

EQUITY ACTION PLAN



Updated August 2021

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Arena Theatre respectfully acknowledges the Dja Dja Wurrung people, and the Taungurung Peoples of the Kulin Nation, the first peoples of country on which Arena Theatre stands. We pay our respects to all of Bendigos First Peoples, and to their ancestors and elders. Indigenous sovereignty has never been ceded and we acknowledge that we continue to make art on what always was and always will be, Aboriginal land.

A male actor is crouching on top of a brightly lit cube. The cube is made up of Z shapes. He is reaching towards a smaller green cube in front of him.



Arena's Equity Action Plan is an operational plan and guide for all staff and board directors working at Arena and will be reviewed and updated annually.

All staff will be required to read the plan to understand the company's commitment to equity. Arena seeks to lead when it comes to the accessibility of our productions, theatre experiences and our printed and digital materials.

Arena's Equity Action Plan has been developed as part of the Fair Play program with the support of Creative Victoria.



Mission Statement

- Arena Theatre Company is committed to ensuring that people from all backgrounds can be an active part of Arena, as artists, staff and audience members.
- As a theatre company we aim to represent our diverse community, and make sure that we are accessible and inclusive of all.

Access and Inclusion Coordinator

Arena employs an Access and Inclusion Coordinator to manage and ensure this plan is embedded into the company's activities. The Access and Inclusion Coordinator works closely with Arena's CEO's and Board to ensure the plan is relevant to the company's activities. All projects must receive input from the Access & Inclusion Coordinator before they commence.

The Access & Inclusion Coordinator fosters relationships with diverse community organisations including:

Arts Access Australia
Diversity Arts Australia
Bendigo and District Aboriginal Co-operative
Dja Dja Wurrung Corporation
Bendigo Community Health Services
Multicultural Arts Victoria
CreateA

Five students are sitting inside a blue tent. They are wearing green and yellow uniforms and looking excitedly towards the camera. The tent has a cutout of a bird placed on the top with orange and purple fabric draped over it.



Section 1:

People with Disability

Disabled people include those who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments which in interaction with various barriers may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others*. People with disability make up twenty percent of the Australian population.

*Article 1, United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disability

The social model of disability is now the internationally recognised way to view and address 'disability'. The social model seeks to change society in order to accommodate people living with impairment; it does not seek to change persons with impairment to accommodate society. It supports the view that Disabled people have a right to be fully participating citizens on an equal basis with others. A social model perspective does not deny the reality of impairment nor its impact on the individual. However, it does challenge the physical, attitudinal, communication and social environment to accommodate impairment.

- Impairment is a medical condition that leads to disability; while
- Disability is the result of the interaction between people living with impairments and barriers in the physical, attitudinal, communication and social environment. It is not the inability to walk that keeps a person from entering a building but the stairs that are inaccessible that keeps a wheelchair-user from entering that building.

Arena Theatre aims to reduce some of these barriers that people with disability face.

A pink sign sitting on green grass with the logo of a wheelchair user with the writing "step free route" and an arrow pointing right.



Accessible Performance

What is an accessible performance?

People with disability and people who are d/Deaf are individuals with unique access requirements. For this reason it's not possible to meet everybody's access needs at all times. Arena will ask audiences, staff and stakeholders what their access requirements are so that we can meet their individual needs wherever possible. When Arena Theatre employs an artist with disability we will factor in their access needs into our budgets, to make sure that their experience is completely accessible and inclusive. This may include the following:

Auslan Interpreted Performances

Auslan is the sign language of the Australian d/ Deaf community. To have an interpreter means that people who are d/Deaf, or have a hearing impairment would be able to access our work.



Assistance animals

There are many situations where animals provide assistance to people living with disability. Dogs are the most commonly used assistance animals, used mostly for people with a vision impairment, or who are blind.



Assistance animals will be welcome at all Arena Theatre Company's performances.

Wheelchair & Mobility Aid Access

Wheelchair access and seating allows for more room for the use of mobility aids. An accessible venue means that there is an accessible toilet, no steps, or the use of a ramp.



Audio Description & Tactile Tours

Audio described performances are narrated by audio describers who describe actions, expressions and gestures during gaps between dialogues throughout the performance.



Tactile tours are when audience members are given a tour of the stage before the performance, where they're invited to touch the sets, costumes and props whilst the Stage Manager, and often cast members, describe them.

Relaxed Performances

A relaxed performance is a performance that has been adapted in particular ways which make it more accessible for a range of potential audience members, including autistic audiences, as well as audience members with sensory or communication conditions.



In a relaxed performance, the intensity of sound and lighting in a performance is reduced to avoid the risk of overwhelm. The etiquette of the theatre is "relaxed" so that audience members can feel more free to move around, make noise, behave in non-normative ways, and generally react to the performance as they please.

Certain information about the production is provided well in advance, so that audience members can attend with a greater sense of confidence and certainty. A "chillout space" meeting certain specifications is available to audience members who may need a break from the show.

A microphone and stand are on an empty stage. There is a spotlight illuminating the. The camera is pointing towards the seats which are all empty.

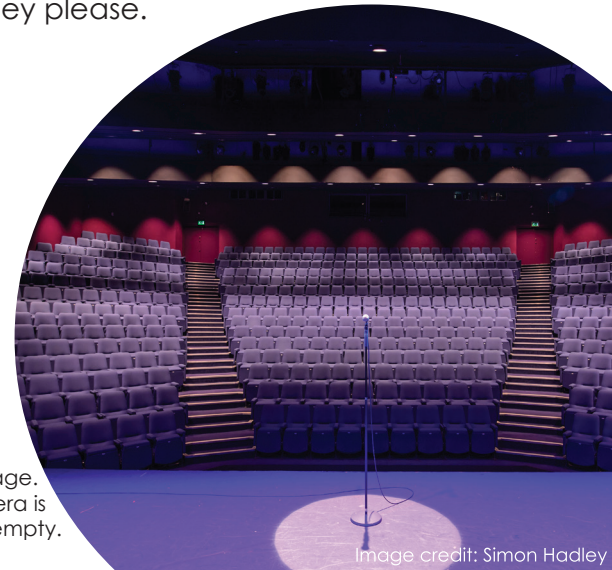


Image credit: Simon Hadley

Accessible Promotional Material

Arena will promote information about accessibility of our theatre work by listing accessibility information on promotional material, website, social media and online listings.

Website

Arena's website aims to foster an accessible digital space for everyone. A UserWay widget is installed on the site which gives the user the ability to customise it to their preferred style. It can remediate issues with;



- colour contrast
- keyboard navigation
- readability
- links
- page structure
- animations

This allows everyone to access Arena's website without barriers while ensuring compliance to the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.1.

Instructions for Arena staff

How to caption videos:

Videos: [click here](#)

How to add **ALT TEXT**

Instagram: [click here](#)

Facebook: [click here](#)

Arena website (Wordpress): [click here](#)

Arena newsletters (Mail Chimp): [click here](#)

Videos and image descriptions

Arena will ensure all videos are captioned so that d/Deaf people know what's being said. Additionally, all images posted to digital platforms - website, newsletters and social media will be captioned, and include image descriptions (alternate "alt" text) so that blind or low-vision users can engage with content via a screen reader.

For example, to describe the image at the bottom right:

“

A female actor is sitting on top of a green industrial recycling bin that has a blue lid. She has brown hair in a pony tail and is wearing a black t-shirt, green pinafore dress and multicoloured leggings. She is looking down at the bin with a pen in her hand about to write on it.

”



Language

People with disability often have very strong preferences for either identity first or person first language. For example;

Identity First

Disabled person

Person First

Person with disability

Many people with disability choose to embrace 'identity-first' language, which positions disability as an identity category. This language is known as 'identity-first' because the identifying word comes first in the sentence and highlights the person's pride of their identity.

Terms to avoid

Wheelchair bound
Handicapped
Special / Special needs
The disabled
Suffers from / victim of
Dwarf, Midget
Mentally disabled
Simple, Intellectually challenged
Downy, A Downs
Slow
Aspie
Blind as a bat
Mute
Normal, healthy, abled, able bodied

Alternative terms to use

Wheelchair user
Has a disability
Person with disability
People with disability
Lives with a chronic condition
Person who is short statured/ has dwarfism
Person who has mental illness
Person with intellectual disability
Person with down syndrome
Person with a learning disability
Autistic person
Person with vision impairment/ who is blind
D/deaf, hard of hearing
Non disabled, a person without disability

Non-disabled people need to be led by each individual person with disability's choice of language they use about themselves. Phrases like 'the disabled' or calling someone 'a wheelchair' reflect the assumption that people are reduced to just their disability

- Some specific disability communities, such as Autistic and Deaf communities, will primarily use identity-first language, and may prefer not to refer to themselves as disabled at all.
- People with disability are often described in ways that are disempowering, discriminatory, degrading and offensive. Negative words such as 'victim' or 'sufferer' reinforce stereotypes that people with disability are unhappy about their lives, and should be viewed as objects of pity.
- Both person first and identity first language are used in Australia to refer to people with disability, or disabled people.

A black background with a persons hand signing the ASL sign for love.

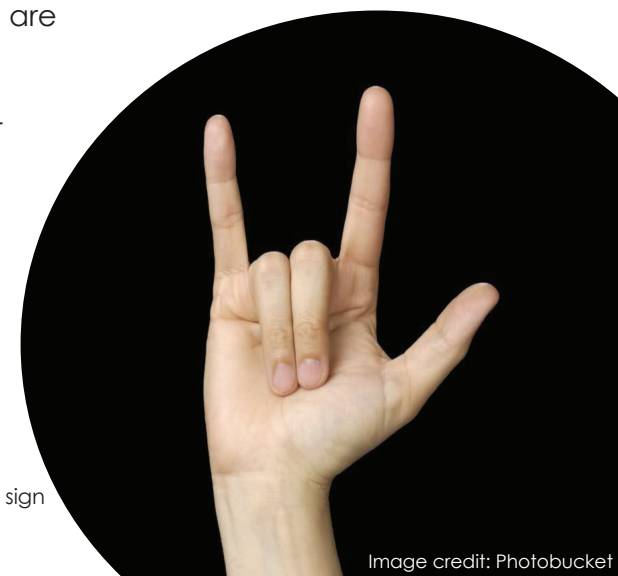


Image credit: Photobucket

Employment

When putting out an advertised position of employment for any position at Arena Theatre, we will state:

“

Arena Theatre is an Equal Opportunity Employer, who is committed to creating a diverse working environment. As such, we strongly welcome applicants from diverse backgrounds.

We accept applications in written, video or audio format. If you would like to submit your application in a different format or your access requirements have not been met, please contact us at either info@arenatheatre.com.au or 03 54635160.

”

What if I make a mistake?

People may worry that they will offend or be embarrassed if they use the wrong term when speaking to or about a disabled person.

It's important to try to use respectful language and some mistakes are understandable, particularly when you are learning. If you make a mistake, apologise promptly and move on. Don't dwell on it, and don't give up – keep trying to get it right.

Repeated mistakes indicate a lack of respect, and can be very distressing. If it continues or is deliberate, it could constitute bullying or discrimination which is unlawful.

A male blonde student is sitting at a desk with a microphone and computer in front of him. He is smiling. A female artist with red hair is assisting him with the computer.



Image credit: Kristen Beever

Section 2: First Peoples

Bendigo is located on the traditional lands of the Dja Dja Wurrung and the Taungurung Peoples of the Kulin Nation. They are the traditional custodians of this land. We also recognise that there are many other First Peoples with links to different language and community groups across Australia who live in Bendigo.

At the 2016 Census, Greater Bendigo had a recorded total of 1845 residents who identify as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander. More than half of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people living in Bendigo are under the age of 24.

An acknowledgement of country will be made at the start of all meetings, rehearsals or live performances. The wording of this acknowledgment should align with the following:

“

Arena Theatre Company is located on the traditional lands of the Dja Dja Wurrung and Taungurung Peoples of the Kulin Nation. They are the traditional custodians of this land, and we pay our respects to their elders past and present. We acknowledge that sovereignty was never ceded, and we offer our gratitude to all First Peoples.

”

Arena are committed to increasing engagement with First Nations artists and young people in the Bendigo region.



A small fire is burning in a grassy area. There is a log and green leaves next to it.

Image credit: Joshua Prieto

Respectful Language

Using respectful and inclusive language and terminology is an essential component of reconciliation.

The ways we speak about reconciliation are just as important as the ways we act: language is itself active, and can impact on attitudes, understandings and relationships in a very real and active sense. While they are guidelines only, below are some recommendations for using respectful and inclusive language and terminology when engaging with First People.

Seek guidance

Given the diversity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and identities across Australia, we should always seek advice from our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders regarding preferences and protocols around terminology. Please consider these guidelines, alongside guidance from our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders. We also understand the intergenerational barriers that young First Nations people face, for this reason it's not up to young people to be experts. We will not rely on First Nations young people to teach us.

Referring to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples

First Peoples or First Nations is best practice but using Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander is still acceptable. 'Aboriginal' alone is also not inclusive of the diversity of cultures and identities across Australia, for which reason it should be accompanied by 'peoples' in the plural. Similarly, as a stand-alone term, 'Aboriginal' is not inclusive of Torres Strait Islander peoples, and reference to both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples should be spelt out where necessary. The acronym ATSI should be avoided as this can be seen as lacking respect of different identities.

Acknowledging diversity

Pluralisation should extend to generalised reference to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander 'histories,' 'perspectives,' 'ways of being,' 'contributions,' and so forth. This acknowledges that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are not homogeneous.



An artist is talking to two students while moving her hands. The students are looking at her. They are sitting at a white table that has sheets of paper on it.

Image credit: Kristen Beever

Respectful Language

Indigenous

In some parts of the country, the term 'Indigenous' can be considered offensive. That is, it has scientific connotations that have been used historically to describe Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as part of the 'flora/fauna' rather than the human population of Australia. It can be seen as a problematically universalising or homogenising label for what are, in reality, highly diverse identities.

An exception for the term 'Indigenous' is considered in some situations, for example:

- If an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander person or organisation prefers and/or has approved the word 'Indigenous' to be used
- If an organisation has appropriately referred to a program or job title (e.g. "Indigenous Programs Unit" or "Indigenous Programs Manager")
- If the word 'Indigenous' has been appropriately embedded into an organisational policy e.g. Federal or State Governments, United Nations

Unacceptable terms

Assimilationist terms such as 'full-blood,' 'half-caste' and 'quarter-caste' are extremely offensive and should never be used when referring to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Terms to avoid

Ensure that the following terms are avoided when describing/ referring to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as they can perpetuate negative stereotypes:

Disadvantaged

Aborigines

Native/native Australians

Lost (e.g. Lost language, cultures)



Yellow and dark brown clay sits on top of grass in a C shape. There are orange circles imprinted into the yellow clay. A white border is around the outside separating it from the grass.

Image credit: COP website

Showing Respect

Capitalisation

As capitalisation demonstrates respect, 'Aboriginal' and 'Torres Strait Islander' should always be capitalised. Capitalisation conventions are often also considered appropriate to extend to terms such as:

First Peoples / Nations / Australians

Indigenous (if it is used at all)

Elders

Traditional Owners / Custodians

Country, as well as the names of particular Language Groups or geo-cultural communities.*

Acknowledgement of Country / Welcome to Country and the names of other cultural practices**

*And corresponding terms such as 'Land,' when it is used in place of 'Country'

**Particularly if the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander meanings or perspectives behind the words used to describe the practices – such as 'acknowledge' or 'welcome' – may be distinct to their English definitions or connotations).

Avoiding deficit language

Acknowledging and addressing the historical – and often intergenerational – injustices and inequities experienced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples since colonisation is a critical component of reconciliation. Nevertheless, it is simultaneously imperative to acknowledge the strengths and resilience shown by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, cultures and communities in the face of discrimination, and to celebrate the continued significance of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander contributions in shaping a shared sense of national unity and identity. It is important to draw on empowering, strengths-based language, and to be careful not to perpetuate patronising or paternalistic rhetoric.

What if I make a mistake?

People may worry that they will offend or be embarrassed if they use the wrong term when speaking to or about First People.

It's important to try to use respectful language and some mistakes are understandable, particularly when you are learning. If you make a mistake, apologise promptly and move on. Don't dwell on it, and don't give up – keep trying to get it right.

Repeated mistakes indicate a lack of respect, and can be very distressing. If it continues or is deliberate, it could constitute bullying or discrimination which is unlawful.



A close up image of a First People's flag with a large crowd in the background.

Image credit: Getty Images

Section 3:

Culturally & Linguistically Diverse (CALD) People

Victoria is home to one of the most multicultural societies in the world and is among the fastest-growing and most culturally and linguistically diverse states in Australia. Close to half of all Victorians were born overseas or have at least one parent born overseas. About a quarter of Victorians speak a language other than English at home.

Despite increasing cultural and linguistic diversity in Victoria and in Australia, it is widely recognised that people of culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds experience barriers such as limited or lack of English language skills, and institutional barriers that can prevent people of CALD backgrounds participating in the social and cultural activities that shape the society we live in. Not all people of CALD backgrounds face barriers when it comes to participating in the arts, but some people of CALD backgrounds do experience barriers that affect their ability to fully participate.

Greater Bendigo is becoming increasingly culturally diverse. The percentage of Greater Bendigo residents born overseas has risen to 7 per cent in 2019, with 2 per cent of households speaking a language other than English at home. The Karen community is one of the biggest, with a contribution of 2,500 strong community members. Other culturally and linguistically diverse community groups include Malayali, Afghan, South Sudanese and Chinese.

Australian law forbids racial and other forms of discrimination and protects freedom of religion. However, many culturally and linguistically diverse people living in Australia experience racism and discrimination on a regular basis. Bendigo is no exception.

Arena is committed to addressing the impacts of systemic racism and ensuring that we as a company are committed to equity in our programs and our workforce.

A group of school children are looking at a map while wearing stethoscopes.



Image credit: Sarah Walker

Historic Barriers

Australia has a long history of systemic racism, going back to the White Australia policy and before. The White Australia policy was only dismantled in 1966 with the Holt Government's introduction of the Migration Act 1966 and officially ended with the Whitlam Government implementing the Racial Discrimination Act in 1975. Historically, people from non-English speaking countries who immigrated to Australia were not given the same rights or consideration as those who immigrated from English-speaking countries.

In the Bendigo and Goldfields region, early migration of Chinese gold miners in the 1850s was met with racial resentment, leading to restrictive immigration policies. Bendigo is now home to many of the descendents of those first Chinese immigrants.

Since the implementation of the Migration Act in 1966, Australia has welcomed migration from all nations, making Australia one of the most multi-cultural in the world. In recent times there has been a rise in nationalism and a push to exclude people from Muslim countries in particular. Arena stands against discrimination on the basis of race or religion. Our community of families and schools include children from all racial and religious backgrounds and we are committed to ensuring cultural safety for all children.

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A group of South Sudanese women are sitting facing the camera and smiling. Three are sitting on chairs and one is on the floor in front. They are wearing brightly coloured clothes.

Image credit: Atong Atem

Communication & Marketing

There is not a one-size-fits-all communication strategy for engaging with CALD communities. We need to use a variety of strategies, committing to a long-term relationship with the communities we serve, based on ongoing evaluation of our policies and procedures. Before anything, first recognise the limits of your own knowledge. Avoid assumptions and stereotypes. Understand that culture is not static and do not draw conclusions about other people's culture based on their ethnicity, nationality or lifestyle. Recognise that there is diversity within cultural groups.

Seek advice on what is the best format to provide information, whether it be translated or in English. Should you use print, audio or video? Is the internet appropriate to engage with your target community? Sometimes the best way to get information out is by connecting with local businesses, religious or community groups, targeted newsletters, community radio stations and groups like Multicultural Arts Victoria, who have existing lines of communication with target groups.

Language Barriers

It is important to understand why some CALD people do not speak English well, or at all. Learning a second language as an adult can be very difficult. The capacity to learn a new language will depend on the level of literacy in one's own language, as well as social and economic factors. Whenever possible, Arena will employ an interpreter for projects that engage people who don't speak English.

When speaking with someone for whom English is not their primary language:

- Speak clearly and pronounce words properly
- Limit the number of concepts you cover at any one time
- Pausing before and after significant words can help improve communication
- Remember that turning up the volume does not increase understanding
- Do not cover your mouth, as it may be useful for people to see how you pronounce your words
- Choose simple words, but you don't need to use overly simplified or patronising language
- If asked to repeat something, first repeat it the same way you said it the first time, as the person may simply have not heard you, and then paraphrase or explain in a different way if you are still not being understood
- Say "yes" or "no" instead of using slang like "Uh huh"
- Avoid sarcasm, jargon and acronyms
- Be attentive and show respect
- Listen carefully and patiently
- Ask if they require an interpreter



A large group of school children wearing yellow uniforms are sitting on the ground. They are wearing bunny ear shaped paper hats and looking up.

Image credit: John Fish Productions

Education

Seek guidance and education

You cannot possibly know everything about every person you engage with, and you should not make assumptions about a person's cultural background. Throughout your time with Arena, you will engage with artists and audiences from many different cultural backgrounds. Arena is committed to supporting and empowering staff by providing cultural safety training at the commencement of any project that engages a specific culturally and linguistically diverse community group. For projects where participants do not speak English, an interpreter will be engaged. Budget will be allocated for this purpose in the project budget.

We encourage staff to do their own reading and reflection, and to educate themselves on the many cultures who call Australia home.

What if I make a mistake?

People may worry that they will offend or be embarrassed if they get names wrong or address someone in a culturally inappropriate way.

It's important to be respectful and some mistakes are understandable, particularly when you are learning. If you make a mistake, apologise promptly and move on. Don't dwell on it, and don't give up – keep trying to get it right.

Repeated mistakes indicate a lack of respect, and can be very distressing. If it continues or is deliberate, it could constitute bullying or discrimination which is unlawful.

Two South Sudanese women are standing together and smiling. The woman on the right is looking at a phone, and the woman on the left is looking away from the camera. They are wearing bright coloured clothes.



Section 4: LGBTQIA+ People

LGBTQIA+ is the recognised term to collectively refer to people who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, queer, intersex, asexual plus a spectrum of diverse experiences and identities of bodies, gender and sexuality.

In a national survey of LGBTQIA+ youth, almost three-fifths (57.0%) of participants in rural/remote areas reported they had felt unsafe or uncomfortable in the past 12 months at their educational setting due to their sexuality or gender identity, followed by 52.7% in regional cities or towns. More participants in rural/remote areas reported experiencing high/very high psychological distress (87.5%) than those in regional cities or towns (83.3%), outer suburban areas (79.8%), or inner suburban areas (73.2%). More participants in rural/remote areas reported in the past 12 months experiencing verbal harassment based on their sexuality or gender identity (45.4%) than those in regional cities or towns (41.0%), outer suburban areas (40.4%), or inner suburban areas (37.0%). Almost two-thirds (65.1%) of participants in rural/remote areas reported experiencing suicidal ideation in the past 12 months, followed by three-fifths (60.5%) in regional cities or towns, 57.1% in outer suburban areas, and 49.2% in inner suburban areas. Participants in rural/remote areas reported the highest levels of suicide attempts in the past 12 months (14.0%), almost twice that of those in inner suburban areas (7.1%).

Arena Theatre does not accept any discrimination towards people who identify as LGBTQIA+ and we are committed to providing an inclusive workforce and theatre experience. We also acknowledge that LGBTQIA+ young people in regional areas experience a higher rate of discrimination and we endeavour to provide support through opportunities for creative expression.



Language

When we use LGBTQIA+ inclusive language, we demonstrate that we respect LGBTQIA+ people, we build trust between Arena and LGBTQIA+ communities, and we start to address the prejudice and discrimination LGBTQIA+ people face.

Don't assume a person is heterosexual

Don't assume that everyone is heterosexual (straight), or that this is the norm. When you don't know what language someone uses to describe their relationship avoid using language such as 'wife' or 'husband' that assumes all relationships are heterosexual, as this excludes non-heterosexual people and devalues their relationships. Words and phrases such as 'partner', 'parents', 'relationship', 'in a relationship' are examples of LGBTQIA+ inclusive language.

Gender, sex and sexuality are all separate concepts.

Gender is part of how you understand who you are and how you interact with other people. Many people understand their gender as being female or male. Some people understand their gender as a combination of these or neither. Gender can be expressed in different ways, such as through behaviour or physical appearance.

Sex refers to a person's biological sex characteristics. This has historically been understood as either female or male. However, we now know that some people are born with natural variations to sex characteristics.

Sexuality or sexual orientation describes a person's romantic and/or sexual attraction to others.

A person's gender does not necessarily mean they have particular sex characteristics or a particular sexuality, or vice versa.

LGBTQIA terminology is diverse and constantly evolving.

Language used to describe different LGBTQIA+ people and by different parts of LGBTQIA+ communities changes over time and can differ across cultures and generations. There will also be differences in how people individually use or define particular terms.

For example, from June 2018 the World Health Organization (WHO) declassified being transgender as a mental illness. The term 'gender dysphoria' has been replaced with 'gender incongruence' and has been placed under the broader platform of sexual health.



The outside of the Engine Room with Pride flags hanging from the bricks.

Image credit: Arena Theatre Co

Language

Don't ask if you don't have to.

We all have a right to privacy. We should only have to bring as much of our private selves to work as we want to and feel safe doing. Allow yourself to be led by how someone talks about themselves, their family and their relationships. Ask or be guided by them about who to share this information with.

Some LGBTQIA+ people from different cultures or faith traditions may have different family or workplace traditions around disclosure or 'coming out'. Do not assume every person who may be comfortable being 'out' in the workplace is 'out' in other settings – people have the right to disclose about their sexuality or gender identity in their own time and on their own terms.

What does the law say?

Discrimination is not just wrong, it is against the law. In Victoria you must not discriminate against someone because of their sexual orientation, gender identity or lawful sexual activity. The Equal Opportunity Act also has a 'positive duty' to make sure that organisations prevent discrimination happening in the first place, rather than responding after a complaint has been made. The Victorian Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities also says that public authorities (e.g. state and local government funded services) must act in ways that are compatible with human rights, such as taking relevant human rights into account when they are making decisions. Recognise that LGBTQIA+ people have suffered and continue to experience discrimination.

This guide gives general advice based on current thinking, however, it's always best to remain open to respecting and learning new and evolving language when you encounter it.



A large group of people are marching in the street surrounded by tall buildings. They are holding letters made from balloons that spell the word love.

Image credit: Getty Images

Common Terms

Being LGBTQIA isn't a preference or a lifestyle choice. When we talk about gender, sex characteristics or sexuality, we're not talking about preferences or choices. We're just talking about how people are.

What terms are commonly used?

Sexuality

- A **lesbian** woman is romantically and/or sexually attracted to other women. Some non-binary people may also use this term.
- A **gay** person is romantically and/or sexually attracted to people of the same sex and/or gender as themselves. This term is often used to describe men who are attracted to other men, but some women and gender diverse people may describe themselves as gay.
- A **bisexual** person is romantically and/or sexually attracted to people of their own gender and other genders. The term 'bi+' is also sometimes used to describe the multiplicity of bisexualities. The term Multi-gender attraction (MGA) may also be used for those who experience attraction to more than one gender over a lifetime, regardless of self-identity or labels.
- An **asexual** person does not experience sexual attraction, but may experience romantic attraction towards others.
- A **pansexual** person is romantically and/or sexually attracted to people of any gender identity or regardless of gender identity.
- **Queer** is often used as an umbrella term for diverse genders

or sexualities. Some people use queer to describe their own gender and/or sexuality if other terms do not fit. For some people, especially older LGBTQIA+ people, 'queer' has negative connotations, because in the past it was used as a discriminatory term. Do not use the term 'queer' unless you are in the community or you have been given permission to use the term by somebody in that community.

- The 'Q' in LGBTQIA+ is used here as '**Queer and questioning.**' Rather than be locked in to a certainty, some people are still exploring or questioning their gender or sexual orientation. People may not wish to have one of the other labels applied to them yet, for a variety of reasons, but may still wish to be clear, for example, that they are non-binary or non-heterosexual. It is important these individuals feel welcome and included in the acronym and communities spaces.



A man is painting a mural on a brick wall, he has his back to the camera. The mural is two hands cupping a rainbow heart shaped earth.

Image credit: Charles Eckert

Common Terms

Gender

- A trans (short for transgender) person is someone whose gender does not exclusively align with the one they were assigned at birth. Trans can be used as an umbrella term, but not everyone uses it to describe themselves. For example, a man who was assigned female at birth might refer to himself as 'a trans man', 'a man with a trans history' or just 'a man'. It's important to use the terms someone uses to describe themselves.
- Gender diverse generally refers to a range of genders expressed in different ways. There are many terms used by gender diverse people to describe themselves. Language in this space is dynamic, particularly among young people, who are more likely to describe themselves as non-binary.
- The terms sistergirls and brotherboys are general terms used in many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to describe transgender people and their relationships as a way of validating and strengthening their gender identities and relationships. The terms sistergirls and brotherboys (or sistagirls and brothaboys) may also be used by non trans, but non-conforming Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples - for example, both lesbian and heterosexual Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women may refer to themselves as 'sistergirls', 'sisters' or 'tiddas', which is a shortened version in Aboriginal English of the word 'sisters'. Gay Aboriginal men may also refer to themselves as sisters.
- A person who is non-binary is someone whose gender is not exclusively female or male; while a person who is agender has no gender.

- A cis (pronounced 'sis', short for cisgender) person is someone whose gender aligns with the sex they were assigned at birth – someone who isn't trans or gender diverse.
- Transition or gender affirmation refers to the process where a trans or gender diverse person takes steps to socially and/or physically feel more aligned with their gender. There is a wide range of ways this process differs between people. Some people may change how they interact with others, and others may change their appearance or seek medical assistance to better express their gender.

Sex characteristics

An intersex person is born with natural variations to physical or biological sex characteristics such as variations in chromosomes, hormones or anatomy. Intersex traits are a natural part of human bodily diversity. Not all intersex people use the term intersex. Intersex people have a diversity of bodies, genders and sexualities. 1.7% of children born in Australia are estimated to be born with an intersex variation. There are many different intersex variations, which may or may not be evident at birth, and which have their own terms.



Two students are standing in front of an interactive screen that is displaying multicoloured patterns.

Image credit: Kristen Beever

Common Terms

Describing LGBTQIA+ communities

When writing about LGBTQIA+ people it is best to use the term 'communities', as these are many separate and distinct communities within this umbrella term.

People may fit more than one of these terms. Heterosexual and cisgender people can be part of LGBTQIA+ communities. For example, there are straight trans and intersex people.

While LGBTQIA+ communities often work together, for example to advocate for equal rights, they are different communities with their own distinct experiences, needs and priorities.

How should I use pronouns?

Pronouns are one way people refer to each other and themselves. Most but not all men (including trans men) use the pronoun 'he'. Likewise, most but not all women (including trans women) use the pronoun 'she'. Some people use a gender-neutral pronoun such as 'they' (e.g. 'Pip drives their car to work. They don't like walking because it takes them too long').

If you're unsure what someone's pronoun is, you can ask them respectfully. Use a question like 'Can I ask what pronoun you use?' Do not ask 'What pronoun do you prefer?' A person's pronoun and identity are not a preference. Instead, just ask what pronoun they use. If you provide your own pronouns and make asking part of your practice, it is a signal to the whole LGBTQIA+ community that the space is safe.

Some people's pronouns may be context-specific. For example, someone might not use their pronoun in a particular environment or around particular people because they do not feel safe or comfortable to do so.

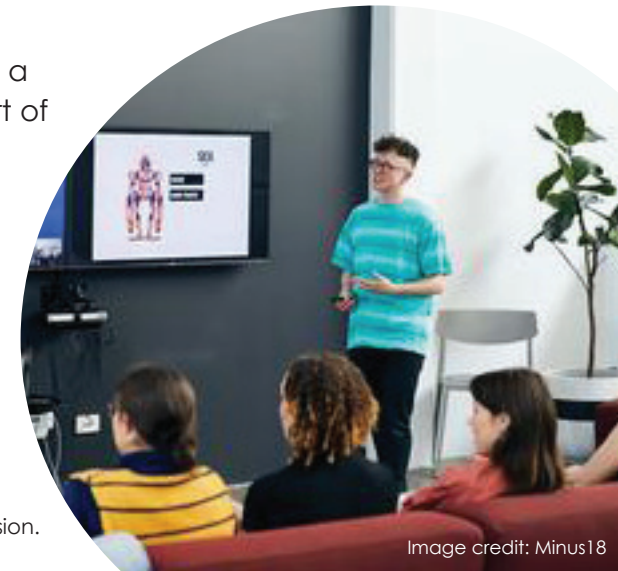
At Arena we include our pronouns in our email signature and in group introductions, such as the start of rehearsals.

What if I make a mistake?

People may worry that they will offend or be embarrassed if they use the wrong term, name or pronoun, particularly for trans and gender diverse people.

It's important to try to use respectful language and some mistakes are understandable, particularly when you are learning. If you make a mistake, apologise promptly and move on. Don't dwell on it, and don't give up – keep trying to get it right.

Repeated mistakes indicate a lack of respect, and can be very distressing. If it continues or is deliberate, it could constitute bullying or discrimination which is unlawful.



A person with a blue t-shirt and glasses is teaching a workshop on LGBTQIA+ inclusion.

Section 5: Goals and Actions

The Arena Board and Management are committed to working towards equity in all our programs and activities. Through the Fair Play program, with the support of Creative Victoria, Arena have developed the following goals and actions, to hold the company accountable to that commitment.

SHORT TERM GOALS = COMPLETED BY END OF 2021
LONG TERM GOALS = COMPLETED BY END OF 2024

Short Term Goal 1

The entire company understands that working with Culturally and Linguistically Diverse, First Nations, LGBTQIA+ and Disabled people is part of the company's ongoing practice and they feel confident in their ability to support and contribute to these projects.

ACTION	PERSON	RESOURCES	TIMELINE	CONSULTATION	EVALUATION
All staff to receive cultural awareness training from Dja Dja Wurrung trainers	ED in consultation with Access & Inclusion Coordinator	Time Budget	Completed for current staff in 2020	Dja Dja Wurrung Corporation BDAC Tashara Roberts Kim Campbell Rodney Carter	Annual review to ensure all current staff have undertaken training
All staff to receive South Sudanese cultural training to assist with current project	ED in consultation with Access & Inclusion Coordinator	Time Budget	Completed for current staff in 2020	Awak Kongor	Annual review to ensure all current staff have undertaken training
All staff to receive LGBTQIA+ inclusion training	ED in consultation with Access & Inclusion Coordinator	Time Budget	Completed for current staff in 2021	Minus18 Zoe Belle Gender Collective	Annual review to ensure all current staff have undertaken training
All staff to be made aware of what they need to do to make all communications (internal and external) accessible	Access and Inclusion Coordinator	Time Budget	By end of 2021	Arts Access Australia Vision Australia	Staff survey
Embed training for new staff into policies, staff PDs and inductions	ED	Time Budget	By end of 2021	Creative Equity Toolkit	Checked during annual policy review
OUTCOME	Staff and volunteers from diverse communities feel safe working at Arena, based on feedback through 1-on-1 sessions and external consultation.				

Short Term Goal 2

To have diverse representation on the board

ACTION	PERSON	RESOURCES	TIMELINE	CONSULTATION	EVALUATION
Develop a recruitment policy that specifically outlines diverse engagement of Board members.	ED, Board approval	Time	By end of 2021	Australia Council AICD	Review recruitment processes and whether they have led to an increase in board diversity
Set up a diversity advisory group to influence programming, board and staff recruitment, engagement with audiences	Executive Team	Time Honarium Terms of Reference	By end of 2021	Rebecca Phillips Maree Clarke Caroline Bowditch Elise Stewart Tom Middleditch Martha Kudum Olivia Muscat	Review the outcomes of the groups decisions on an ongoing basis
Update board skills matrix in line with the goal of achieving diversity	Board	Time	Completed in 2021	Arena Board	Board skills matrix reviewed annually to reflect diversity principles
Set quota for diversity on the board	Board	Time	Start recruiting start of 2021. By end of 2021 (ongoing)	Arena Board	Review diversity quota annually
OUTCOME	30% of the board (2-3 people) are from targeted diverse communities – First Peoples, Disabled, CALD, LGBTQIA+ Communities				

Short Term Goal 3

Implement effective policies for recruiting people from diverse groups.

ACTION	PERSON	RESOURCES	TIMELINE	CONSULTATION	EVALUATION
Ensure diverse panelists on recruiting panels	ED	Time Budget	As required	Australia Council FCAC MAV DARTS Bendigo Community Health Service	Record and review the makeup of recruitment panels on an ongoing basis
Procedures for hiring staff and artists includes widely advertising the role, targeted promotion to underrepresented groups, and appropriately worded position descriptions.	ED	Time Budget	Completed in 2021	Fairplay Creative Equity Toolkit	Access & Inclusion Coordinator to assess recruitment processes on an ongoing basis
Develop and implement an inclusive recruitment checklist for hiring	ED	Time	By end of 2021	Creative Equity Toolkit	Checklist reviewed by Access & Inclusion Coordinator
Review staff welcome pack to take on board learnings from Fairplay	ED	Time	By end of 2021	Creative Equity Toolkit	Staff survey
Identify a transparent complaints process and monitor and review this to ensure accessibility and safety for staff without fear of repercussions or breach of confidentiality	ED	Time	By end of 2021	Artists and staff themselves	Staff survey
OUTCOME	There is a 10% increase in applications from people from diverse groups, leading to an increase in staff and artists from diverse groups working with Arena.				

Short Term Goal 4

Arena's projects with CALD communities follow embedded community engagement principles and are culturally safe.

ACTION	PERSON	RESOURCES	TIMELINE	CONSULTATION	EVALUATION
Develop a financial and operating framework for community engaged projects that ensures appropriate compensation for participants time and intellectual property	ED	Time	By end of 2021	BCHS Gorkem Acaraglu MAV	Post-project review and assessment by Diversity Advisory group
Gather feedback from participants after completing the first stage of the South Sudanese community project	ED and Eliza	Time	By end of 2021	SSWE participants	Feedback gathered through a group debrief and verbal survey with interpreter
Ensure appropriate cultural safety training is conducted at the start of each new community engaged project	AD & Eliza	Time Budget	Ongoing	Awak Kongor	Access & Inclusion Coordinator to assess on a case by case basis.
Develop a process for continuing engagement with communities after a project ends	AD & Eliza	Time	By end of 2021		Review future plans as part of the debrief process at the end of each project
OUTCOME	Arena's engagement with CALD communities is a positive experience for participants, it is ongoing and it is culturally safe, based on feedback received from community participants.				

Short Term Goal 5

Arena has a comprehensive data collection system in place to help understand levels of participation of diverse children and young people

ACTION	PERSON	RESOURCES	TIMELINE	CONSULTATION	EVALUATION
Work with schools and presenters to gain more complete quantitative audience and participant data for all of our programs to understand its diversity make up	ED	Time	By end of 2021	Schools BV&E	Gain access to ticketing data from venues wherever possible and schools to provide student data.
Audience and participant surveys which include questions on diversity are circulated after every project	ED	Time	By end of 2021	Creative Vic AusCo	Surveys sent to venues to forward on to audiences.
OUTCOME	We have a deeper understanding of our audience demographics and can work to increase underrepresented groups.				

Long Term Goal 1

Create partnerships and pathways for First Nations young people to engage with Arena

ACTION	PERSON	RESOURCES	TIMELINE	CONSULTATION	EVALUATION
Develop a mutually beneficial partnership with Dja Dja Wurrung Corporation	AD	Time Financial resources	By end of 2022	Dja Dja Wurrung Corporation	Review interactions and joint activities
Develop a First Nations engagement plan that outlines how to engage First Nations young people and artists	AD & ED	Time	By end of 2023	Dja Dja Wurrung Corporation Tashara Roberts Shonai at BAG	The plan is reviewed by the diversity panel and the board annually
Develop a long term partnership with a school with a high population of First Nations children	AD & ED	Time Budget	By end of 2024	California Gully School	At least 2 activities with the school per year
OUTCOME		Arena has increased engagement with First Nations young people, based on data supplied by schools.			

Long Term Goal 2

There is a clear pathway by which people from diverse backgrounds can secure a significant leadership role within the Company.

ACTION	PERSON	RESOURCES	TIMELINE	CONSULTATION	EVALUATION
Engage staff from diverse groups with a clear mind for the potential pathway to leadership and give them professional development opportunities	ED & AD	Time Budget	By end of 2023	Arena staff	Staff survey
Provide supported opportunities for new staff to lead larger projects while being mentored by AD and ED	ED & AD	Time Budget	By end of 2022	Arena staff	Staff survey
Provide access to understand the decision making processes at Board level	ED & AD	Time	By end of 2021	Arena Board	Staff survey
OUTCOME	A succession path is identified for a leadership role at Arena to be filled by a person from a First Peoples, CALD or Disabled community by the end of 2024.				

Long Term Goal 3

Arena's artists and creative staff are reflective of the Australian Population

ACTION	PERSON	RESOURCES	TIMELINE	CONSULTATION	EVALUATION
Implement quota for diverse representation on creative teams across the annual program	Board approval	Time	By end of 2022	Arena Board	Quota established and diversity panel to review adherence to the quota annually
Network of artists expands to include artists from a range of diverse backgrounds	AD	Time	By end of 2022 ongoing	FCAC MAV DARTS Various culturally specific artists collectives Ilbidjerri	Assessment of % artists from diverse groups
Develop ongoing mentorship program for FN, CALD and Disabled artists and pathways to employment	AD and ED	Budget Time Mentors	By end of 2022	Mentors Artists to be mentored	Assessed by diversity panel annually
Identify any specific resources and support employees might need from diverse backgrounds	ED	Budget	As required	The staff	Staff survey
Develop a partnership with BDAC to implement Culturally Safe procedures and support for First Peoples staff	ED, Access & Inclusion Coordinator	Time	By end of 2022	BDAC	Staff survey
OUTCOME	Our annual number of employed staff and artists, including creative teams are made up of, at a minimum: 30% people from diverse communities (First Nations, CALD, Disabled and LGBTQIA+)				

Long Term Goal 4

Develop media partnerships with media outlets that target diverse communities of children and their families

ACTION	PERSON	RESOURCES	TIMELINE	CONSULTATION	EVALUATION
Identify media outlets that target diverse communities	ED, Access & Inclusion Coordinator	Time	By end of 2022	SBS radio MAV SSWE	Access & Inclusion coordinator to review and add to the list annually
Develop relationships with community media outlets	ED, AD, Access & Inclusion Coordinator	Time	By end of 2023	SBS radio MAV SSWE	Review the level of coverage after each public project.
OUTCOME	Media outlets consistently help us to reach our target audiences in diverse communities				

Section 6:

References

This plan was created in consultation with:

Diversity Arts Australia

Reconciliation Australia

The Victorian State Government

Arts Access Victoria

Arts Access Australia

Carly Findlay

Tom Middleditch

Gorkem Acarađlu

Bendigo District Aboriginal Corporation

Zoe Belle Gender Collective

Minus 18

A woman stands in an aviator costume with her arms stretched out to the side to imitate an airplane. Behind her are the outlines of two seesaws, and a billowing parachute.



Image credit: Jolyon James