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.

Neurodiversity acknowledges and celebrates the natural variations in the human brain and recognises that each individual has a diverse way of thinking, learning, and experiencing the world.

Neurodiverse affirming language is a way of communicating that respects and recognises the diversity of neurological differences and emphasises the strengths, talents and unique perspectives that come with these differences.

This language challenges the traditional notion of 'normal' and advocates for inclusivity and acceptance of all neurological differences.

Definitions

Neurodivergent - Refers to when a brain differs in mental or neurological function when compared to what is considered neurotypical.
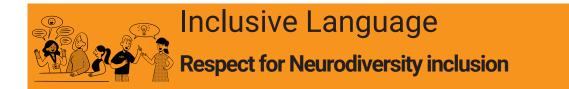
Neurotypical - Refers to when a brain that does not display atypical pattern of thoughts or behaviours.

Words to choose

Instead of	Use
Autist	Autistic person, person with autism (clarify personal preference whenever possible)
Mute	Non-verbal
Slow learner	Person with a learning disability
Space cadet	Has ADHD
Aspie	Autistic person, person with autism (clarify personal preference whenever possible)
high functioning/low functioning/on the spectrum	Use the correct neurotype. Avoid assumptions based on observed behaviours

Neurodiversity encompasses a broad range of differences in the human experience and can refer to the following:

- Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)
- ADHD
- Dyslexia
- Dyspraxia
- Dyscalculia
- Epilepsy
- Tourette Syndrome
- Schizophrenia
- Bipolar Disorder
- OCD
- C-PTSD & PTSD
- Intellectual Disability
- Sensory Processing Disorder
- Borderline Personality Disorder
- Synaesthesia
- Misophonia
- FASD

What is ableist language?

- Ableist language involves using words, phrases or expressions that reinforce negative stereotypes and discrimination rather than promoting understanding and acceptance.
- It is important in the workplace to acknowledge that individuals will work different, listen differently, and communicate differently.
- "Just focus and get on with it" – this is seen as ableist and unhelpful towards an individual, with ADHD for example, who is seeking support in implementing strategies that will assist them to better complete their tasks.
- Acknowledge different working styles – some people may excel in quiet, focused environments whilst others might thrive in dynamic, collaborative settings.
- Communication preferences – some people might prefer written communication to ensure clarity, while others might excel in verbal discussions. Clear instructions are preferred as this helps prevent misunderstandings and ensure that everyone is on the same page.

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 ableist).
- 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 – apologise and move on. 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 disability inclusion, AGAA recommends:
- Diversity Council Australia (DCA) - https://www.dca.org.au/
- People with Disability Australia - https://www.amnesty.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/AIA-Inclusive-Language-and-Events-Guide-3.pdf