Inclusive Language
Respect for Age diversity

Why do we have an inclusive language guide?

At AGAA we treat each other with human dignity and respect. One of the ways we do this is through the language we use. Language is a powerful tool and can have significant impact, both positive and negative. Inclusive language enables everyone to feel valued and respected and can help create a safe, inclusive, and equitable workplace.

This guideline provides a starting point for learning about age inclusive language and communication. Standalone words in everyday use, like 'old' and 'young', can carry bias or unintended subtext. Older people are often stereotyped as not being able to keep up with change whereas young people are stereotyped as being unreliable and behaving entitled. Generational identifiers such as "Boomer", 'GenX", or "Millennial" also imply certain stereotypes and do not reflect the diverse lived experience of individuals.

Words to choose

Instead of	Use
Seniors' moment	Vague moment
Old people	Older people
Juniors	Youth or younger people
Elderly	Older people
Young vibrant team	Enthusiastic, dynamic team
Mature workforce	Experienced workforce

Terms and phrases to rethink

Avoid stereotypes:

- Assuming that older people are not interested in career opportunities as they want to retire
- Assuming that younger people have reduced skills or experiences
- Address people as individuals rather than making board judgements
- Avoid using generational identifiers i.e Boomers, Millennials to stereotype an individual
- *"You sound like my children"*
- *"This is your first job, so you wouldn't understand'*
- *"When I was your age"*
- Avoid terms like *"Senile"*
- *"You don't need to worry about this, you'll be retiring soon"*

Responding to non-inclusive language

The best way to set expectations about inclusive language is to address any non-inclusive language directly when it occurs. It is important that we focus on correcting our own missteps more than we do other people's.

For example, you may choose to:

- Call out the language or behaviour - avoid name-calling (e.g. calling someone ageist).
- Appeal to the person's better side – *"that doesn't sound like you to say that"*.
- Take the person aside at a later moment and explain why the language was non-inclusive.

It is important to remember in the workplace that what may be funny to one person can be offensive or upsetting to another. Comments intended as a joke can be a form of harassment or discriminatory behaviour, therefore any jokes that are demeaning to demographics of people or characteristics are best avoided.

Remember:

- Getting called out doesn't mean you need to defend yourself – trivialising someone else's feelings does not help build inclusion.
- Instead of trying to defend or excuse your actions, try focusing on understanding the other persons perspective.
- If you are confused by their reaction you could ask *"Could you explain why what I said was wrong?"*.

Support

If you would like more information on inclusive language for gender, AGAA recommends:
- Diversity Council Australia (DCA) - https://www.dca.org.au/