoples of all religions should have a problem with [@WOOLWORTHS_SA](#) openly supporting actions that go against the scriptures!!
I for one, as a Muslim don't see myself ever walking into their stores ever again
I'll survive <https://t.co/qaZGk60RMt>— DashcamGP-ZA  (@Dashcampros) [June 3, 2023](#) ”

“ Dear Woolworths,

As a longstanding loyal customer, I value the importance of creating inclusive spaces where every individual is treated with dignity and respect, regardless of their background, appearance, sexual orientation, or beliefs. I believe this is a fundamental right...— S (@SunflowerSrina) [June 4, 2023](#) ”

“ Blocked by Woolworths because I commented on their Twitter page "Go woke, go broke". [#PrideMonth #LGBTQ](#)
That's it then, [#BoycottWoolworths pic.twitter.com/NCCb8Qd5kd](#)— Mari9 (@Mari922221193) [June 2, 2023](#) ”






“ Honestly, the kind of people promising to boycott Woolworths means it'll be an all round more pleasant shopping experience for the rest of us. <https://t.co/gdEILUfVzS>— Melanie van Wyk (@melvanwykct) [June 4, 2023](#) ”

“ It was really funny reading through the tantrums

Being on the right side of history is more important than a few fragile who can't do a month without the Woolworths difference <https://t.co/lSc2e3ZMby>— Complimentary Cripple (@WheelsnToys) [June 2, 2023](#) ”

“ [@WOOLWORTHS_SA](#)

As you are supporting the erosion of families, my family and I are no longer going to support you as we've been doing for more than three decades! [#woolworths #woolworthssa #family #woolworthssouthafrica pic.twitter.com/mGuvuDgg5o](#)— Khalid (@khalidvawda7) [June 1, 2023](#) ”

“ The sheer chest pains this simple pride post has given so many fragile snowflakes fills me with absolute strength
 [@WOOLWORTHS_SA](#)     <https://t.co/MySyT3xOQB>— Nikolaus Bauer (@NikolausBauer) [June 4, 2023](#) ”