

RESPECTFULLY SPEAKING (NON-DISCRIMINATORY LANGUAGE)

The Australian population is a mix of many different ethical and cultural groups. An important Australian social value is the idea of giving people a “fair go”. Using appropriate language is part of this and in some cases is part of Australian law. The workplace and learning environment, in this case the hospital, is a place where everybody deserves to be treated with *dignity, courtesy and respect*.

The following information will assist all Australians and non Australians living, working or visiting, to use non-discriminatory language at work in the hospital while mixing with patients, their families and hospital staff :

IMPORTANT POINTS

- When describing a man and a woman who are partners, (they may or may not be married) treat both partners as equal. In Australian culture, males and females are equal by law in the community and in the workplace.
- Avoid using language that treats women as less important than men. For example, do not call women girls. Always ask if you are not sure about whether someone should be addressed by their title, for example Mrs. Jones or as Jane because her name is Jane Jones. It is better to be too formal rather than too familiar in the first instance.
- Use professional titles in the same way for males and females. For example; Dr. John Smith and Dr. Marie Jones, not Dr John Smith and Mrs. Marie Jones. If you do not know someone’s marital status, use the word partner instead of husband and wife. This is usually acceptable to both married and not married Australian couples.
- Avoid using words and phrase that are racial and ethnic stereotypes. This is offensive to many people. For example, calling someone a “wog” is not appropriate.
- Any nicknames or derogatory words that label people should be avoided and may be offensive. For example, talk about asylum seekers instead of illegal migrants. Australians often use nicknames affectionately and it takes time for non - Australians to understand that a nickname can be either a positive or a negative label. Some nicknames however are always offensive so until used to the culture it is better to avoid all nicknames. Do not use nicknames and labels for sexual identities. Accepted terms are heterosexual, lesbian, gay men and bisexual people.
- Australian indigenous/native people are known as Aborigines. This term Aborigine, needs a capital letter and must not be shortened.
- Recognize every person as an individual so you are not discriminating against them because of their race.
- Any person who is an Australian citizen whatever country of birth should be described as Australian

- People with medical conditions such as HIV/Aids should be described in the following way; as a person living with HIV/AIDS
- People with mental illness; as a person with a psychiatric disability or a person with mental illness
- People with disabilities should be spoken of in the following terms:

Vision impaired, not blind, hearing impaired, not deaf, a person with paraplegia, not paraplegic.

- Avoid talking about a person as a “sufferer” of something

Some terms give the impression of people as objects not human beings. This is to be avoided.

If you want to discuss the issue of language or need information please contact the Medical Education Officer at the LGH Ms. Robin Ikin Ph. 7428