

Guidance to Support Diversity and Inclusion in Guiding

1. About this document

This document is provided as a supplementary document to the Girl Guides Australia (GGA) Diversity and Inclusion Policy and GGA Diversity and Inclusion Procedures to support the implementation of inclusive practice. It does not provide exhaustive supporting materials and is not a statement of mandatory requirements.

Background

GGA and its member SGGOs aim to be inclusive organisations that serve and make a positive contribution to a diverse Australian community.

The GGA Diversity and Inclusion Policy states:

“As a group of organisations with a mission to empower girls and young women to grow into confident, self-respecting, responsible community members, Girl Guiding in Australia acknowledges we have a duty of care and will take all reasonable steps to prevent harm and manage risks and to providing a respectful, open and safe environment where:

- *All people are treated equitably and with mutual respect regardless of their background, ethnicity, culture, language, beliefs, gender identity, sexual orientation, age, socio-economic status, level of ability, additional needs, family structure or lifestyle*
- *Inclusive practices actively support diversity and counteract bias and prejudice.”*

In accordance with the GGA Diversity and Inclusion Policy, GGA expects all Volunteers, Members and Employees to be proactive in supporting diversity and removing barriers to inclusion.

In seeking to achieve this, GGA encourages Volunteers, Members and Employees to draw on the *Diversity Council of Australia*¹'s five mindsets to support inclusion and diversity.

Volunteers, Members and Employees who support inclusion and diversity are:

Identity aware. They believe diversity can significantly improve the performance and relevance of the organisation, and so learn about their own and others' identities.

Relational. They create teams and networks in which a diversity of people feel they belong, and are valued and respected.

Open and curious. They are curious about, and open to, learning new and different perspectives from a diversity of people.

Flexible and agile. They are flexible about, and responsive to, a diverse range of people and perspectives.

Growth-focused. They challenge accepted practices and incorporate different perspectives into how Guiding 'business' is done.

¹ Adapted from Diversity Council of Australia, *Building Inclusion - An Evidence-Based Model of Inclusive Leadership*, <https://www.dca.org.au/dca-research/building-inclusion---an-evidence-based-model-of-inclusive-leadership.html>

2. Including people with disabilities

- Over 4 million people in Australia have some form of disability. That's 1 in 5 people.
- 18.6% of females in Australia have a disability.
- 7% of Australian children have a disability.
- 20.5% of young people with disability (aged 15 to 24 years) report having experienced discrimination or unfair treatment because of their disability.

- Australian Bureau of Statistics 2015 Survey of Disability, Ageing and Carers

GGA recognises that all people have various levels of abilities. GGA and SGOs are committed to providing support for employees, and for girls and women to participate in Guiding activities, to the best of their ability in a way that is safe for them, other Members, Employees and Supporters. While prioritising the duty of care GGA and SGOs have for Members, Employees and Supporters, every reasonable effort should be made to ensure wherever possible, that those with disabilities are able to participate and benefit from Guiding activities.

Types of disability

A disability may be defined as any physical, sensory, neurological, intellectual, cognitive, neurological or psychiatric condition that can impact on a person's lifestyle and/or everyday function.

People with a disability have abilities, interests and challenges; some individuals also have a disability. Abilities and disabilities may be visible or invisible. Focus on the whole person, and do not define a person by a disability.

Communication

The use of appropriate language is an important way of exercising respect for any person that you are speaking about or to. Posture, approach, tone of voice, body language and facial expression also contribute to your message. Be aware of your own approach in communicating with others. Show respect, kindness, acceptance and inclusion.

Disability is not an illness. It is *part of* a person's identity but *not their whole* identity.

Language should reflect this by ensuring that you use respectful, person-first language:

- Address a person by their name
- Refer to a person's disability only when it is relevant and ask the person for their advice on how to describe them
- Describe the person, not the disability
- Refer to "person/s with a disability" (or specifically to the disability name if commonly used) and not "disabled person/s"
- Do not describe a person as "suffering", "victim of" or "afflicted with" a disability
- Maintain confidentiality and only share information about a person's disability with others with the person's consent and on a need-to-know basis.

Take care not to make assumptions about the needs, choices or abilities of a person with a disability or act towards them in a way that is disempowering. Ask the person or the person's parent/guardian/carer what level of support they need and how they are able to participate. If you believe it is necessary to limit an individual's participation in programs or activities to

ensure her health or safety, or the health or safety of others, explain this fully and respectfully.

Support personnel and assistive technology

Some people with disabilities may access support personnel or assistive technology devices to enable them to participate in activities.

A support person provides service or assistance with communication, mobility, personal care, medical needs and/or access to services. A support person can be a paid worker, volunteer, family member or friend, and does not necessarily require any special training or qualification to be a support person.

Assistive technology devices enable people to move, communicate, read or lift. When dealing with a person using assistive technology:

- Focus on the person and not the device
- Be open and willing to learn and work with assistive technology devices
- Be guided by the person who uses the device:
 - Ask the person using the device (or their parent/guardian) if they need assistance or support to use the device
 - Ask the person using the device to teach you how to best communicate with them.
- Always ask for permission to touch or handle the device
- Ensure the person and their assistive technology device have the appropriate amount of space.

Neither GGA nor SGGOs are responsible for providing support personnel or assistive technology devices but should work with Members and non-members to make suitable arrangements if this is required.

Get support

If you have concerns, or feel you lack the resources to support a person with a disability, seek out the support through the appropriate SGGO reporting structure or contact GGA for assistance.

Common questions and concerns

Q: How do I answer questions from parents or girls about a person's disability or needs?

A: As stated under *Disclosure and rights to privacy*, it is important that you do not disclose or discuss personal information about members in your unit with others. Be aware that parents may be seeking this information with good intentions, wishing to provide assistance. Encourage them to engage with the person directly, to ask if they require any assistance.

Q: How should I respond if the parent of a girl in my unit expresses concern that the inclusion of a girl with a disability is limiting opportunities for their daughter to participate in a broad range of activities?

A: This kind of comment may indicate a reluctance to accept and include people with disabilities and in that case is a form of discrimination. Advise the parent that Girl Guiding is an inclusive, non-discriminatory organisation that seeks to empower girls and young women.

Check your own thinking and practice and that you balance the expectations and abilities of all girls in your unit. Have you limited the activities of the unit based on assumptions you have made about ability? Limited resources? Informed planning and innovative thinking can help to provide diverse activities. Consider how you can adjust the requirements of activities to allow all girls to participate to the level of their ability. Involve the girls in your unit in the process of choosing activities and ask them to be inventive and think about inclusivity.

Q: A person with a disability wishes to join our Guide unit. We are a small team and I do not feel we have the resources to support her. How do I manage this?

A: Every reasonable effort should be made by volunteers and employees to ensure that, wherever possible, people with disabilities are able to participate and benefit from Guiding activities. Start by being open. Check your biases and be aware of ways that your thinking may be limiting. Ask the person and/or their parent/guardian/carer kind of support they need and how they are able to participate. Share your concerns and identify what you need so that you can support participation. The person's family/parent carer may provide or source support' or may have some ideas of how to source support if needed. If you are still uncertain seek advice from your region manager or SGGO.

Q: I am concerned that our facilities are not accessible for people with disabilities. What should I do?

A: Contact your SGGO to raise your specific concerns. You may also wish to consider fundraising or seeking a grant to upgrade the facilities. This also should be discussed with your SGGO.

Q: Where can I get assistance/training to help me understand how to include people with disabilities?

A: Contact your SGGO to find out what training or resources are offered in your State. Commonwealth, State and Local governments and community organisations also provide publications, training services and advice.

3. Including cultural and linguistic diversity

In 2011 26% of Australia's population was born overseas and a further 20% had at least one overseas-born parent. The estimated resident Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population of Australia was 3% of the total Australian population.

- Australian Bureau of Statistics 2011 Australian Census of Population and Housing

The Australian community is a dynamic, multicultural community enriched by people with a diversity of cultural, ethnic, linguistic and religious backgrounds. GGA's mission is to empower girls and young women to grow into confident, self-respecting responsible community members. GGA is best able to meet its mission when it provides programs and opportunities for girls and young women from diverse backgrounds.

GGA has adopted the definition of culturally, religiously and linguistically diverse groups used by Girl Guides Victoria in their 2013 Social Inclusion Strategy²:

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.

Cultural groups are also diverse, as each person in the group is unique and their identity can be shaped by many different factors. In Australia people often identify with multiple heritages, languages, beliefs and ethnicities, shaped by their families of origin or other factors.

Supporting cultural diversity requires awareness of our own views and a willingness to examine ourselves for signs of unconscious bias and prejudice and challenge our unconscious discriminatory attitudes. It requires that we have a positive attitude towards cultural differences and are curious and open rather than judging in our approach to others.

Cultural competence is the ability to understand, communicate with and effectively interact with people across diverse cultural environments. It encompasses:

- Being aware of one's own world view
- Developing positive attitudes towards cultural difference
- Gaining knowledge of different cultural practices and world views
- Developing skills to assist with communication and interaction across cultures³.

Get support

If you have concerns, or feel you lack the resources to support a person from a culturally and linguistically diverse background, seek out the support of a region manager or contact your SGGO or GGA for assistance.

² Girl Guides Victoria, *You, Me and Us, Building Inclusive Communities*, 2013

³ Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority (ACECQA), *What does it mean to be culturally competent?* 2014

4. Inclusive practice supporting mental and physical health

GGA recognises that the abilities of girls and women to participate in Guiding activities and employment may be affected by their physical and mental health. GGA also recognises that participation and employment provide positive health benefits and therefore, is proactive in its support of those Volunteers, Members and Employees managing health conditions.

There is a range of physical and/or mental health conditions that may impact on a person's ability to participate in activities.

Note: HIV, hepatitis and other infectious diseases are treated separately under the *GGA HIV AIDS and Other Infectious Diseases Policy*

No condition whether ongoing or temporary should be assumed to be a reason for limiting a person's participation or employment in Guiding. While prioritising the duty of care GGA and SGGOs have for Members, Employees and Supporters, every reasonable effort and/or adjustment should be made to ensure that people are supported to participate to the best of their ability in a way that is safe for them, other Members, Employees and Supporters.

Communication

Chronic illness may be visible or invisible, and may or may not be considered as a disability by the person with the condition. Take care not to make assumptions about the health needs of an individual and their ability to participate. Ask the person or the person's parent/guardian/carer what level of support they need and how they are able to participate. If you believe it is necessary to limit an individual's participation in programs or activities to ensure her health or safety, or the health or safety of others, explain this fully and respectfully.

In line with all other inclusive practice, a person and – not their health condition -should be your focus and your language and behaviour should reflect this. It is important to:

- Focus on the person, not the health condition
- Maintain confidentiality and do not share information about a person's health with others except with the person's consent and on a need to know basis only
- Refer to a person's health needs only if it is relevant.

Support personnel

Under some circumstances a support person may be required to assist a person to manage their health and medical needs. A support person can be a paid worker, volunteer, family member or friend, and does not necessarily require any special training or qualification to be a support person.

Neither GGA nor SGGOs are responsible for providing support personnel but should work with Members and non-members to make suitable arrangements (also refer to section 2).

Get support

If you have concerns, or feel you lack the resources to support a person with mental or physical health needs seek out the support of a Region Manager or contact your SGGO or GGA for assistance.

5. Inclusion and gender diversity

Membership of GGA and SGGOs is limited to girls and women and non-female gender is a lawfully permitted basis for denying membership. However GGA welcomes people of all gender identities to take up supporter roles in accordance with relevant GGA and SGGO policies and procedures. Furthermore, GGA recognises that a commitment to diversity and inclusion, and to supporting and empowering girls and women, necessarily includes support for the inclusion of transgender girls and women.

Disclosure and rights to privacy

An individual is to be considered the final authority on their own gender identity. The only way to know if a person is a transgender person is if the person discloses this to you. Members have a right to privacy and any information about any woman or girl should be treated as confidential.

It is not appropriate to judge who is and who is not a girl, nor is it appropriate to approach a person to ask if they are transitioning. Adult members are often in a position of trust and on this basis a Member or supporter may disclose their circumstances. In this case it is appropriate to listen to the person who says they are transitioning, and show respect, kindness, acceptance and inclusion. You may also wish to refer the person to a support organisation. For a list of support organisations, please refer to the section on *Common questions and concerns*.

Unless otherwise directed by the woman or girl, information about a person's status as a transgender person should be treated as confidential. Information should be only disclosed by the woman or girl or with their explicit permission. Some girls and women may want to share information about being transgender with their unit, and they should be supported to do so in a positive and affirming manner.

Communication

The use of appropriate language is an important way of exercising respect for any person that you are speaking about or to. Posture, approach, tone of voice, body language and facial expression also contribute to your message. Be aware of your own approach in communicating with Members and non-members when dealing with transgender issues. Speak with respect, kindness, acceptance and inclusion.

Gender is only one aspect of a person's identity and it is important not to use gender or any other aspect of identity to label a person. Definitions are provided below to assist Members and non-members to understand commonly used terminology relating to gender diversity⁴:

- **Cisgender:** a person whose gender identity aligns with their biological sex (e.g. a person who is biologically female and identifies as a woman)
- **Gender dysphoria:** a psychological term used to describe the incongruence between a transgender person's physical sex and gender identity
- **Gender expression:** how a person expresses gender, such as what clothes they wear, their hairstyle, activities they participate in, etc
- **Gender identity:** a person's sense of their gender as being female, male, or neither. Gender identity may or may not align with the person's biological sex

⁴ Sourced and adapted from Girl Guides of Canada–Guides du Canada, *Guidelines for the Inclusion of Transgender members*

- **Gender nonconforming:** a person whose expression of gender differs from stereotypical expectations of their gender (e.g. a female dressing in “male” clothes). How this is understood differs in different cultures
- **Intersex:** a person who has any of several variations in sex characteristics including chromosomes, gonads, sex hormones, or genitals that, according to the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, "do not fit the typical definitions for male or female bodies". Intersex people were previously referred to as hermaphrodites but this term is no longer considered accurate or appropriate
- **Neutral/ non-binary/gender fluid:** used by individuals wishing to identify as outside of the gender binary without specifying their gender. The most common pronouns used for neutral/non-binary/gender fluid persons are them and they
- **Sex reassignment therapy:** consists of hormone replacement therapy and other procedures to modify appearance; and may or may not include sex reassignment surgery to alter a person's physical appearance and sexual function to resemble that of their identified gender
- **Sexual orientation:** a description of how a person experiences sexual and romantic attraction. Sexual orientations can include asexual (not experiencing sexual attraction), heterosexual (experiencing attraction to another sex), lesbian and gay (experiencing attraction to the same sex), bisexual (experiencing attraction to more than one sex) and more. It's important to remember that all people have both a sexual orientation and a gender identity. Knowing a person's transgender status does not give you any information on their sexual orientation
- **Transgender:** an adjective describing a person whose gender identity is different from their biological sex assigned at birth (e.g. someone who is born biologically male and identifies as a female is a transgender woman)
- **Transition:** the process where a person goes from living and identifying as one gender to living and identifying as another.

Get support

If you have concerns, or feel you lack the resources to support a transgender woman or girl seek out the support of a region manager or contact your SGGO or GGA for assistance.

Common questions and concerns⁵

Q: [How do I ensure there are appropriate bathroom, change room and sleeping arrangements for a Youth Member in my unit who is a transgender girl?](#)

A: Any child in your unit, including those who are transgender girls, may use the bathroom/change room that corresponds to their gender identity provided that they feel comfortable to do so. If a Youth Member is uncomfortable using a shared change room, provide a non-stigmatizing alternative if possible or by having a policy of girls accessing the bathroom one at a time.

As a Youth Member of your unit, the girl will participate in the same activities as all other Youth Members of your unit. This includes sleeping in the same area as the other Youth Members of your unit.

⁵ Sourced and adapted from Girl Guides of Canada–Guides du Canada, *Guidelines for the Inclusion of Transgender members*

Q: How do I answer questions from other parents or adults about a transgender Member?

A: As stated under *Disclosure and rights to privacy*, it is important that you do not disclose or discuss personal information about Members in your unit with others.

Q: How should I handle specific questions about a transgender girl's body?

A: As above, information about any girl should be treated as confidential. Remind the person asking questions that bodies are generally considered private, and that it is inappropriate to ask about a person's genitals or hormones. It is completely appropriate to let the asker know that many people consider such questions intrusive and offensive. Repeated questions about a person's body should be considered as harassment, should be addressed under the terms of the Code of Conduct.

Q: How should I respond if the parent of a girl in my unit expresses concern about their daughter's physical safety and does not want their daughter using the bathroom with a transgender girl?

A: This is often raised in conversations about denying transgender people access to bathrooms and is recognised as a form of discrimination. Advise the parent that you expect all girls to behave in respectful and appropriate ways, that everyone's safety is important to you, that having a transgender Member poses no risk to their daughter, and that you will address any concerns about behaviour should they arise.

Q: If a Member in my unit discloses that they are a transgender girl how can I be supportive?

A: If you are in a position where a Member in your unit discloses that they are a transgender female and asks you for help or support, show them respect, kindness and acceptance. Find out what assistance they are seeking and provide whatever practical support you can to enable them to participate fully in the unit. It is important to recognise the limitations of your capacity and expertise. Depending on the type of support they are seeking you may wish to refer them to one of the following:

Kids Helpline <https://kidshelpline.com.au/>

Reach Out <http://au.reachout.com/>

The Gender Centre <https://gendercentre.org.au/>

Transcend <http://www.transcendsupport.com.au/>

Q: What do I do if someone says something derogatory about the transgender Member in my unit?

A: It is important to ensure that all Members and non-members feel safe and are not discriminated against. As part of an inclusive organisation it is important to educate others about why it is not acceptable to make derogatory comments about or discriminate against others. Remind Members of the Guide Promise and Law and what their commitment to respecting others means.

Q: What do I do if I suspect that a transgender Member in my unit is being abused?

A: GGA requires all Employees and Volunteers to report any child protection concerns, i.e. any instance where they have reasonable grounds to believe that a child may have suffered, or be at risk of suffering abuse or neglect as defined in the GGA Child Protection Policy. Please refer to the policy or contact your SGGGO for further information.

Q: How can I support a transitioning male member leaving Guiding?

A: If a Member discloses that they are thinking about transitioning to a male, you can refer them to the resources listed above for support. It is important that transitioning Members reach out to an expert in gender issues.

As an all-female organisation, GGA and SGGOs are no longer the right place for Members who have transitioned to male. It is important to note, however, that transition is not a single moment and to treat transitioning/exiting Members with sensitivity and respect. When the transitioning Member has acknowledged that they now identify as male, in most cases the individual will elect to exit the organisation on his own. In the very unlikely event that an individual expresses a wish to remain in Guiding, he must be advised that he is no longer eligible for membership. A transitioned male may have a role as a support person or parent helper on specific occasions, in accordance with the Supervision Ratios Policy.

Q: What should I do if a Member wishes to identify as non-binary/neutral/gender fluid?

A: There is a wide spectrum of ways that people who identify as non-binary/neutral/gender fluid live and therefore this issue may at first appear complex. GGA and SGGOs are all-female organisations, i.e. they are explicitly female organisations, not 'non-male' organisations. As such GGA and SGGOs are not the right places for members who identify as other than female. To support a person who is transitioning in this way you may want to refer them to the resources listed above for support.

Non-binary/neutral/gender fluid persons may have a role as a support person, parent helper, or activity leader on specific occasions, in accordance with the Supervision Ratios Policy.

Important: Disclosure and rights to privacy

GGA and SGGOs respect the privacy of all individuals and are committed to protecting the privacy of all Members, Volunteers and Employees. While supporting diversity and inclusion is a shared responsibility, it does not authorise the sharing of personal information.

Protecting privacy means that personal information about Members in your unit may not be provided to, or discussed, with others. Information should be only disclosed by the person or the person's parent/guardian/carer or with their explicit permission.

Acknowledgements

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Further resources

Information and grant funding to support inclusion in the Australian community is available from Commonwealth, State and Local government agencies, and community based organisations.

Australian Human Rights Commission Publications
<https://www.humanrights.gov.au/publications-home/all>

Australian Network on Disability
<http://www.and.org.au/>

Community Grants Hub
www.communitygrants.gov.au

Department of Social Services Grants Program
<https://www.dss.gov.au/grants/grant-programs>

Department of Social Services Strengthening Communities Grants Program
<https://www.dss.gov.au/grants/grant-programmes/strengthening-communities>

Diversity Council of Australia
<https://www.dca.org.au/>

Vision Australia
<http://www.visionaustralia.org/>

Deaf Society of NSW
<https://deafsocietynsw.org.au/>

VicDeaf
<http://www.vicdeaf.com.au/>

The Royal South Australian Deaf Society
<http://www.deafcando.com.au/>

Definitions and Abbreviations

Term	Definition/Abbreviation
Board	The Board of Girl Guides Australia
Employee	Any individual employed by Girl Guides Australia or a State Girl Guide Organisation
Adult Member	Current financial Member of SGGO or GGA, 18 years of age or over.
State Girl Guide Organisations	The state-based Girl Guide organisations in Australia. Namely, Girl Guides New South Wales and the Australian Capital Territory, Girl Guides Northern Territory, Girl Guides Queensland, Girl Guides South Australia, Girl Guides Tasmania, Girl Guides Victoria and Girl Guides Western Australia.
Supporter	An irregular volunteer supporter of Guiding activities. Supporters who provide regular ongoing support are considered Volunteers.
Volunteer	A person doing unpaid work for or on behalf of GGA or a SGGO.
Youth member	Current financial Members of SGGO under 18 years of age.