

### Why is Inclusive Communication important in the NSW SES?

Inclusive communication aims to reach as many people as possible in a clear, respectful way, contributing to a culture of inclusion. This means we need to consider the diversity of people who are part of our local community and the NSW general public. This includes people of different ages, genders, abilities and people from different social, economic, cultural and educational backgrounds.

#### Did you know:

- 3% of Australians identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander peoples
- 19% of Australians speak a language other than English at home
- 18.3% of Australians live with disability affecting their daily activities
- 44% of Australians age 15 – 74 years are at literacy level 1 to 2 (low level literacy)
- approximately 55% of Australians are at numeracy level 1 to 2 (low level numeracy) <sup>1</sup>

In our social media communications, given the diversity of our population, we want to:

- Write content with the diversity of the audience in mind.
- Be aware of how our words and messages demonstrate our values as an organisation (TARPS).
- Show people within and outside the NSW SES that the Service is a diverse and welcoming place; and
- Ensure our communication is mindful of the variety of people's personal, social, and professional identities.

If you prepare social media messages without taking diversity and inclusion into consideration, you may:

- miss out on connecting with a large component of your audience, or
- find that non-inclusive content pushes people away from engaging with the Service

### What is Inclusive Communication?

Inclusive communication means paying attention to the words you use in a message and the accompanying visual images. Inclusive communication avoids using words, expressions, images or assumptions that may exclude people. It demonstrates that the NSW SES respects and values all individuals, regardless of age, culture, gender, sexuality or other aspects of difference.

The following questions are helpful when drafting a message:

- Are you using words that may exclude individuals/groups (eg gendered language such as 'guys' instead of 'everyone')?
- Are you using images that represent one type of person/group (eg men)?
- Are you presenting your message in a clear and simple way that can be easily understood?

---

<sup>1</sup> <https://guides.service.gov.au/content-guide/accessibility-inclusivity/#audience-diversity>

When preparing inclusive content, remember that a person's sex, religion, nationality, racial group, age, or physical or mental characteristics should only be mentioned if this information is relevant to the message. It's unlawful to discriminate based on these aspects as well as gender identity, intersex status and sexual orientation. So, if you plan to mention any such characteristics in your communications, always ask yourself if it's relevant.

### What is Inclusive Language?

Diversity Council Australia defines inclusive language as language that is:

- respectful (ie. shows respect for all community members);
- accurate (ie. reflects the diversity of the real world rather than perpetuating stereotypes); and
- relevant to all (ie. meaningful to a wide audience).<sup>2</sup>

The table below provides a few examples of inclusive language:

Use Inclusive Words	Do Not Use Non-inclusive/Discriminatory Words
First Australians or Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples	ATSI/Aboriginals/Aborigines
Worker	Workman
Business Manager/Businessperson	Businessman or businesswoman
Chairperson	Chairman/Chairwoman
People with disability	Disabled people/handicapped people
People who are deaf or have a hearing impairment	Deaf people
People who are blind or have a vision impairment	Blind people
Older people/seniors	Old-age pensioners

### Top 10 Tips for Inclusive Social Media Messaging

1. Write content that all users can read and understand in plain English. Avoid NSW SES jargon – use non-technical words and short sentences. Make the text as clear, simple and direct as possible. This helps a variety of readers, including those using assistive technology such as screen readers, and those learning the English language.
2. Be aware of the diversity of your audience
3. Use people-first language (eg 'person with a disability' instead of 'disabled person')
4. Avoid language that is biased towards one gender. Use gender neutral language and inclusive pronouns (eg you, they, them, theirs, members, public, people, everyone instead of 'guys', 'girls', 'ladies')
5. Avoid using gendered emojis (ie use default yellow emojis to address a diverse public audience)

<sup>2</sup> Diversity Council Australia: Words at Work – Building Inclusion through the Power of Language, p2  
[https://www.dca.org.au/sites/default/files/dca\\_wordsatwork\\_overall\\_guide.pdf](https://www.dca.org.au/sites/default/files/dca_wordsatwork_overall_guide.pdf)

6. Don't assume gender or identity online. Address people by their names/usernames when responding to comments/messages. This is particularly important for customer service interactions on social media
7. Try to share diverse voices and images/photos. In a historically male-dominated Service, it's important to show that the NSW SES includes members of different age, gender, cultural backgrounds etc in a variety of different roles.
8. Provide descriptive captions for images/photos (enabling people with visual impairments to use text-to-voice software and understand how the image relates to the message). Facebook and Twitter provide specific fields for adding alternative-text to images. Add closed captions to videos to enhance access for people with permanent, temporary, or situational hearing impairments.
9. Remove offensive comments – if one of your posts receives a comment that is insensitive or hurtful towards any group or person, remove the comment immediately to demonstrate that the NSW SES does not tolerate that behavior. It's best not to publicly engage with the author of the comment as this may be seen as validating the comment and may attract similar types of response.

Be aware of your own stereotypes and biases, and willing to learn from those around you.

### Resources

The following resources are external leading practice resources for inclusive communications including social media content-creation:

- Australian Government Digital Guide to Accessibility & Inclusivity  
<https://guides.service.gov.au/content-guide/accessibility-inclusivity/>
- Australian Government Digital Guide to Writing Style  
<https://guides.service.gov.au/content-guide/writing-style/#readability>
- <https://www.digital.nsw.gov.au/design-system/guides/writing-content/writing-for-inclusivity>
- Diversity Council Australia: Words at Work – Building Inclusion through the Power of Language  
[https://www.dca.org.au/sites/default/files/dca\\_wordsatwork\\_overall\\_guide.pdf](https://www.dca.org.au/sites/default/files/dca_wordsatwork_overall_guide.pdf)