



# Working with Diversity

A guide to inclusive language and presentation  
for staff and students

EQUITY SERVICES



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## Introduction

Language is not neutral. It reflects the values and knowledge of the people using it and can reinforce both negative and positive perceptions about other people.

When it is used to acknowledge, in a positive and constructive way, that people have differing cultural and religious norms, experiences and values, then language is being inclusive. When language is used in a derogatory or discriminatory way it is a symptom of, and a contributor to, the unequal social status of particular groups. For example, people are most often targeted by discriminatory language on the basis of sexuality, disability, gender, religion or race. Inclusive language and presentation refers to how people speak, write and visually represent others, as well as intonation, body language and other forms of non-verbal communication. For academic staff, it includes non-discriminatory content in curriculum, non-discriminatory teaching practices and appropriate management of group discussions and group work.

Use of language or visual representations, for example, cartoons, pictures, websites, email or text messages, screensavers or videos, which devalue or demean people is discriminatory or harassing, and in some cases is illegal. For example, where it incites hatred on the basis of race, religion or sexuality. Discrimination can also occur when people are excluded, i.e are 'missing' from the conversation, text or visual representation. Ignoring or under-representing experiences of different groups can unwittingly exclude them and even render them invisible or suggest that they are marginal in society.

## Policy on inclusive language and presentation

Under its Equal Opportunity and Diversity Policy (2007), QUT aims to 'respect and protect the rights of its students and staff; promote a fair and inclusive educational and work environment; ensure its graduates possess a sense of social and ethical responsibility; and contribute to the social well-being of Brisbane, Australia and other nations'. To this end, QUT supports a policy of inclusive language and presentation in all administrative and academic activities of the University. This means that QUT will raise awareness about individual discrimination and systemic racism which emerges in group dynamics through ignorance and poor management.

For the purpose of this policy:

Inclusive language and presentation positively reflects the value that QUT places on the social and cultural diversity of Australian society and the QUT

community. Discriminatory language and presentation devalues or demeans individuals or groups of people by harassing them, highlighting individual characteristics in an offensive or prejudicial manner, and can result in harassment or exclusion.

QUT recognises that use of inclusive language and presentation in all activities will assist in the University's mission to bring the benefits of teaching, research and learning to the community.

## Responsibilities

QUT expects all staff, students and other members of the University community to act in accordance with QUT's Equal Opportunity and Diversity Policy (2007).

Executive Deans, Heads of Divisions and Chancellery are responsible for ensuring that staff and students comply with this policy.

## Using this guide

QUT staff and students are urged to use this guide as a starting point for developing their use of inclusive language and presentation. The examples given as inappropriate or offered as alternatives are those generally agreed upon among the groups of people most affected.

This guide and the examples outlined here are by no means exhaustive and references are provided at the end of the booklet for a more detailed exploration of the issues raised here.

For further discussion, or assistance within QUT, please contact (where appropriate) the following QUT sections:

Library	Phone 3138 2083(GP)/3079(KG)
Disability Officers	Phone 3138 2699(GP)/85601(KG) Caboolture by appointment
Equity Services	Phone 3138 2699(GP)/5601(KG)
International Student Services	Phone 3138 2019(GP)/3963(KG)
Oodgeroo Unit	Phone 3138 3610
Student Guild HelpDesk	Phone 3138 1213

## Why have inclusive language at QUT?

Language and visual representations used in QUT reflect the degree to which the social and cultural diversity of staff and students is valued as part of University culture. Inclusive language enhances QUT's efforts to provide education to the broadest possible community. Inclusive language gives a more accurate view of the real world by reflecting social diversity rather than perpetuating stereotypes.

Many students and staff rely on QUT for their intellectual development and sense of community. If the University community tolerates discriminatory language its continued usage is likely to impact on the ability of staff and students to work and study to their full potential. There is a high onus on employers and educators to ensure language and presentation is inclusive.

QUT does recognise that there are special contexts in which particular language or representations, that may otherwise be offensive, may be utilised and this policy is not intended to proscribe such usage. Care should be taken to ensure that the usage is a 'requirement' and that the materials or language are appropriately acknowledged and quoted, and that the audience is forewarned and advised that it should not be used outside that context.

Unlike a venue such as a theatre or an art gallery where it is possible to leave, without fear of punishment or negative consequences, if offensive language or material is used or displayed, staff and students do not always have the same freedom of choice in a work or educational environment.

The use of discriminatory language may also render QUT vicariously liable for discrimination under anti-discrimination legislation. For example, if students are unable to attend classes because they feel excluded or harassed by the language used by lecturers or other students, they could reasonably make a complaint of discrimination or harassment.

It is important to appreciate the difficulties faced by some people in expressing their feelings of being excluded or devalued by language and presentations. Those most likely to be affected are generally from the groups which are traditionally the least powerful or who are under-represented in the University community.

## **Inclusive communication style, teaching and promotional material**

The aim of using inclusive language in both presentation and practice is to include everyone in the communication process. This means giving all participants appropriate attention and facilitating meaningful participation by all students, for example, through body language and eye contact and encouraging questions and answers from the whole group. It also includes using content which includes everyone and vocabulary and body language which is non-offensive to any individual in the group. Be aware of the cultural diversity of different groups and individuals and be aware of the range of verbal and non-verbal communication techniques people use.

Materials, quotes and examples used in lectures/tutorials/presentations, online teaching and web sites need to be relevant to all participants. The experiences of women, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, people from non-English speaking backgrounds, people with a disability, people who identify as gay or lesbian and older people are as much a part of the 'real world' as the experiences of men, young people, people from Anglo-Saxon cultures or those who are heterosexual. This should be reflected in the texts and materials presented to students.

If at all possible, try to find an alternative to literature or materials which are demeaning or non-inclusive. If you must refer to such a source then make explicit reference to the problem with the material, otherwise use [sic] after the offending word or phrase to indicate that you are aware that the material is non-inclusive.

Promotional material such as posters, videos and brochures, or teaching material such as slides, overheads or other illustrations should also feature the diversity and cultural richness of Australian society and the QUT community.

Lecturers should actively encourage their students to use inclusive language and presentation in all their written work, oral presentations and discussions in lectures and tutorials. This will be enhanced if lecturers model appropriate language and lead discussions in an inclusive way, being prepared to challenge and discuss, in a constructive manner, statements that may be racist, sexist or personally demeaning.

# Using gender-inclusive language

## 1 GENERIC TERMS FOR WOMEN AND MEN

It has been commonly accepted for many years that the use of 'man' as a generic term excludes women. Words like 'mankind' and 'chairman' make people think 'male' rather than 'female' and make women invisible. Find words that include both sexes.

Instead of	Consider
Man has yet to understand nature	Humans (or people) have yet to...
The Committee needs a new chairman	The Committee needs a new chairperson
Find out who is the spokesman for the company	Find out who is the spokesperson...
We owe much to the men of science	We owe much to scientists (or men and women of science)

## 2 INCLUSIVE PERSONAL PRONOUNS

Find ways of using pronouns that refer to both men and women and so avoid using the generic 'he', 'his' and 'him'.

Instead of	Consider
Each Head of School must give his approval	Heads of School must give their approval
Each lecturer will give her students	Lecturers will give their students
Each student must submit his essay	Each student must submit an essay
When a student enrolls he must...	When a student enrolls he or she must...

## 3 WORDS OF EQUAL STATUS

Many common terms can demean or patronise women, such as calling mature women 'girls' or referring to them as 'dear', 'love' or 'sweetie'. This occurs particularly among professional female staff and female students. Only use 'lady' if you would use 'gentleman' in the same context. Otherwise, use 'woman', 'young woman' or 'female' as appropriate.

Instead of	Consider
More girls are studying engineering	More women are studying, or there are more female students in engineering
Ask the ladies in the office	Ask the staff (or the women) in the office

#### 4 WOMEN AND MEN WORK EVERYWHERE

Women and men work everywhere and many also have parental responsibilities. Putting 'female' or 'male' in front of occupational titles suggests that such jobs normally belong to a particular gender. When providing examples, illustrations or case materials ensure that women and men are depicted in a variety of roles.

Find neutral, generic terms for occupations and job titles which recognise that both men and women 'own' occupations. (It is appropriate to refer to a person's gender when it is a significant factor, e.g. first female dean or first male child care worker.)

Instead of	Consider
Jane Austen is an authoress who uses social satire	Jane Austen is an author ...
Woman doctor charged with overservicing	Doctor charged with ...
Male nurse accused of pilfering	Nurse accused of ...

#### 5 INDIVIDUALS, NOT STEREOTYPES

Stereotypes ignore the complexity of people's lives. Women are often described as 'wife of' or 'mother of', irrespective of their other roles, qualifications, expertise or achievements.

Instead of	Consider
A mother of four has been appointed as the Head of Engineering Professor	Professor Jennifer Smith has been appointed as the Head of Engineering



## 6 TITLES OF ADDRESS

‘Mr’ and ‘Ms’ are not linked to marital status like ‘Mrs’ and ‘Miss’. ‘Ms’ is widely used and is advisable unless the individual indicates otherwise. Using ‘partner’ or ‘spouse’ rather than ‘husband/wife’ or ‘girlfriend/boyfriend’ to describe relationships will include those in de facto or same-sex relationships.

Use titles and modes of address in a parallel fashion for women and men.

Instead of	Consider
Anthony Brown and his wife	Anthony and Susan Brown
Mr Spina and Emma	Emma Parker and Rod Spina
Judy Spina and Dr Cheung	Associate Professor Spina and Dr Cheung; or Judy Spina and Wen Cheung
Dear Sir	Dear Sir/Madam, Dear Madam or Sir or Dear Colleague
Mrs Bhutto and John Howard	Benazir Bhutto and John Howard or Prime Minister Bhutto and Prime Minister Howard

## 7 COMPLIMENTS AND PUT-DOWNS

Many so-called compliments to women are likely to be seen as put-downs. Examples include:

‘You think just like a man.’

‘You’re pretty smart for a woman.’

‘You’re beautiful when you’re angry.’

‘You’re very feminine for a career woman.’

Similarly, praising a particular action because it is atypical of traditional gender stereotypes is insulting. For example, ‘He’s so amazing, he even collects his children after school.’

Try substituting the opposite gender into the sentence to know if it’s a compliment. For example, would you say ‘you look handsome when you’re angry’ or ‘you’re pretty smart for a man’, or ‘she’s amazing collecting her children after school’?

Expressions such as ‘the weaker sex’, the ‘fair sex’, have no place in modern society. Other comments often used as a sarcastic jest to insult men, such as ‘he behaved like an old woman’ or ‘you blokes play like girls’ are belittling and insulting to women and can constitute bullying or gender-based discrimination if used as part of ongoing harassment against men.

## **8 SEXIST HUMOUR**

Good humour is witty, not demeaning. Humour used to trivialise gender issues is sexist and devalues their importance. Increasingly women and men find such humour tasteless and unacceptable. For example:

‘Wally Lewis played for Wynnum-Manly. Oops! I should say Wynnum-Personly.’

‘I wish some woman would come and sexually harass me.’

‘With Rachel here, I’d better watch my language.’

‘I’ll explain that again, for the benefit of the girls – sorry – ladies – sorry – persons.’

## **Using language inclusive of gender and sexual identity**

### **1 REPRESENTATION OF GENDER AND SEXUAL IDENTITY**

QUT staff and students are diverse in both gender and sexual identity. Language and visual representations at QUT should reflect the fact that Australian society and the QUT community includes people who do not identify as male or female or heterosexual; terms with which the dominant society in Australia tends to identify. Just as individual people can be racial, ethnic or religious bigots, individual people can be homophobes. Homophobia is the irrational fear of gay people or any behaviour, belief or attitude in oneself or others which doesn’t conform to rigid sex-role stereotypes. Some people who are homophobic simply avoid gay and lesbian people, places, events and topics of conversation. The extreme behaviour of homophobia is violence against homosexuals.

It can be difficult for staff members or students to be open about being gay, lesbian or bisexual, for example, for fear of retribution or harassment, even though legislation makes discrimination on the basis of sexuality or gender identity illegal. This fear affects the quality of their work and study and inclusion in University life.

For example, using words like ‘poofter’, ‘lezzo’ or ‘faggot’ to insult homosexual and heterosexual people; or to refer to something in a derogatory way, ‘that’s so gay’, perpetuates the view that homosexuality is unacceptable. The words ‘gay’ for men and ‘lesbian’ for women are generally accepted within the homosexual community. ‘Queer’ and ‘queer community’ are accepted by some people within these groups but should not be used by people outside the community without first consulting the relevant groups.

## 2 TERMINOLOGY FOR GENDER AND SEXUAL IDENTITY

It is important to ensure that the correct terminology is used when referring to particular gender or sexual identities. The following provides a brief guide to those terms which are most likely to be used in the University context.

Term	Definition
Gender	A psychosocial construct used to classify a person as male, female, both or neither
Gender identity	Usually conforms to societal gender norms and usually congruent with a person’s gender expression and sex
Sex	The anatomy and biology that determines whether one is female/male
Sexual identity	How a person sees himself or herself physically, e.g. as male or female
Sexuality	Which sex is emotional, physically or sexually attractive: opposite (hetero), same (homo) or both (bi).
Transgender/ism	A person whose gender identity is different from his or her anatomical sex may (or may not) elect to undergo chemical and/or surgical alteration. Many transgendered people have heterosexual identities. Since both the legal system and the general public tend to discriminate against them similarly to discrimination against other sexual minorities, organisations have enlarged their mission statements to include transgender persons  Often mistakenly used as a synonym for transsexualism

Transsexual/ity	A medical term referring to a person whose gender identity differs from what is culturally associated with their biological sex at birth and who chose to undergo sex reassignment surgery. Considered an outdated term with transgender being a more appropriate term. In addition 'reassign' is now more commonly referred to as 'reaffirm'.
Intersexed people	Are born with chromosomal and/or physiological anomalies and/or ambiguous genitalia

### 3 A SAFE ENVIRONMENT

Inclusive language is an important part of creating a safe environment for people who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex or queer (LGBTIQ) at QUT. This includes using language that embraces the reality of same-sex couples, family groups which do not fit the societal 'norm', and the complex lives of young people who are still exploring their gender and sexual identities. Affirmation of sexual and gender diversity also requires challenging heteronormative assumptions when these are expressed by others, particularly when done in a threatening or offensive manner. Thoughtless remarks or joking about people's sexuality are also demeaning. Challenging homophobic jokes and derogatory comments in a constructive way demonstrates support and greatly assists in creating a comfortable work and learning environment.

## Using culturally-inclusive language

### 1 VALUING DIVERSITY

Australia has many hundreds of different language groups including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander language groups.

However, the dominant culture in Australia, for the past 220 years or so, has been Anglo-Celtic Australian and is widely regarded as the 'norm' by which people from other backgrounds are often unfairly compared or assessed. Use of culturally-inclusive language means all ethnic and cultural groups are represented as equally valid. To avoid discriminatory language, it is important not to emphasise irrelevant racial or ethnic features where such features would not be stressed for those of Anglo-Celtic descent, e.g. 'two Asian students were accused of plagiarism'.

In general, avoid referring to the ethnic and racial background of a person or group unless there is a transparently valid or legal reason for doing so.

## **2 ETHNIC, CULTURAL AND RELIGIOUS DIFFERENCES**

The term 'Asians' is often used inappropriately, sometimes in a negative way, to refer to people from diverse countries with different cultures such as China, Japan, Vietnam, India, Taiwan and Malaysia. Grouping all these cultures under one title is ambiguous and fails to recognise ethnic and cultural distinctions.

Inappropriate generalisations can be made about ethnicity and religion. Not everyone in an ethnic group necessarily has the same religion. For example, not all Lebanese or Turkish people are Muslims and not all Muslims are Arabic or Turkish.

Similarly, religions such as Judaism, Christianity and the Islamic faith are practised throughout the world, not just in particular countries. In addition, within these religions there can be a number of denominations with differing beliefs and practices. For example, Christian denominations include Anglicans, Catholics and Lutherans, and Judaism has denominations such as Orthodox and Hasidic Jews.

'Australians' include people born in Australia or with Australian citizenship, regardless of their cultural heritage. If you need to specify a person's ethnicity, use a qualifying adjective such as 'Arabic-speaking Australians', 'Jewish Australians', or 'Australians of Irish descent'. Alternatively, hyphenation can be used, as in 'Anglo-Australians', 'Vietnamese-Australians' or 'Italo-Australians'. Show respect for the personal preference of people who choose not to be identified by their ethnic group.

## **3 INDIVIDUALS, NOT STEREOTYPES**

When describing people, take time to think of more relevant features such as occupation, abilities or achievements, rather than physical features such as 'Jewish-looking' or 'slanted eyes' which tend to perpetuate negative stereotypes.

Stereotyping is misleading and ignores the personal worth of individuals. For example, 'all Vietnamese accents are difficult to understand', and 'all Anglo-Australian men are 'boozers', which is clearly not the case.

Describe a person's ethnic or racial characteristics only if you would similarly describe people from other ethnic groups, including English-speaking, in the same context.

#### **4 RACIALLY-BASED NAME-CALLING**

The University will not tolerate racially-based name-calling as it is a form of racial harassment. This includes all derogatory terms that refer to a person's ethnic or cultural background. Grievance procedures are available to deal with complaints (see page 19).

#### **5 CULTURAL CONTEXT**

Talking about different cultural practices out of context can result in them being ridiculed or condemned without informed consideration. For example, polygamous marriages, while illegal in Australia, are acceptable in some cultures. Engaging in dialogues about the context in which such practices occur will offer different perspectives and a broader understanding of the world.

#### **6 OFFICIAL DOCUMENTS AND SURVEYS**

Using 'given name' or 'personal name' on forms is more relevant than 'first name' which does not suit the cultural and ethnic groups in Australia who use their family name first. Similarly, the term 'Christian name' is inappropriate for the sizeable proportion of the population that is not Christian.

## **Using language inclusive of Indigenous peoples**

### **1 FAIR REPRESENTATION OF INDIGENOUS NATIONS IN AUSTRALIA**

The Indigenous people of Australia have diverse and distinctive cultures within the Australian context. The diversity of languages (including adaptations of English), communication and social priorities and protocols may not be readily understood by people who do not belong to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures. However, the spiritual and religious ties with both land and sea, the strong family networks and support systems are shared by all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Inclusive language recognises and values the diversity among the many cultural groups belonging to Australia, including those of the original custodians of the land and sea. It is important to recognise the contributions

that both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander individuals and community groups have made and continue to make to contemporary Australian society.

## **2 ACCEPTABLE NAMES**

Popular and acceptable usage of names changes over time. If possible, take the time to find out what the people themselves prefer to be named. This may depend upon the family structure and land area associated with each particular person. Acceptable names may be 'Koori' if that person was connected to New South Wales, 'Murri' for Queensland, and 'Nyunga' for Western Australia, or other specific groupings such as 'Anangu' or 'Yolngu'.

The term 'Aboriginal people' is quite widely used and a person may say 'I am an Aboriginal person', though within Aboriginal systems that person could also say 'I am a Murri' or 'I am a Koori' which actually is far more descriptive and gives more information than purely 'Aboriginal'.

Torres Strait Islanders have a linguistic and cultural identity which is very different from that of Aboriginal peoples. It is appropriate to refer to these groups as Torres Strait Islanders or use the names of relevant groups.

When referring to the two cultural groups together use 'Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people' consistently throughout the document or discussion. Another term used is 'Indigenous to this land'. Always remember to write the word 'Indigenous' with the first letter capitalised as many Indigenous people find it offensive to do otherwise. 'The first Australians' or 'the first people of Australia' are also terms used quite frequently by Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander people themselves. The use of 'ATSI' people is not acceptable as it is offensive to reduce the diverse members of ancient cultures to an acronym, and it implies there is one distinct 'ATSI' cultural identity.

It is important to be respectful and not be over familiar in addressing or referring to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. It is also important to understand that some groups do not allow the use of the name of a family member after their death. Check on the correct protocol when this situation occurs. For example, when Dr Charles Perkins died in October 2000, the family advised that, in their law, they referred to family members who have passed on as 'Kwementyaye' but permission was given for Dr Perkins to be referred to by speakers as they knew him.

### **3 RACIAL IDENTITY**

The term 'black' has both positive and negative connotations. While it signifies solidarity, unity and political activism against racism to various groups around the world, it has been used also to devalue and victimise people on the basis of their skin colour. The terms 'Black' and 'Blackfella' should only be used by Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander people.

Terms such as 'full-bloods', 'half-castes' and 'part Aborigines' were used officially in the past for the purpose of discriminatory treatment and are regarded by both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, and others, as inaccurate and insulting.

Some cultural practices have been misrepresented, for example, the English word 'walkabout' has been appropriated, inaccurately into English. Similarly, the cultural beliefs of the Aboriginal people and people of the Torres Strait Islands have been misrepresented and devalued and expressions such as 'superstition' or 'black magic' should not be used when referring to their traditional beliefs.

### **4 AUSTRALIAN SOUTH SEA ISLANDERS**

Australian South Sea Islanders are not Indigenous Australians but, similarly, have strong family and cultural ties including great respect for their elders. They share with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples a history of disadvantage and discrimination since colonisation, and have been recognised as a distinct cultural group in Australia since 2000.

Australian South Sea Islanders do not have an Indigenous or immigration heritage as they were first brought to Queensland between 1863 and 1904 from eighty Pacific Islands to work in the fledgling sugar industry. They were, for nearly 50 years, the industry's principal labour source; often lured into coming or kidnapped through 'blackbirding'. Unfortunately, while some legislation was enacted to control the worst excesses of the system, their existence was harsh, and legislation was also used to regulate their movement and employment and to eventually exclude them from the sugar industry.

Many Australian South Sea Islanders have strong connections with both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families through marital relationships. Some can claim heritage through all these cultural connections. However,



it is important to remember that Australian South Sea Islanders, Aboriginal Australians and Torres Strait Islanders are all distinct cultural groups.

Never make assumptions about identity, be guided by the manner in which people identify themselves. This demonstrates respect for all the communities and their individual cultures.

## **5 ACCURATE PRESENTATIONS OF AUSTRALIAN HISTORY**

Inclusive Australian history acknowledges that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander life has always been rich in tradition with complex social and governing structures developed from a religious base that stems from creation.

Talking about 'when Captain Cook discovered Australia' is not only insulting to the Indigenous people of Australia, but is also incorrect. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people were here at least fifty thousand years before the coming of the Europeans. As a learning institution, avoid using texts or materials which perpetuate historic inaccuracies, or which use euphemisms to describe the historical treatment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. For example, the phrase 'when Aboriginal people moved to the mission stations', hides the fact that force was used in dislocating Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people from their homeland. Seek guidance from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and their communities where available and always look for, and use, materials which present an alternative history.

Staff of the Oodgeroo Unit are also available to assist in locating appropriate materials. The University's Human Research Ethics Committee and the Oodgeroo Unit should also be consulted before any research is undertaken which will involve surveys, visiting communities or using artefacts related to Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander cultures.

## **Using language inclusive of people with a disability**

### **1 THE INDIVIDUAL, NOT THE DISABILITY**

People with a disability are individuals who don't want to be pitied, feared or ignored, or to be seen as somehow more heroic, courageous, patient, or 'special' than others. Avoid using the term 'normal' when comparing with people with a disability.

Remember, people with a disability are handicapped to the degree that the physical or social environment does not accommodate their disabilities. Terms

like 'handicapped', 'able-bodied', 'physically challenged', 'crippled', 'differently abled' and 'sufferer' are not generally acceptable.

## 2 APPROPRIATE TERMINOLOGY FOR DISABILITIES

If possible, find out how the individual refers to their disability. For example, some people may refer to themselves as 'blind' while others with low or limited loss of vision may call their visual disability an impairment. This may also be the case for people who are deaf or who have a hearing impairment. Those who use AUSLAN sign language typically prefer to be known as 'deaf', or as 'the deaf' when referring to the community.

Other preferred terms are people 'with' or 'who have' cerebral palsy, Down's syndrome, mental illness, paraplegia, quadriplegia, epilepsy, specific learning disability or speech impairment.

Avoid terms that define the disability as a limitation, such as 'confined to a wheelchair'. A wheelchair liberates, it doesn't confine.

Words like 'victim' or 'sufferer' can be dehumanising and emphasise powerlessness for people who have or have had a disease or accident.

Instead of	Consider
the visually impaired	people with vision impairment
the disabled	people with a disability
the mentally handicapped	people with an intellectual disability
epileptics	people with epilepsy
the mentally ill	people with a mental illness/psychiatric disability
confined to a wheelchair	wheelchair user, uses a wheelchair
victim of AIDS or AIDS sufferer	person with AIDS/person who is HIV positive
polio victim	person who has/had polio
disabled toilet	accessible toilet
handicapped parking	parking for people with disabilities
learning impaired	person with a learning disability

### 3 INCLUSION

It is important to ensure that people with a disability are included in illustrations and materials in a non-discriminatory way. The lives of people with a disability are not prescribed by their disability and they should not be excluded from representations or content which is unrelated to the topic of disability. However, neither should their inclusion be gratuitous nor their presence treated as curious or 'freakish'.

## Using language inclusive of all ages

Inclusive language counters many of the myths about youth and ageing. Language and representations should reflect the fact that both young and older people are independent and contributing to the social and economic well-being of the community.

Staff need to be aware that students are of all ages and not refer to them as 'kids' or 'young people'.

Terms like 'pensioners', 'the elderly' and 'geriatric' perpetuate negative stereotypes, although pensioner may still be used as a technical term, it doesn't necessarily refer to older persons. The term 'older people' is considered most acceptable and 'seniors', 'older adults' and 'mature aged' are also common.

Only use a person's age where it is a requirement or relevant, such as 'celebrating her 100th birthday', and ensure that both younger and older people are shown in current environments and with current views. Don't stereotype and demonise people whatever their age group; not all older people are ill or bad-tempered, just as not all young people are arrogant or lazy, and not everyone has a 'mid-life crisis'.

## Procedures for resolving complaints of demeaning or discriminatory language and presentation

Anyone who wishes to make a complaint about demeaning or discriminatory language/presentation can get information and support from a variety of sources. For example, the QUT Student Guild, the Oodgeroo Unit, Counselling Services, the Human Resources Department or contact Equity Services or visit their web site at [www.equity.qut.edu.au](http://www.equity.qut.edu.au), which also includes a list of the Discrimination Contact Officers.

After obtaining information and discussing the options available, the complainant/s may attempt to resolve the matter directly with the person concerned. On the other hand, the decision may be made to access the formal process.

There are three levels in the confidential resolution process:

1. If the complainant is not satisfied with the outcome of their own attempt to resolve the situation, or does not wish to attempt resolution on their own behalf, the complaint should be referred to the relevant supervisor for resolution through conciliation.
2. If the conflict is unresolved at that level, the complainant may refer the matter to the relevant Executive Dean of Faculty or Head of Division.
3. If the grievance is not resolved at that level, the complainant may seek referral of the complaint to the Vice-Chancellor for a formal investigation.

The full policy and procedures are available at:

**[www.mopp.qut.edu.au/A/A\\_06\\_01.jsp](http://www.mopp.qut.edu.au/A/A_06_01.jsp)**

(Grievance Resolution Policy) and

**[www.mopp.qut.edu.au/A/A\\_08\\_05.jsp](http://www.mopp.qut.edu.au/A/A_08_05.jsp)**

(Discrimination-related grievance procedures).

**Note:** At any stage, QUT's Equity Services, a Discrimination Contact Officer, the relevant union, or the Student Guild can be contacted for assistance in presenting a complaint.

## Acknowledgments

This guide was originally written by Ms Nina Shatifan and Associate Professor Philip Neilsen, with contributions from staff of the Oodgeroo Unit for the guidelines on Indigenous people. It is revised annually by staff of the Equity Services in consultation with staff of the Oodgeroo Unit and others.

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Details on the relevant QUT policies such as QUT's Reconciliation Statement, Cultural Diversity and Anti-racism Policy, Disability Services Policy and Grievance Resolution Policy can be found at **[www.equity.qut.edu.au](http://www.equity.qut.edu.au)**

### The key sources are:

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- Non-Discriminatory Language, Anne Pauwels (Australian Government Publishing Service, 1991)
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- Public Response to Racist Speech: Considering the Victim's Story, Mari J Matsuda (Michigan Law Review, Aug 1989, p2320-2381)
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- Straight Talk: Guide to Non-Discriminatory Language (University of New England, 1995)
- TransGenderism: Transgressing Gender Norms, Nancy R Nangeroni for the International Foundation for Gender Education, **[www.gendertalk.com/tgism/tgism.html](http://www.gendertalk.com/tgism/tgism.html)**, January 2002
- Watch your Language! (University of Melbourne, 1987)



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