



GIRL GUIDES
AUSTRALIA
VICTORIA



Social Inclusion Strategy

October 2013

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Acknowledgements

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Foreword from the Hon Ryan Smith MP, Minister for Youth Affairs

Over 100 years, Girl Guides Victoria has helped thousands of young women develop into confident and responsible members of the community.

This wonderful tradition continues today, and I commend Girl Guides Victoria for recognising the need to explore opportunities to connect with a wide range of young women. This social inclusion strategy outlines a new direction for Girl Guides Victoria and will assist all young women to have the opportunity to be involved in Guides.

The Victorian Coalition Government's Youth Statement, *Involve, Engage, Create* believes in the active role young people can and do play in building a vibrant Victoria. Therefore government is committed to making sure all young people have the same chance to enjoy a healthy and active role in their communities, both now and into the future.

That's why we are pleased to support Girl Guides Victoria through a range of initiatives, including providing additional funding for the development of this strategy, an important first step in creating a more culturally inclusive approach. The Victorian Government is also proud to provide \$4 million over four years to Scouts and Guides to help upgrade facilities across the state.

I feel confident our next generation of Girl Guides will lead the way in creating a stronger and more vibrant Victoria. I congratulate Girl Guides Victoria on their initiative and I look forward to the outcomes of the strategy.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ryan Smith', written over a faint, illegible printed name.

The Hon Ryan Smith MP
Minister for Youth Affairs

Introduction from Girl Guides Victoria



Robinette Emonson
State Commissioner



Wendy Lewis
Chief Executive Officer

The development of our Social Inclusion Strategy – *You, me, us: Building inclusive communities* - is a direct result of the Victorian Government’s generous support of Guiding.

Girl Guides Victoria was founded over 100 years ago on the promise of respect, responsibility, and a commitment to making a positive contribution to the community and to Australia as a whole. Since this promise was first articulated, Australia has changed immeasurably, developing into a vibrant and diverse nation.

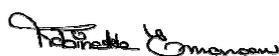
The core principles of Guiding, however, remain the same; we are an organisation that values all girls and believes that every girl should have the opportunity to develop their self-confidence and learn new skills that prepare them for a productive and successful life and career.

It was therefore appropriate that in 2011, our centenary year, we began development on our Social Inclusion Strategy; the vital link between our proud history and our ambitious future. As part of this we have consulted with social and cultural groups and organisations across Victoria to better understand how we can engage and support girls from diverse backgrounds, and learn how we can make sure our activities are relevant, appropriate and exciting for all.

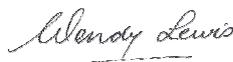
In the coming months and years we will be putting the learnings and recommendations of this work into practice, ensuring we are able to make each and every Unit a place where all girls are welcome and can come together to share in the opportunities that have brought joy, friendship and advancement to countless girls for more than a century.

Girl Guides Victoria is extremely grateful to the Victorian Government for funding this work and we wish to acknowledge the Minister for Youth Affairs, The Hon Ryan Smith for his encouragement and support.

We are delighted to present this strategy as the first step on our journey.



Robinette Emonson
State Commissioner



Wendy Lewis
Chief Executive Officer

Executive summary

Girl Guides Victoria (GGV) has a rich and proud history spanning more than 100 years. Throughout its history, the movement has welcomed members from a wide range of backgrounds. However, as the organisation enters its second century, it recognises the need to do more to encourage and embrace participation from a wider cross-section of the Victorian community.

This report outlines an inclusion strategy for GGV which aims to significantly boost participation levels of young people from a diverse range of backgrounds in Girl Guides and to increase opportunities to build broader community relationships. Funding provided by the Victorian Government has enabled the development of this strategy and the actions that will underpin its delivery.

The strategy's development follows a program that included:

- research
- consultation with a number of delivery experts and potential partners in the field of culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) community engagement and inclusion
- formal focus group research with representatives from six CALD communities in metropolitan and regional areas
- an assessment of current CALD participation rates within GGV
- a series of workshops with current GGV leaders to further develop the strategy.

This strategy is built around two pillars:

- 1. Supporting women and girls from diverse cultural backgrounds in Australia to become involved in Girl Guides**
- 2. Educating the membership of GGV to ensure the organisation embraces the aspirations of an inclusive movement**

Implementation of the strategy will entail a journey that will take some time, but will have enormous benefits for GGV and girls from a diverse range of cultural backgrounds who join GGV in the future.

Why does GGV need this?

The key principle of inclusion for GGV is to take the progress and achievements of the organisation's first 100 years and ensure the opportunities and benefits of Girl Guides are shared with a new generation of girls from a wide variety of backgrounds.

As Australian society grows, GGV must embrace the nation's rich cultural makeup and enhance access to the broader Girl Guides community for girls from all cultural backgrounds.

Embracing a more diverse membership base will also produce significant benefits for GGV in ensuring relevance of the organisation and its activities to new generations of girls, assisting in future sustainability and growth.

Purpose of document

This document outlines the vision, objectives and actions that will enable GGV to create an environment that attracts and retains members from diverse cultural backgrounds.

The strategy is based on research undertaken or commissioned by GGV, including desktop research, focus groups with CALD community groups, meetings with other non-government organisations currently operating in the sector and a range of GGV leaders from regional and metropolitan areas.

Social inclusion policy statement

Girl Guides Victoria embraces social inclusion by providing an environment where all members feel valued and their differences are respected.

Social inclusion is promoted by embracing all members – girls, leaders and volunteers – within the organisation. This includes being sensitive to, and aware of, the needs of all girls and women regardless of their circumstances and background, and creating opportunities that enable participation in Girl Guides within local communities.

The adoption of this policy statement is our commitment to building a Girl Guides movement in Victoria that is socially inclusive and that provides opportunities for all girls and young women to participate, gain skills and confidence beneficial to their personal development. In this way, we will contribute to making the world a brighter, cleaner and better place for all.

Social inclusion: what does it mean?

An inclusive organisation is one in which all members feel valued and their differences are respected.

For GGV to be a truly inclusive organisation, it is crucial to create an environment where girls and leaders from different cultural, linguistic and socioeconomic backgrounds, faiths and stages of settlement in Australia, and all levels of physical and mental ability, are able to participate, experience and benefit from GGV.

The first phase of the strategy will focus on the social inclusion of girls from CALD communities and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

Key principles of social inclusion in GGV

- Diversity embraces all people in the organisation
- Inclusion is fundamental to the egalitarian culture of GGV
- Positive relationships are the cornerstone of inclusive practice
- Inclusion is fundamental to the recruitment and retention of girls, volunteers and leaders
- GGV is for all Victorian girls

Research and findings

Focus Groups

A series of focus group meetings were held with representatives from a number of cultural groups in metropolitan and regional Victoria.

The aim was to assess the current levels of awareness of GGV and to identify ways to improve GGV's engagement with different cultural communities across Victoria.

Meetings were set up with representatives from:

- the Vietnamese community in Richmond
- the Punjabi community in Blackburn
- the Somali community in Point Cook
- the Chinese community in Mount Waverley
- the Iraqi community in Shepparton
- the Croatian community in Footscray.

Each consultation was conducted with six members of each community, who had children aged 6–12 years.

Consultation Findings

- Participants from the community groups had different levels of awareness of GGV. The Croatian group had all heard of GGV, and the Chinese and Punjabi groups had moderate awareness. Participants from the Somali, Vietnamese and Iraqi groups had less awareness of GGV.
- More than half of the participants expressed concern about their daughters participating in an organisation whose members they did not know.
- Other than participants from the Somali group, participants had daughters who already participated in out of school activities and could therefore have difficulty fitting in other commitments on weekends or after school hours.
- Discussion with the participants from the newly settled Iraqi community highlighted cultural differences that GGV would need to consider and address to enable girls from the community to participate in Guiding.

The following opportunities were identified:

- **Overall high interest** – the majority of participants expressed support for GGV as an all-girl organisation, based on its volunteering model and were interested in receiving more information about the organisation. There was strong support in particular for their daughters to learn skills such as personal development and leadership and for participation in camps.

There was also high support for encouraging other parents to enrol should their own daughters join. Several of the groups also said that participation would assist their daughter to participate more broadly in the community.

- **Volunteering** – a high number of participants stated that they either currently or have in the past volunteered with another organisation and many indicated that they would be interested in volunteering in GGV should their daughters join.
- **Cost** – generally speaking, cost was not seen as a significant barrier to participation for the communities. Participants from the Chinese, Croatian and Punjabi community groups said that the cost was not an issue. Most participants from the Arabic, Vietnamese and Somali were comfortable with the cost. However representatives from all groups felt financial assistance would be helpful for some members of their community.

Representatives from the community groups recommended that:

- information about GGV in brochures and the website should be in different community languages;
- key messages about GGV should demonstrate that GGV is a trustworthy, all-girl organisation;
- ambassadors from different cultural backgrounds should be identified from current and past Girl Guides, volunteers and other women to communicate with and build relationships with different cultural communities;
- a tailored multicultural media plan should be developed for print and radio outlets that reach different cultural communities;
- tailored mail-outs to community organisations and language schools would be effective at reaching different communities;
- GGV should invite greater use of its facilities by different community groups when not being used for GGV activities.

Existing engagement with CALD communities by Girl Guides

GGV already has some experience in encouraging greater social inclusion.

For example a number of GGV centres have engaged girls from a range of cultural backgrounds. Some single-community centres have been created, such as the GGV unit at King Khalid Islamic College in Coburg. Other GGV Units cater for specific cultural groups, including a predominantly Jewish Unit in Caulfield and a Coptic Unit in Hallam.

There have also been a range of social inclusion pilot programs undertaken by Girl Guides in other parts of Australia, and other Girl Guides State Organisations were consulted about their experiences in social inclusion.

It appears that some aspects of Girl Guides pedagogy have been restrictive, culturally insensitive or irrelevant. Formal programs and pilots have fallen away when funding is cut or key internal drivers (such as dedicated staff) leave the organisation and attendance by leaders at culturally specific workshops had been hard to achieve.

In developing and implementing this strategy, GGV recognises the organisational challenges to be addressed.

Vision

To have the membership of Girl Guides Victoria reflect the rich diversity of the Victorian community and provide an environment for understanding and respect, building on the 100-year tradition of helping to develop a cleaner, brighter, better world through mentoring, empowering, encouraging and challenging each and every girl.

Objectives

- To facilitate stronger relationships with a diverse range of community groups across Victoria.
- To demonstrate the willingness of GGV to embrace the rich cultural diversity of modern Australia.
- To demonstrate the benefits of GGV programs to a wide range of girls.
- To provide opportunities for a diverse range of communities to gain greater awareness of GGV and participate in regular activities.
- To foster a better understanding among young girls and leaders of the different cultures in Victoria.
- To establish and develop networks with a wide range of complementary organisations to create mutual opportunities to enhance the lives of girls from newly arrived communities.
- To add to the continuing growth of GGV through increased participation across the state.
- To allow for better use of GGV infrastructure by increasing access to new communities.

Actions

1. Messaging

GGV will develop a communications plan and messaging about the strategy and its rollout to the membership and broader community, demonstrating that GGV is inclusive of girls from all cultural backgrounds.

2. Pilot Programs

GGV will introduce pilot programs to areas to encourage more girls from a diverse range of multicultural groups to participate in Guiding.

3. Reassessment of delivery centres

GGV will adopt a more flexible approach to introducing Girl Guides in new communities and explore other places to deliver the GG experience as traditional Guide Halls may not be the most appropriate locations in some cases.

4. Financial assistance

Where cost is a barrier for some groups, GGV recommends a budget be set aside for the purpose of subsidising costs of participation in certain cases. This should be assessed case by case to encourage initial commitment and reduce the burden of establishment costs (such as uniforms). The long-term aim is that subsidies should not be required.

5. Shared Responsibility

While GGV Head Office will be responsible for leading the strategy, responsibility must be embraced at the local level to develop partnerships and retain new members.

6. Diversity Awards

GGV will initiate a program recognising and rewarding Units that demonstrate a keen interest in learning about different cultures and engaging with their local community. The Diversity Awards will operate on three levels of attainment (bronze to gold) and offer credit specifically for progress in the area of inclusion. It is anticipated that the awards will produce a number of examples of Units that can be profiled to show the progress GGV is making in this area.

7. Use of Springvale South Guide Hall to engage cultural groups

Springvale South Guide Hall will create the opportunity to run a pilot project to attract girls from the diverse range of communities living in the area. Springvale will be positioned as the centre for diversity and act as a training facility, or a location for meetings and community forums.

8. Sharing knowledge and experiences between GGV centres in different areas

If one centre in particular is achieving significant results in engaging new communities, it is important to find out why its approach has worked and to share the knowledge across the network. GGV will identify or create mechanisms that enable efficient sharing of knowledge and experience, including GGV's new online hub.

9. Phased approach

GGV will work with Units to become culturally aware, culturally friendly and culturally engaged.

To become culturally aware – GGV will assist Units to understand the strategy and its objectives, through internal communication and cultural awareness training.

To become culturally friendly – GGV will assist Units to identify and make links with local community groups and address local cultural diversity issues.

To become culturally engaged – GGV will encourage Units to have ongoing relationships and undertake activities with different cultural groups and to celebrate cultural diversity through events such as Harmony Day and other culturally specific celebrations.

10. Social Inclusion Networking Group

GGV will investigate creating a Social Inclusion Networking Group to give advice and direction on the development of a social inclusion program and to share experiences and learnings from engaging with diverse communities. The composition of the group will comprise representatives from multicultural organisations, youth based organisations and the Community and Economic Participation Branch in the Department of Human services, as well as active representatives from within the Girl Guides movement.

Conclusion

For more than 100 years, the Girl Guides movement in Victoria has endeavoured to embrace all girls, instilling a strong sense of community and a commitment to social justice. For each girl, Guiding is a journey towards greater confidence, self-respect and responsible community member.

Moving into its second century, Girl Guides Victoria is committed to continuing this tradition by ensuring that the opportunities inherent in membership are afforded to all, without any girls feeling excluded or restricted.

Girl Guides Victoria places utmost importance on ensuring that all Units are sensitive to, and aware of, the needs of all girls and women regardless of their circumstances and background, and are able to engage in and fully embrace the community around them.

To that end, this strategy is intended to create the framework for Girl Guides Victoria to make the progression towards being a more consistent, culturally engaged organisation, setting a strong foundation on which to build the future of Guiding in Victoria.

Glossary of terms

For the purpose of this strategy, the terms below are defined as follows:

CALD

We have adopted a wide definition of culturally, religiously and linguistically diverse groups, referring to:

the range of different cultures and language groups represented in the population. In this strategy, the term is used interchangeably with 'multicultural'. In popular usage, culturally and linguistically diverse communities are those whose members identify as having non-mainstream cultural or linguistic affiliations by virtue of their place of birth, ancestry or ethnic origin, religion, preferred language or language spoken at home.¹

Culture

Culture consists of shared language, ideas, rules and meanings. These enable individuals within a community to communicate, live, work, anticipate and interpret each other's intent and behaviour. Culture is not synonymous with ethnicity. Other important influences on the culture of a person or group include gender, class, education, place of birth, and religion.

Diversity

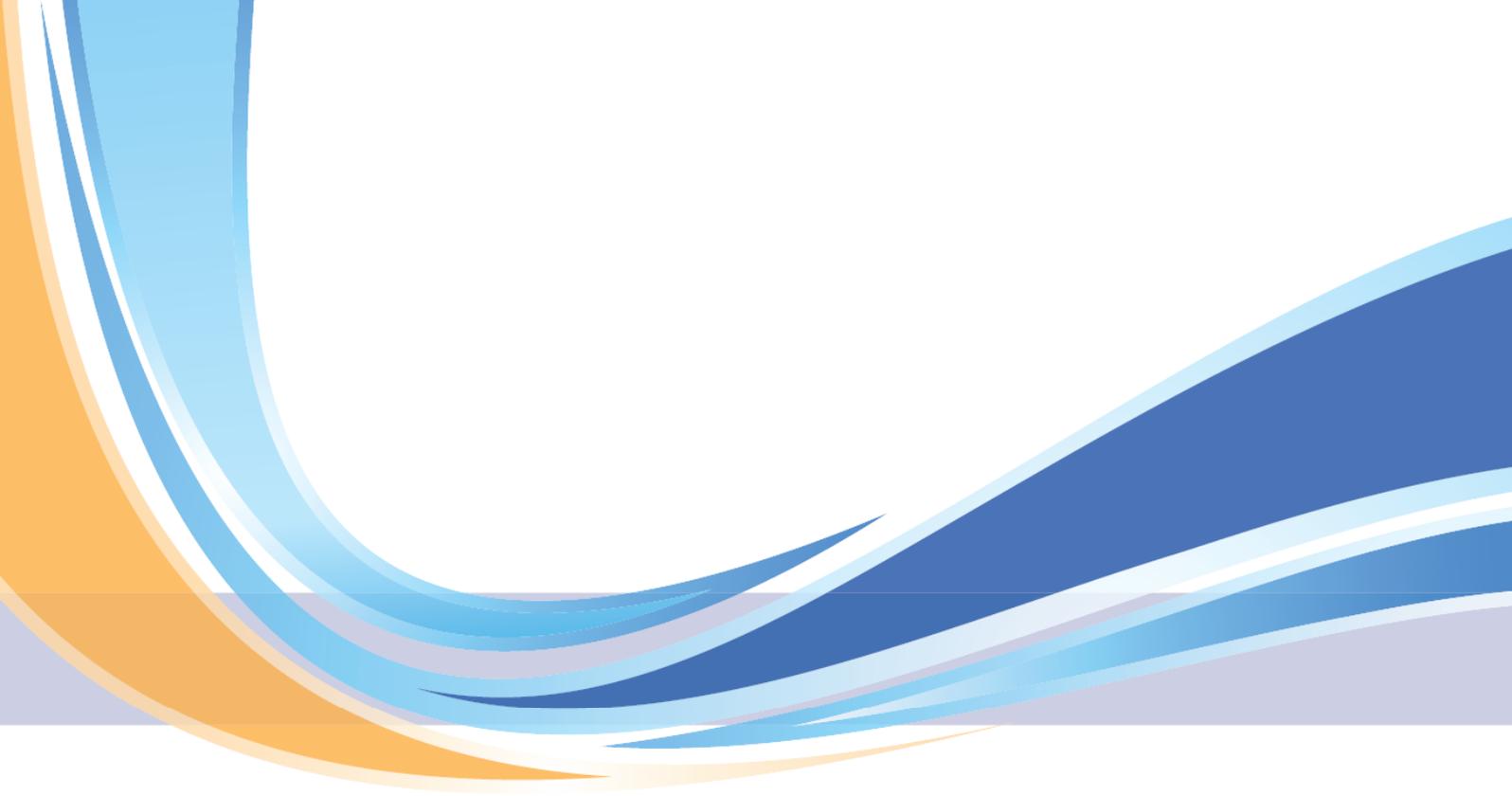
Where an organisation comprises members with differences in age, gender, race, marital status, physical capability, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, educational background, personality styles, and interests, learning styles and working styles. That is, an organisation that reflects society.

Inclusion

An inclusive organisation is one where all members feel valued and their differences are respected.² For GGV to be a truly inclusive organisation, it is crucial to create a normalised situation where girls from different cultures and linguistic backgrounds, faiths and stages of settlement in Australia can jointly participate, experience and benefit from Girl Guides in Australia.

¹ Victorian Department of Human Services, 2006

² <http://www.health.vic.gov.au/agedcare/maintaining/countusin/inclusion.htm#definition>



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