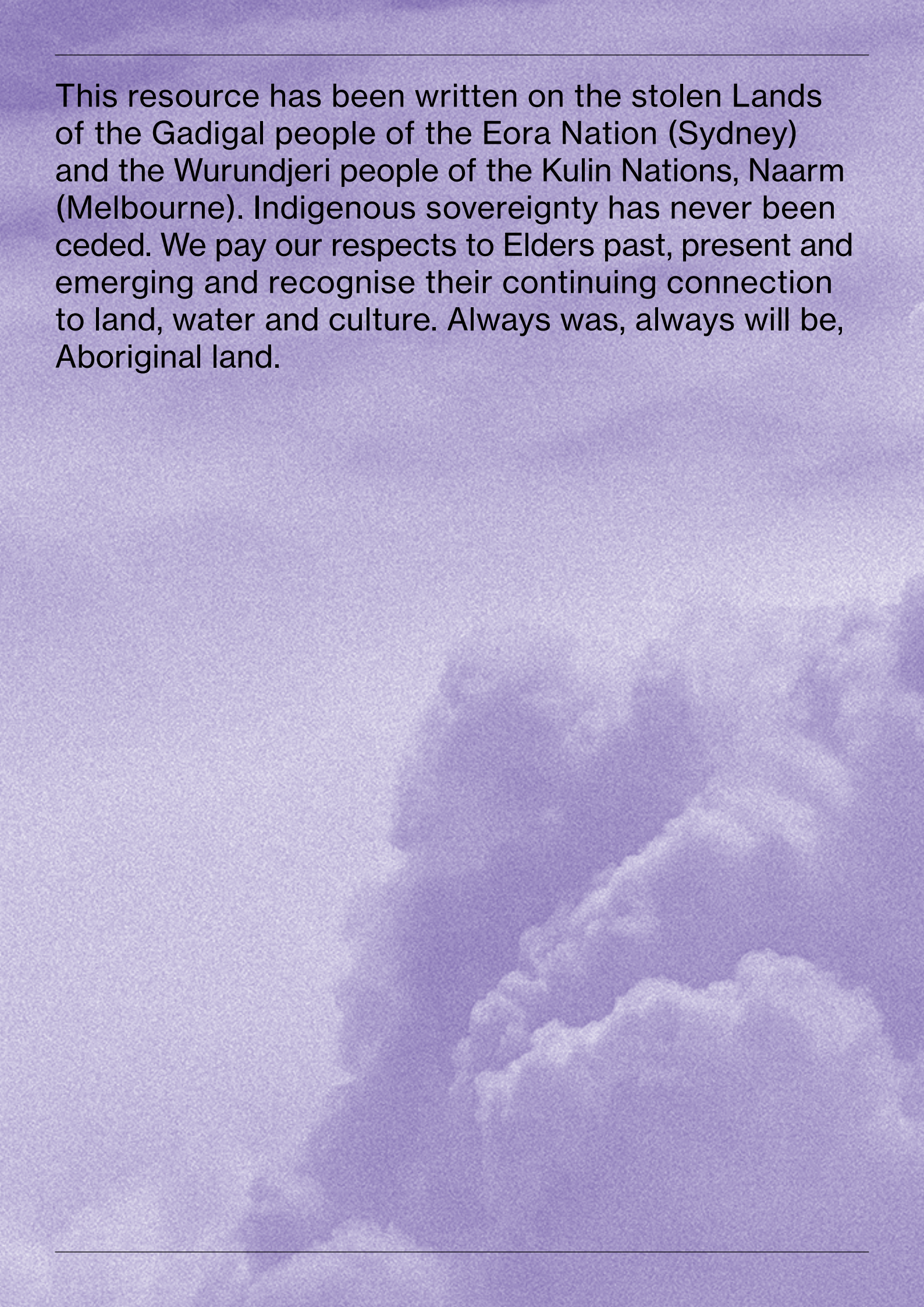

CLEAR EXPECTATIONS

GUIDELINES

→ FOR

INSTITUTIONS, GALLERIES AND CURATORS
WORKING WITH TRANS, NON-BINARY
AND GENDER DIVERSE ARTISTS

This resource has been written on the stolen Lands of the Gadigal people of the Eora Nation (Sydney) and the Wurundjeri people of the Kulin Nations, Naarm (Melbourne). Indigenous sovereignty has never been ceded. We pay our respects to Elders past, present and emerging and recognise their continuing connection to land, water and culture. Always was, always will be, Aboriginal land.



This resource has been compiled by artists, [Spence Messih & Archie Barry](#). This resource has been copy-edited by [Bobuq Sayed](#) and proofread by [EO Gill](#). This resource, in its first iteration, has been financially assisted by [Countess](#) and [NAVA](#).



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CLEAR
EXPECTATIONS

GUIDELINES FOR INSTITUTIONS,
GALLERIES AND CURATORS WORKING
WITH TRANS, NON-BINARY AND GENDER
DIVERSE ARTISTS

INTRODUCTION

Note on the Resource

This resource has been compiled by Spence Messih and Archie Barry, and it therefore reflects our personal experiences and the specificities and limitations embedded in our worldviews as young transmasculine artists in an Australian context. While we have attempted a thorough approach to consider multiple issues, we acknowledge that this resource will be unable to address all situations, as the art world, gender and language are constantly changing constructs.

Scope

A non-exhaustive overview of suggested best practice for art spaces ranging from artist run initiatives to larger institutes, when working with trans, non-binary and gender diverse creatives.

INTRODUCTION

What is the need for this Resource?

Visibility and representation is not always an inherently positive and beneficial experience for those being represented and should not be assumed as such. Being 'represented' often comes at a large personal cost where artistic exposure does not equal actual resources or access to influence, nor does it make the lives of trans, non-binary and gender diverse artists easier. Visibility often means having to respond on someone else's terms, speak only about one's gender identity and provide evidence of, and defend, one's own existence.

For trans, non-binary and gender diverse artists, representation can lead to various issues including the commodification of personal identity, the tokenisation of work, having the complexity of one's practice be reduced to a gender-centric reading and witnessing the erasure of gender diversity in broader gendered contexts. Other challenges include being excluded from dialogue, being misgendered in a public domain and having artwork censored.

Experiencing harm from the bureaucracy of institutional decision-making is a common experience for trans, non-binary and gender diverse people, even in the Australian arts sector. Institutions, galleries and curators often fail to respect and affirm the gender identities of trans, non-binary and gender diverse people — this is particularly alarming as institutions often engage with this community of people to represent their gender identities. Through lack of considered care and education, institutions, galleries and curators can commodify and profit off the representation of trans identities, bodies and experiences. In doing so, they perpetuate a hateful history of trans erasure, tokenisation and disempowerment. Acknowledging the power that institutions, galleries and curators hold, it is crucial that minority groups are treated with informed and nuanced care and respect. This is a responsibility that institutions, galleries and curators must accept.

This resource aims to provide institutions, galleries and curators with tools and strategies for working with and supporting trans, non-binary and gender diverse people.

TERMS YOU MAY HAVE HEARD

Transgender/Trans: A term covering a range of self-defined identities that transgress socially defined and expected gender norms, based on perceived sex at birth. It may mean someone who mentally and emotionally identifies as a different gender to the one they were assigned by society, often living their lives as that gender, and who may choose to undergo gender affirming surgeries. Or it could be a person who transcends the binary gender system altogether, so that they identify as neither 'male' nor 'female', 'man' nor 'woman'. The 'trans' in transgender comes from a Latin word meaning 'on the other side of'.

Cisgender/Cis: The 'cis' in cisgender comes from a Latin word meaning 'on this side of' and is a term used for a person whose physical sex, gender identity and gender expression all align. For example, someone who has been gendered as female from birth, goes by the pronouns 'she' and 'her' and feels comfortable and aligned with that identity.

Non-Binary/Enby: An umbrella term for people whose gender identity exists between or beyond the feminine/masculine gender binary. Some non-binary people identify as trans, others do not.

Brotherboys: "Brotherboys are Indigenous transgender people with a male spirit, whose bodies were considered female at birth. Brotherboys choose to live their lives as male, regardless of which stage/path medically they choose. Brotherboys have a strong sense of their cultural identity."
— *Sisters & Brothers NT*, an advocacy and support group that celebrates gender, intersex and sexuality diversity.

Sistergirls: "Sistergirls are Aboriginal transgender women (assigned male at birth) who have a distinct cultural identity and often take on female roles within the community, including looking after children and family. Many Sistergirls live a traditional lifestyle and have strong cultural backgrounds. Their cultural, spiritual, and religious beliefs are pivotal to their lives and identities."
— *Sisters & Brothers NT*, an advocacy and support group that celebrates gender, intersex and sexuality diversity.

TERMS YOU MAY HAVE HEARD

- Queer:** An umbrella term and a reclaimed pejorative word to refer to all LGBTIQ+ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, intersex, queer, asexual, and more) people. A politicised self-defined sexual orientation that advocates breaking binary thinking and seeing both sexual orientation and gender identity as fluid and interconnected experiences. Can also be a simple label to explain a complex set of minority sexual behaviours and desires that are not heterosexual. For example, a person who is attracted to multiple genders may identify as queer. Queer may not be an appropriate term to use when organising events or working with elders within the community as it is historically a derogatory word, consultation on this is important.
-
- Genderqueer:** A person whose gender identity is neither 'man' nor 'woman', is between or beyond genders, or is some combination of genders. Genderqueer identities are usually related to or in reaction to the social construction of gender, gender stereotypes and the gender binary system. Some genderqueer people identify as trans, while others do not.
-
- Gender Diverse:** An umbrella term that includes all the different ways gender can be lived and perceived. It can include people questioning their gender, those who identify as trans or transgender, genderqueer, non-binary and many more labels.
-
- Transphobia:** An umbrella term for a range of negative and violent attitudes (for example, fear, anger, intolerance, resentment, erasure or discomfort) that one may have towards members of the trans, non-binary and gender diverse community. The term can also connote a fear, disgust, or dislike of being perceived as anything other than cisgender. Transphobia kills trans people.
-

TERMS YOU MAY HAVE HEARD

'Female-identifying':

This term is often used when trying to include trans women, however it is considered exclusionary as it insinuates that trans women only 'identify as women' rather than being women, reverting back to the harmful ideology that trans women are not women. Rather, trans women are women. If you want to welcome trans women into your organisation you can say, for example, "This event welcomes applications/participation by women (cis, trans, transfeminine)" or "This day/event celebrates all women".

Drag:

A style of entertainment involving people dressing and acting as an exaggeration of gender stereotypes, often characterised by flamboyance and sexual innuendo. Anyone may perform drag acts, however, it is important to understand that while gender non-conformity may be a form of entertainment for some, it is a personal identity for others.

PHYSICAL SEX, SEXUALITY, GENDER IDENTITY AND GENDER EXPRESSION – WHAT’S THE DIFFERENCE?

Physical Sex

Physical sex refers to anatomical characteristics that are often conflated with gender identity, such as genitals and chest shape. It is inappropriate to ask about the anatomical decisions a trans, non-binary or gender diverse person has made about their body.

Intersex

Intersex is the term used for people who are born with physical, hormonal or genetic features that don't fit medical and social norms of 'female' and 'male' bodies.

Sexuality

Sexuality refers to who a person is romantically and/or sexually attracted to. Gay, lesbian, bisexual, asexual and pansexual are some examples of sexualities.

Gender Identity

Gender Identity is a person's internal sense of self with regards to gender. Some people feel more masculine, some people feel more feminine, others have changing or less strong gendered feelings. There are many genders including women, men, trans women, trans men, bigender, agender, non-binary, genderfluid and genderqueer people. It is important to note that some trans people may identify specifically as a trans woman or a trans man while some identify as a woman or a man.

Gender Expression

Gender Expression refers to choices and propensities around gendered appearance and can include clothing, hair styles, hormone therapy, surgical procedures, vocabulary and body language.

GUIDELINES

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INSTITUTIONS, GALLERIES AND CURATORS
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One way to directly demonstrate that your program and organisation is inclusive of trans, non-binary and gender diverse artists is to turn your words into actions. This can be achieved by reflecting gender diversity in all facets of your organisation, program and staffing, and to focus on creating a consistently accessible and safe environment for the people that you wish to engage.

Pronouns and Misgendering

When speaking and writing, we often refer to other people through gendered pronouns. Examples of pronouns include 'she', 'her' and 'he', 'him'. Other pronouns you may be less familiar with are 'they' and 'them', 'ze' and 'hir'. In response to the limitations of the English language, these words have been created to reflect non-binary genders. It is important to note that you can't assume someone's gender identity or what pronouns they use by their gender expression or name.

Misgendering is the process of using a pronoun or other word that disregards someone's sense of self or their gender identity. When a trans, non-binary or gender diverse person is misgendered, especially in front of other people or in a professional setting, it feels extremely disorienting.

The question 'What pronouns do you use?', or beginning an introduction with the phrase 'My name is ____, I use ____ pronouns. I want to make sure to address you correctly, how do you like to be addressed?' are appropriate ways to ask for someone's personal pronouns. This may seem like an awkward thing to do, but it is a far better approach than using incorrect pronouns. If you accidentally misgender someone, apologising in the moment and repeating your phrase with the correct pronoun is an appropriate way forward. While you may feel embarrassed or think 'there was no time to correct myself', affirming a person's gender identity is far more important than your ego and it only takes a few seconds. If you hear someone else misgender a person, correct them by saying '(Name of person) uses the pronouns ____'. You should do this work whether the person whose pronoun was misused is present or not.

Respecting Privacy

For many reasons, such as safety and privacy, not every trans, non-binary and gender diverse person is 'out' as being a particular gender or sexual identity. In relation to gender identity, the term 'passing' is used to refer to someone's ability to be perceived as cisgender by mainstream society. The concept of passing can also be applied to racial and cultural identity, ethnicity, social class, sexual orientation, religion, age and disability status. Passing is always related to privilege, with the identity category one passes as often having more privilege than their marginalised lived identity. For example, a mixed race person with light skin would 'pass' as a white person, whereas a mixed race person with darker skin would not. Here, whiteness is the privileged identity.

It is important to know and remember that not every trans, non-binary or gender diverse person is concerned with, or aspires to, 'pass' as cisgender. To avoid 'outing' someone, it is crucial that you have the permission of the individual to disclose their gender identity to colleagues, other participants or the public. As social media has a life of its own and does not guarantee safety for trans, non-binary and gender diverse people, ask before taking and using images of people for marketing purposes. Make clear requests, avoid invasive questions and assumptions, and allow the artist to steer the decision making.

Addressing Audiences

In written communications and at events, it is important to acknowledge that your audience members may be gender diverse. In addressing your audiences, phrases such as 'Ladies and gentlemen, can I please have your attention' and 'The woman in yellow has a question' can be replaced with 'May I please have everybody's attention' and 'The person in yellow has a question'. Using gender neutral and inclusive language helps to create a safe environment for everyone.

Inclusion as the Curatorial Framework

Many exhibitions and other curated projects seek to include trans, non-binary and gender diverse artists alongside other gendered perspectives in order to represent a more diverse pool of knowledge and insight. While this is a step in the right direction, inclusion needs to be a practice embedded in the philosophical underpinnings of the exhibition or project, instead of an afterthought or to meet diversity quotas. Tokenism happens when a trans, non-binary or gender diverse artist is invited to a group exhibition at the last minute or when organisers do not follow through or communicate clearly around presenting a 'range of voices'.

If you're featuring the work of trans, non-binary and gender diverse people, don't censor their work to 'protect' the galleries reputation. For example, when working with trans, non-binary and gender diverse people, documentation footage of performance works or artist talks should not be censored or edited out. Any editing of documentation footage should be done with consultation, clear communication and consent.

It is important to acknowledge and work against the continued systematic and historical erasure of trans, non-binary and gender diverse people. Making the effort to educate yourself and your staff about trans history, trans studies, and trans resistance is the best way to ensure you are working *with* and not inadvertently against the artists you invite into your programs.

Consultation

Paid consultation by trans, non-binary and gender diverse people should be engaged when exhibitions, events or publications centre around concepts that are linked to trans or non-binary people (such as gender, sexuality, embodiment, identity, feminism). It is important to acknowledge that the person advising you or your organisation is drawing on a wealth of personal experience that is often self-funded, labour-intensive, exhausting and traumatic. It is important that they are respected through proper financial support, respectful communication and given autonomy over their contribution.

Autonomy

Where an exhibition, event or publication centres around concepts that are linked to trans, non-binary and gender diverse people (such as gender, sexuality, embodiment, identity, feminism), seek out opportunities to commission trans, non-binary and gender diverse artists, writers and theorists to produce new material. This creates situations where ideas concerning us are addressed by us.

Consider and discuss with the artist how installation decisions may impact or undermine a trans, non-binary or gender diverse artist's politics and/or message.

TERF is short for trans exclusionary radical feminist. While varied, TERF rhetoric advocates for biological essentialism, which is the idea that a person *is* and will always *be* the sex they were assigned at birth, that bodies have an inherently biological gendered truth of either 'female' or 'male' and that trans people, particularly trans women, should be excluded from feminism and/or the lesbian identity. Tired TERF slogans include, 'biology is not bigotry', 'trans men are really women' and 'trans women are really men'. TERF rhetoric is hate speech because it attacks and excludes a demographic of people. If you are curating exhibitions or programs, particularly 'all-woman' events or exhibitions exploring ideas of femininity, feminism or womanhood, you need to be aware of TERF rhetoric, what it looks like and how damaging it is, not just to trans people, but to feminism as a whole and to people who work to dismantle misogyny. Simply put, TERF rhetoric is not feminism.

Creating a Safer Environment

It is common for trans, non-binary and gender diverse people to do a great deal of invisible labour so that they can feel okay being in institutional spaces — from working out the safest transport routes to and from venues, to when and where to go to the bathroom, to how to best introduce themselves and make any requests around language. Inviting trans people into your space or program isn't enough, the space and staff have to be prepared and safe. Some recommendations for making the space as safe and prepared as possible;

- Letting trans, non-binary and gender diverse artists know *how* the space is safe. For example, bathroom access and that, when appropriate, staff are briefed on correct pronouns.
- In public forums such as artist talks, panel discussions or recorded conversations, brief artists on questions prior to asking them.
- For performance works, ensure there is private and contained space for rehearsal or warm up.
- Ensure pronoun checking for *all* artists when creating public content such as radio or print interviews, podcasts, exhibition reviews etc. For example, an email introduction between an artist and the media could be 'Hi (Name of media person), I'd like to introduce you to (Name of artist). (Name of artist) uses the pronouns _____. (They are/she is/he) is looking forward to speaking with you.' You can do this work on behalf of the artist to help normalise the practice.

Inclusive Labelling Practices of Bathrooms

Venues can make bathrooms as safe as possible for trans, non-binary and gender diverse artists and audience members by labelling the facilities, not the bodies using them. For example, replacing signage such as 'women' and 'men' with an image of a urinal or a toilet, or simply the word 'toilets' or 'bathrooms' ensures that people can use the facilities that best align with their needs and identities. Sanitary bins and baby change facilities should be available in all bathrooms. In the [Transgender Discrimination ADB Factsheet](#), the Anti-Discrimination Board of New South Wales recommends to employers that it is "safest legally" to allow people to "use the toilets and change rooms of the gender with which [they] identify". Aside from the legal dimension, this also upholds respectful relationships.

Collecting Data

Actively work against the erasure of trans, non-binary and gender diverse people caused by heteronormative and cisgender systems by making structural changes to your data collection system and language. People often conflate sex with gender, so please see above for definitions. Asking for 'sex' is not appropriate.

- Update all forms and database categories to reflect gender diversity. Include non-binary selectors. Recommended gender options for forms:
 - Woman
 - Man
 - Non-Binary
 - Other, please specify: _____
- Add Mx, pronounced *mix*, as a gender neutral title option i.e. Dr, Ms, Mr, Mx. Consider removing honorific fields.
- Having 'trans' as a gender identity option is not appropriate unless you are collecting this information specifically. As trans women **are** women and trans men **are** men, they may use those selectors.

Managerial Responsibilities

- Hire trans, non-binary and gender diverse people in staff, management and advisory capacities. Do not ask or expect these staff members to be unpaid consultants on gender diversity. Pay trans, non-binary and gender diverse people properly for the work they do whether it be new work development, public programming, consultation or participating in artist talks.
- Brief staff *before* they begin working with trans, non-binary and gender diverse people. This briefing should cover names, pronouns and any access requirements. The [Transgender People At Work Guideline](#) written by the Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission provides comprehensive best practice suggestions and documents for supporting staff members who are coming out and/or transitioning.
- Don't wait until a staff member, audience member, artist or other member of the public expresses their concern over language and gender diversity. Seek out professional development from your relevant LGBTIQ+ state advocacy and training organisations, particularly by LGBTIQ+ led training organisations. Visit the [National LGBTI Health Alliance](#) for a comprehensive listing of state-specific professional development, education and training opportunities.

NSW

[Here and Now LGBTIQ+ Inclusivity Training, *Twenty10*](#)

[LGBTI Awareness and Inclusion-Tailored, *ACON*](#)

[Intersex: Tailored Training, *Oll Australia \(NATIONAL\)*](#)

VIC

[Trans and Gender Diverse Introduction, *Transgender Victoria* and/or \[LGBT Training, *Transgender Victoria Living LGBTI, Gay and Lesbian Health Victoria*\]\(#\)](#)

QLD

[Rainbow Pride at Work and/or Basic LGBTI Cultural Awareness and/or Creating Inclusive Services, *Queensland AIDS Council*](#)

TAS

[Champions for Change, *Working it Out*](#)

SA

[Foundations of LGBTI Inclusion, *ShineSA*](#)

WA

[Freedom Centre LGBTI Diversity trainings, *Freedom Centre*](#)

Supporting Career Development and Longevity

Think about the longevity of artists' careers, not just about diversity quotas as dictated by funding bodies. One way of actively avoiding the trap of tokenising trans, non-binary and gender diverse bodies and identities is by doing more than just inviting them in for public programs and one-off public events. Galleries, institutions and curators need to engage with, and support the practices of trans, non-binary and gender diverse people through ongoing conversation, the commissioning of new work and writing, reading artist newsletters and articles, visiting exhibition openings and events of artists you have worked with in the past and considering works for collection.

An issue for many artists from minority backgrounds is having one's whole practice reduced to an identity politics reading. Acknowledge and allow space for complexity: not all trans, non-binary and gender diverse people make work about their gender experience. Don't expect or ask trans, non-binary or gender diverse people to keep making the same work about the same things — let us grow.

If you have any suggestions, would like to use this resource or are interested in supporting the continual revision of this document please contact trans.inclusive.guidelines@gmail.com

We would like to thank the following organisations for their support:

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