

Australian Volunteers Program's Diverse SOGIESC Statement of Intent

VISION

The Australian Volunteers Program fosters a safe and equitable environment where people with diverse sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, and sex characteristics (SOGIESC) are supported to fully participate as volunteers, staff and partners, and have equal access to contribute to and benefit from the Australian Volunteers Program.

IMPORTANT NOTE ON LANGUAGE

The Australian Volunteers Program acknowledges the significance of language and terminology and that the use of inappropriate language and terminology can be disempowering and, in some cases, harmful to communities and individuals.

The Australian Volunteers Program acknowledges that in order to effectively engage LGBTIQ+ people in our program, it is important to use language and terminology that is used by them. We recognise that across the global community people use a wide range of terms to describe themselves depending on where they live and how they identify. We fully support local autonomy and aim to use local definitions and cultural terms in the countries we operate in.

As an Australian program, we mostly use the term LGBTIQ+. LGBTIQ+ stands for: Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex and Queer. Importantly, the plus aims to include people whose identity is not represented in the LGBTIQ acronym. The program also uses the term 'diverse SOGIESC' to describe people with diverse sexual orientation, gender identity and expression and sex characteristics. This is an inclusive term, not limited to countries or cultures, and is most commonly used in human rights and anti-discrimination law.



PURPOSE

The Australian Volunteers Program aims to be fully supportive and inclusive of people with diverse SOGIESC, and be exemplary in our approach. Working towards a safe, supportive and equitable environment for people with diverse SOGIESC is an essential part of ensuring overall diversity and inclusion. We recognise that LGBTIQ+ volunteers, staff and partners have been and always will be integral to our success.

CONTEXT

In Australia and many other countries there has been significant progress in recognising and protecting the rights of people with diverse SOGIESC. However, at least 69 countries have national laws criminalising same-sex relations between consenting adults. In addition, at least nine countries have national laws criminalising forms of gender expression that target transgender and gender nonconforming people.¹

“Everyday discrimination”, fuelled by entrenched discriminatory attitudes and facilitated by lack of effective anti-discrimination laws, affects LGBTIQ+ people everywhere – including in education, healthcare, employment, housing, and within families.²

The Australian Volunteers Program is committed to ensuring that international volunteering is inclusive and accessible to Australians from a range of backgrounds, with diverse perspectives, identities and abilities. While data on people with diverse SOGIESC is incomplete, the 2014 Australian Human Rights Commission Face the Facts research suggests up to 11 per cent of Australians have diverse SOGIESC.³ To ensure the program reflects the diversity of Australian society, it is important to intentionally include and support people with diverse SOGIESC to participate in the program.

OUR COMMITMENT

The program’s approach to diverse SOGIESC inclusion is underpinned by our commitment to:

- Ensuring a rights-based approach to diverse SOGIESC inclusion.
- Recognising diversity within LGBTIQ+ communities in Australia and around the world.
- Taking an intersectional approach to our work – recognising there are multiple aspects and identities that create discrimination and privilege, including SOGIESC.
- Ensuring work on diverse SOGIESC inclusion is informed and led by LGBTIQ+ people.
- Zero tolerance of attitudes or practices that discriminate against people with diverse SOGIESC in any way.
- Partnering with organisations and sector experts that support and champion diverse SOGIESC inclusion, both in Australia and the countries we operate in.
- Providing resources and information in ways that do not require LGBTIQ+ people to identify themselves as such.

PRIORITIES

The program will prioritise:

- Leadership, resourcing, systems and oversight that increase diverse SOGIESC inclusion across the program.
- Developing and implementing a strategy for diverse SOGIESC inclusion.
- Developing and implementing a diverse SOGIESC inclusion learning and development plan for staff, volunteers and partner organisations.
- Ensuring that information, policies and procedures across the program are diverse SOGIESC inclusive, with a specific focus on risk management and safety and security.
- Increasing participation of LGBTIQ+ volunteers through the provision of specific resources, communications, and support.
- Responding to discrimination, harassment and assault experienced by LGBTIQ+ volunteers and staff and increasing trust in program staff and incident reporting processes.
- Developing and strengthening partnerships with organisations focused on diverse SOGIESC inclusion, in Australia and the countries we operate in, and providing specific opportunities for LGBTIQ+ volunteers.
- Applying a diverse SOGIESC inclusion lens to monitoring and evaluation activities to assess progress and improve outcomes.

OUTCOMES

Through our actions and commitment to diverse SOGIESC inclusion, the Australian Volunteer Program strives to achieve the following outcomes:

- The program is actively inclusive of people with diverse SOGIESC.
- Increased participation by Australians with diverse SOGIESC.
- The program has developed strong partnerships with organisations focused on diverse SOGIESC inclusion and is achieving impact.
- Staff are confident to support safe, effective and equitable diverse SOGIESC inclusion.
- The program provides sufficient, up-to-date information and resources to support all stakeholders.
- LGBTIQ+ volunteers have access to appropriate mental and physical health resources.
- LGBTIQ+ volunteers and staff are confident to report incidents of discrimination, harassment or assault.

¹http://internap.hrw.org/features/features/lgbt_laws/

²https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/Discrimination/LGBT/A_HRC_29_23_One_pager_en.pdf

³<https://humanrights.gov.au/our-work/education/face-facts-lesbian-gay-bisexual-trans-and-intersex-people>