

CHIEF COMMISSIONER REPORT – NOVEMBER 2018

How proud each of us should be to be a member of an organisation committed to empowering girls and young women AND how proud each of us should be to be a member of an organisation committed to diversity and inclusion!

The Girl Guides Australia (GGA) Diversity and Inclusion Policy has recently been adopted by Guiding in Australia following broad consultation with members and external authorities. The policy aligns with federal and state anti-discrimination and equal opportunity law and adheres to privacy legislation.

Commitment to diversity and inclusion is an essential underpinning of the Girl Guide Promise and Law and a fundamental requirement for an organisation seeking to serve the Australian community.

For over 110 years, Girls Guides has empowered girls and young women to grow into confident, self-respecting, responsible community members. This has been achieved with a commitment to diversity and inclusion for all our members and it is the intention of Girl Guides Australia to continue to be a diverse and inclusive organisation.

Girl Guides Australia is committed to providing a respectful, open and safe environment where:

- All people are treated equitably and with mutual respect regardless of their background, ethnicity, culture, language, beliefs, gender identity, sexual orientation, age, socio-economic status, level of ability, additional needs, family structure or lifestyle; and
- Inclusive practices actively support diversity and counteract bias and prejudice.

Membership of GGA and the State Girl Guides organisations is limited to girls and women. Under the terms of the GGA Diversity and Inclusion Policy, 'girls and women' includes persons who identify as, and live their lives as, females.

I have been encouraged by the positive comments, emails and messages from Guiding members on the release of the Diversity and Inclusion Policy. The policy together with the accompanying procedures and guidance notes can be found on [Guide Lines](#) and recognise the broad array of females who can benefit from the opportunities offered by Girl Guides and encourages us, as members of Guiding, to proactively aim for inclusive practices.

At the Sydney Jamboree we took the opportunity to hear the voice of our Guides. Why they initially joined Girl Guides and why they continue to be part of the Guiding community?

The young women spoke about the opportunities Girl Guides offer them to develop new connections and relationships, build the confidence and resilience of themselves and other Guides, and challenge themselves through a variety of activities and programs.

'I cannot believe the sorts of things we get to do as Guides. I have had so much fun but have also pushed myself to do things that years ago would have freaked me out'.

They also spoke about the benefits of being part of an organisation where they are safe to be themselves without judgement or criticism, and to support other young women to do the same.

'At school, everyone is hassled to look the same and like the same things. None of that matters when I am at Guides. I can be me'.

Many also spoke about Guiding being misunderstood in the broader community, including by other girls and young women.

'People need to realise that Guides is more than just being nice to people and selling biscuits. We fly planes, jump off cliffs, have heaps of fun, and learn how to be strong and independent at the same time'.

So please, continue to encourage self-awareness, awareness of others and personal development. Continue to promote and create environments where our members, volunteers and employees feel safe, respected and supported; and where they are able to learn, work, thrive and participate.

This is Girl Guiding! These are the leaders of tomorrow!

With every best wish

Rosemary Derwin
Acting Chief Commissioner