

Gendered/inclusive language

A guide for staff of City of Wagga Wagga (Council)

Normalising gender equity in public and private life is a focus of Council. When we use gender neutral and inclusive language we are working to create a respectable and equitable community.

Having exchanges with gender neutral language means speaking and writing in a way that does not discriminate against a particular sex, social gender or gender identity and does not perpetuate gender stereotypes. Using gender-inclusive language is a powerful way to promote gender equality and eradicate gender bias (United Nations [Gender inclusive language](#)).

The examples below highlight the difference between gendered and inclusive words:

Gendered	Inclusive
He/him or her/she or his/her	They/them/their
You guys	You all, friends, everyone
Ladies and gentlemen	Everyone, friends, or nothing
Men and women (man and woman), boys and girls	Employees, staff, people, or used when it makes the sentence more inclusive. If you wouldn't write 'man surgeon' don't write 'woman surgeon'. You should only use female with good reason – eg. first female Prime Minister
Man hours, man the door, manpower	Work, staff, people, work hours, staff the door/work the door
Mankind	Humankind/ humanity
Man made	Synthetic, artificial
Fireman, waitress, policeman, chairman	Firefighter, wait staff, police officer, chair/chairperson
Actor/Actress	Actor
Mr and Mrs	Mr and Ms, or nothing
Disabled employee	Employee with a disability
Homosexual, dyke, faggot, tranny, leso, poofter, homo, lemon	Lesbian, gay, bisexual woman/man, transman, transwoman, transsexual person, transgender person
Husband, wife	Partner, spouse
Spokesman	Spokesperson
The girls in the office, woman doctor, male nurse, cleaning lady, female professor	Office staff, doctor, cleaner, professor

It's not about being 'politically correct' – it's about using language that is respectful, accurate and relevant to everyone ([Words at Work – Diversity Council of Australia](#))

Gender-based expressions

Gender based expressions also work to perpetuate gender stereotypes and show disrespect. These include:

- ‘She/he throws/runs/fights like a girl.’
- ‘She/he completed that in a manly way.’
- ‘Thank you to the ladies for making the room more beautiful today.’
- ‘Men just don’t understand.’
- ‘Men cannot do two things at the same time.’
- ‘Who wear the pants in that family/couple?’
- ‘That’s so gay’

Gendered sentences and an alternative inclusive option:

Gendered	Inclusive
Guests are invited to attend with their wives	Guests are invited to attend with their partners
Fathers babysit their children	Fathers care for their children
A substitute judge must certify that he has familiarised himself with the record of the proceedings.	Substitute judges must certify that they have familiarised themselves with the record of the proceedings.
If a complainant is not satisfied with the board’s decision, he can ask for a rehearing.	A complainant who is not satisfied with the board’s decision can ask for a rehearing.

Masculine and feminine words

When developing job advertisements, expressions of interest or other external documents, particular words may exclude a particular gender from considering a response or application.

The words listed below have come from academic research¹ into language that is 'coded' as masculine and feminine, reflecting societal bias about these genders. This means we associate each gender with those qualities, often at an unconscious level. These include:

Masculine words	Feminine words
Active	Affectionate
Adventurous	Child
Aggress*	Cheer
Ambition	Collab*
Analy*	Commit*
Assert	Communal

¹ Masculine and Feminine coded words: Gaucher, Danielle & Friesen, Justin & C Kay, Aaron. (2011). Evidence That Gendered Wording in Job Advertisements Exists and Sustains Gender Inequality. *Journal of personality and social psychology*. 101. 109-28. 10.1037/a0022530.

Athlet*	Compassion*
Autonom*	Connect
Boast	Considerate
Challeng*	Cooperat*
Compet*	Depend
Confident	Emotiona*
Courag*	Empath*
Decide	Feminine
Decision	Flatterable
Decisive	Gentle
Defend	Honest
Determin*	Interpersonal
Domina*	Interdependen*
Dominant	Interpersona*
Driven	Kind
Fearless	Kinship
Fight	Loyal
Force	Modesty
Greedy	Nag
Headstrong	Natur*
Hierarch*	Pleasant
Hostil*	Polite
Impulsive	Quiet*
Independen*	Respon*
Individual	Sensitiv*
Intellect	Submissive
Lead*	Support
Logic	Sympathy
Masculine	Tender
Objective	Together
Opinion	Trust
Outspoken	Understand
Persist	Warm
Principle*	Whin*
Reckless	Yield*
Self-confiden*	
Self-relian*	

Self-sufficien*	
Stubborn	
Superior	

* denotes the acceptance of all letters, hyphens or numbers following its appearance.

Terminology for sexual orientation – definitions

Understanding the terminology used for sexual orientation helps to breakdown prejudices and stereotypes and promote safer spaces for all. Use of the correct language will allow us to create a safe and inclusive Council.

Terminology ²	Definition
Gender	Refers to male and female identity that goes beyond the biological differences between men and women. Understandings of gender are continually evolving and can be considered the complex interrelationship between three dimensions, body, identity and expression. Culture may also play a part in determining gender.
Lesbian	Refers to a woman who is romantically and sexually attracted to other women
Gay	Refers to someone who is romantically and sexually attracted to people of the same gender identity as themselves. It is usually used to refer to men who are attracted to other men but may also be used by women.
Bisexual	refers to a person who is romantically and sexually attracted to individuals of their own gender and other genders.
Asexual	Refers to someone who does not experience sexual attraction. They may still experience feelings of affection towards another person.
Pansexual	Refers to people who are romantically and sexually attracted to people of all genders.
Queer	Used to describe non-conforming gender identities and sexual orientations
Intersex	Refers to the diversity of physical characteristics between the stereotypical male and female characteristics.
Trans (transgender)	Refers to a person whose gender identity, gender expression or behaviour does not align with their sex assigned at birth. A person classified as female at birth who identifies as a man may use the label trans, transman or man. Similarly, a person classified as male at birth who identifies as a woman may use the label trans, transwoman or woman.
Congruence	Refers to a feeling of harmony and comfort a person feels when their gender has been adequately named and recognised by themselves and others. Congruence may be social, hormonal, surgical and/or legal.
Transitioning	Is the term used when people are pursuing congruence measures.
Gender diverse and non-binary	Refers to people who do not identify as a woman or a man. Gender identity is not a binary. It is important to challenge thinking beyond the constructs of male and female.

² (Victorian Government <https://www.vic.gov.au/inclusive-language-guide>)

Brotherboys and sistergirls	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people may use these terms to refer to transgender people.
Cisgender	Refers to people whose gender identity is in line with the social expectations of their sex assigned at birth.

More definitions

There are some expressions which are heard when discussing equity and respect. These include:

Expressions	Definition
Bystander	A witness who sees or knows about inequality or disrespect who may or may not react to it.
Gender bias	An unfair difference in the way people of different genders are treated.
Gender equality	Ensuring everybody has an equal opportunity regardless of their gender.
Gender equity	Justice and fairness in the manner of treating individuals according to their respective needs.
Gender stereotypes	Preconceived ideas whereby females and males are arbitrarily assigned characteristics and roles determined and limited by their gender.
Me too (#metoo)	The 'me too' movement is a worldwide movement against sexual harassment and sexual assault. It followed sexual abuse allegations against film producer Harvey Weinstein in 2017 but may have originated as early as 2006 by activist Tarana Burke.
Primary prevention	Refers to strategies aimed at preventing (in this case) violence before it happens. It includes changing attitudes and behaviours and building awareness.
Secondary and tertiary programs	Aim to provide support and redress to victims and survivors of violence and deal with the aftermath of violence,
Sexism	Discrimination against a person on the basis of their gender identity or sexual orientation.
Unconscious bias	Social stereotype held about certain groups of people that individuals form outside of their own conscious awareness. The brain makes an assessment of a person or situation without realising it.