## Words Matter: Developing inclusive language guides in a tertiary setting

## Slide 1: Words Matter: Developing inclusive language guides in a tertiary setting

Stevie Lane (they/them)

Kay Barnard (they/them)

## Slide 2: Acknowledgement of Country

## Slide 3: Content Warning

Image of a triangular warning symbol next to the text: This presentation will contain upsetting or sensitive topics including racism, colonialism, intergenerational trauma, LGBTIQA+ discrimination, mental health and ableism.

## Slide 4: Why an Inclusive Language Guide?

It ensures:

* We have respectful conversations about ourselves and others
* Use consistent language across the university
* We are putting people and their lived experience at the forefront of what we do
* Language reflects society and culture

## Slide 5: What is Inclusive Language and why is it important?

Four captioned images showing three people watching a sports game from behind a fence. First, reality – the tallest person is standing on multiple boxes, the second person is standing on one box and the third person is standing in a hole and can’t see over the fence. Second, equality – all three are standing on one box each, but the third person still can’t see over the fence. Third, equity – the first person has no box but can see over the fence, the second person is on one box and the third person is on two boxes and they can all see over the fence. Four, liberation – the fence is removed and there is no need for the boxes.

* Relevant
* A sign of respect and reflects how far we’ve come
* Develops and maintains a welcoming and inclusive culture
* Promotes mental health and wellbeing
* Goes beyond tolerance - acceptance, value and celebrated
* It can be empowering to people and communities
* It ensures we avoid stereotypes and disrespectful and discriminatory language and behaviour
* Reflects society and culture

## Slide 6: We need to acknowledge the impact of Colonisation on Language

**Colonisation has had a devastating impact on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples**

* Still severely impacted by disparaging health and social determinants.
* ***Racism is still a huge social problem***

**Colonisation impacts the lives of, and language we use to refer to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, and many other communities to this day.**

* A shift from collectivism to individualism
* Binary systems e.g., gender
* Western patriarchal views of men and women
* Negative views on aging
* Inherited British laws
* Deficit / medical model of disability, sexuality etc

## Slide 7: ECU’s Inclusive Language Guide: Collaboration

**Coordinated by ECU’s Equity Projects team in collaboration with and input from:**

* Staff and students with lived experience
* Kurongkurl Katitjin (Centre for Indigenous Australian Education and Research at ECU)
* Athena Swan team
* International Office
* Pride @ ECU (LGBTIQA+ subcommittee)
* Disability, Access and Inclusion subcommittee (DAISC)
* Corporate Communications team (to align with existing comms guidelines)
* Staff without specific knowledge / extensive exposure to inclusive language – to sense check

## Slide 8: ECU’s Inclusive Language Guide: Content

Key Focus Areas

* Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander
* Age
* Disability
* Sex, Gender and Sexuality
* Race, Ethnicity and Culture
* Religion and Belief
* Mental Health

It is an evolving document as language is always changing and evolving

## Slide 9: ECU’s Inclusive Language Guide: Feedback

* Staff, students and people beyond ECU have found value in the guide for things like:
	+ Embedding inclusive language in curriculum
	+ Inclusive language in assessments
	+ Students advocating for inclusive language in the classroom
	+ Developing their own guidelines
* Most people just want to know how to be respectful and consistent with their language
* We have been asked to provide a quick guide to refer to
* Mental health section has been added

## Slide 10: Case Scenario 1: Autistic student

An autistic undergraduate psychology student attends a lecture on the topic of developmental disabilities. The lecturer starts talking about autism and how devastating an autism diagnosis can be to a child’s family. They go on to show a video of an autistic child having a ‘meltdown’ in a shopping centre and negative reactions from onlookers. The lecturer talks negatively about what they describe as ‘low functioning autistic children’. They then show a picture of the character Sheldon Cooper from the Big Bang Theory and say that people with Aspergers syndrome can be very intelligent and ‘high functioning’ but struggle with social situations. The student leaves that class early and upset. She was initially excited about covering this topic, but is now not interested in engaging in the content.

1. What kind of language did the lecturer use that was not inclusive / outdated?
2. How might this lecture impact this student beyond their initial response?
3. What kind of language could the lecturer have use instead?

## Slide 11: Case Scenario 1: Non-binary student

A non-binary student is participating in a volunteer peer mentoring program which assists new students to the university during orientation. When the student registers for the program, they are assured by administrators that their affirmed name has been noted and used in all interactions and communications moving forward. When they arrive at orientation, they notice the Program Coordinator has printed their program materials and name tag with their legal name (which some trans and gender diverse people may refer to as their ‘deadname’). The student tries to quietly explain the issue to the Program Coordinator, who says their legal name out loud while trying to rectify the situation, explains that it’s not his fault, and tells the student that he understands because people use his full name instead of his nickname all the time.

1. What kind of language did the Program Coordinator use that was not inclusive / outdated?
2. How might this have made the student feel?
3. How could the Program Coordinator have approached this situation differently?

## Slide 12: Thank you

**Stevie Lane (they/them)**

Equity Projects Officer

Access and Equity

Office of DVC (Students, Equity and Indigenous)

s.lane@ecu.edu.au

**Kay Barnard (they/them)**

Equity Projects Officer

Access and Equity

Office of DVC (Students, Equity and Indigenous)

k.barnard@ecu.edu.au