

# RESPECT VICTORIA STYLE GUIDE

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## Overview and purpose

This document provides guidance for Respect Victoria staff when developing written content, including emails, briefs, presentations, reports, publications, social media and website content. It should be read in conjunction with our [Brand Guidelines](#).

Respect Victoria and the Victorian Government follow the [Australian Government Style Manual](#) for writing and editing content. The style manual helps you create clear and consistent content to meet the needs of your readers. It includes guidance on creating accessible and inclusive content, designing and structuring content, grammar and punctuation, and more.

Specific Victorian Government guidance on Welcome and Acknowledgement of Country, apolitical language, government terms, departments, addressing officials, region and place names can be found in the [Victorian Government style guide](#).

In general, writing should:

- use plain language (avoid jargon)
- be clearly structured and uncluttered
- be concise and accurate as possible
- avoid acronyms e.g. ‘prevention of violence against women’ rather than ‘PVAW.’

**The number one rule for writing content is to know who your audience is and write for them (not yourself!).**

See [DFFH writing guides](#) for further information, including writing in plain language and how to structure written content.

# Using inclusive language

Below is guidance on terminology representing people who experience intersecting forms of oppression, discrimination, power and privilege. Our content should respect the preferred language articulated by the communities we are describing or referring to.

Language is constantly evolving; as such this style guide is not static and should be considered a living document.

Recommended terms	Considerations for use and terms to avoid	Further Information and Source
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples First Nations peoples First Peoples	<p>Increasingly Respect Victoria uses First Nations or First Peoples when talking about both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. 'Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander' is also used.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The term 'Aboriginal' on its own is not considered to be inclusive of the diversity of cultures and identities across Australia, and therefore should be accompanied by 'peoples' in the plural.</li> <li>It can be appropriate to use the term Aboriginal peoples (i.e., not accompanied by Torres Strait Islander) when referring to communities in Victoria, e.g. "Aboriginal peoples in Victoria."</li> <li>'Aboriginal' and 'Torres Strait Islander' should always be capitalised, as should First Peoples/Nations, Elders, Traditional Owners/Custodians, and Country/Land.</li> </ul> <p>Terms to avoid:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>use of the possessive when referring to First Nations e.g. "our Aboriginal people", "Victoria's first people".</li> <li>the acronym ATSI as it can be seen as lacking respect for different identities.</li> <li>'native' or 'lost' when speaking about First Nations people.</li> <li>'disadvantaged' or anything that deviates from a strengths-based approach.</li> <li>'Indigenous' as some connotations with indigenous 'flora and fauna,' however there are instances where it is accepted, including when a First Nations organisation has used it or prefers it e.g., Monash Indigenous Studies Centre.</li> </ul> <p>In talking about prevention work, it's advisable to use phrases like 'preventing violence against Aboriginal women' or 'preventing family violence against Aboriginal peoples.'</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Avoid using 'Aboriginal family violence' – this can incorrectly imply that the perpetrators of this violence are only Aboriginal peoples, or that this violence is inherent to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and communities).</li> </ul>	<p><a href="#">Australian Government Style Manual</a></p> <p>Reconciliation Australia  <a href="#">"Demonstrating Inclusive and respectful language"</a></p> <p>Our Watch  <a href="#">Changing the Picture</a></p>

<p>People/women from multicultural communities</p> <p>Racialised groups</p> <p>Culturally and racially marginalised people/women</p>	<p>Use the general term 'multicultural communities' to write about people from different cultural backgrounds.</p> <p>When talking about people who face marginalisation and discrimination because of their race, we use terms like 'culturally and racially marginalised' or 'racialised.' These terms deliberately highlight discrimination based on race in order to 'name' the problem and encourage action against racism.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>'Racialised groups' can be used to refer to "all groups that do not enjoy the privileges of white people as a result of the socially constructed process of racialization." (Oxfam)</li> <li>The term 'culturally' is added because these people may also face discrimination due to their culture or background – e.g., a woman who is a Muslim migrant from South Sudan may face discrimination because of her race and her religion and cultural background." (Diversity Council of Australia)</li> </ul> <p>Terms to avoid/consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In some government-specific contexts, 'culturally and linguistically diverse communities' is used, but avoid the acronym 'CALD'.</li> <li>Avoid using words such as 'ethnic Australians' or 'ethnic groups'. This can imply that migrant heritage or migrant status is unusual.</li> </ul>	<p><a href="#">Australian Government Style Manual</a></p> <p>Oxfam <a href="#">Inclusive Language Guide</a></p> <p>Diversity Council of Australia <a href="#">Culturally and Racially Marginalised Women in Leadership: A framework for intersectional organisational action</a></p>
<p>People/women from migrant and/or refugee backgrounds</p> <p>People seeking asylum</p>	<p>People may identify as coming from migrant and/or refugee backgrounds. Some women may use the term 'migrant and refugee women', but in most instances we use person-first language i.e. "women from migrant backgrounds".</p> <p>To refer to people who have recently arrived in Australia, you can use 'migrants', or 'new arrivals'.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>These words don't say anything about a person's culture or language: they are neutral.</li> <li>'Person seeking asylum' or 'refugee' can also be used to describe people who have had to leave their home country due to war, conflict or persecution.</li> </ul> <p>Refer to people living in Australia as 'Australians;' Australians speak many different languages and have different cultures.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Consider the breadth of what migrant communities look like in Victoria and across Australia – it encompasses new arrivals as well as people who have lived here for decades, who continue to identify as coming from migrant backgrounds.</li> </ul>	<p><a href="#">Australian Government Style Manual</a></p> <p>Oxfam <a href="#">Inclusive Language Guide</a></p> <p><a href="#">Victorian Multicultural Commission</a></p> <p><a href="#">Multicultural Centre for Women's Health</a></p>

<p>People/women from faith and faith-based communities</p> <p>People/women who practice [a religion]</p>	<p>Only refer to people's religion, faith or belief if it is relevant to the context in which you are writing.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>While someone's religion can overlap with ethnicity, this should not be assumed when preparing content.</li> <li>Remember that the terms 'religion', 'faith' and 'belief' can mean different things to different people, and people may relate to one but not the others. For example, some people may hold beliefs or faith without belonging to a particular religion.</li> </ul> <p>Note:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Capitalise the names of all religions and religious groups. Religious figures, deities, holy texts, holidays and titles are also usually capitalised.</li> <li>Avoid overgeneralised statements that imply all people of a religion have identical beliefs and values.</li> <li>Avoid Christian-centric attitudes. For example, remember that not everyone celebrates Christian holidays like Christmas, but they may celebrate other religious holidays.</li> </ul>	<p>University of Bristol <a href="#">Inclusive writing: Religion, faith and belief</a></p> <p>Multicultural Centre for Women's Health</p> <p>Diversity Council of Australia</p>
<p>People with disability/disabilities</p> <p>Women with disability/disabilities</p>	<p>Focus on the person, not the disability. Unless a community group prefers identity-first language (e.g., 'disabled person'), lead with person-first language.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>For example, use 'women with disabilities,' 'person who is living with disability,' 'person who uses a wheelchair or mobility device,' 'person who is blind or has low vision,' etc.</li> <li>Avoid terms like 'handicapped' or anything implying that a person 'suffers from' or 'struggles with' a disability.</li> </ul>	<p><a href="#">Australian Government Style Manual</a></p> <p>Oxfam <a href="#">Inclusive Language Guide</a></p>
<p>People who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans and gender diverse, people with intersex variations, queer or questioning, and asexual.</p> <p>People/women from LGBTIQ+ communities</p> <p>People with intersex variations</p> <p>Trans and gender diverse</p> <p>Trans woman/ trans man/ trans person</p> <p>Non-binary</p>	<p>The Victorian Government uses LGBTIQ+ unless we are quoting someone or referring to another organisation's usage.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Spell the term out in full, followed by LGBTIQ+ in round brackets at the first mention or include reference to the full definition.</li> <li>Because multiple communities are included in the term LGBTIQ+, ensure that 'communities' is plural.</li> <li>The '+' recognises that LGBTIQ does not include all the terms people identify with.</li> </ul> <p>'Trans and gender diverse' is used when referring to "people whose gender identity or experience is different from the gender that was presumed and recorded for them at birth. Within this grouping, people use a range of different terms such as trans woman, trans man, non-binary, Brotherboys and Sistergirls." (Pride in Prevention Messaging Guide.)</p>	<p>Department of Families, Fairness and Housing <a href="#">"Using Inclusive Language"</a></p> <p><a href="#">Victorian Government "Inclusive language guide"</a></p> <p>Rainbow Health Australia <a href="#">Pride in Prevention Messaging Guide</a></p>

Older people Young people	<p>Use older people, not 'old people.' Older Victorians and senior Victorians are acceptable.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Avoid terms like 'elderly' or inferring that older people are inherently vulnerable.</li> </ul> <p>Young people and 'youth' are both acceptable.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Be careful using the plural 'youths,' as this can carry negative connotations.</li> <li>Avoid 'junior' or 'juniors.'</li> <li>Depending on the context, you can use the words 'adolescents', 'children' and 'babies.'</li> <li>'Kids' can be suitable, depending on the content's voice and tone.</li> </ul>	<a href="#">Australian Government Style Manual</a>
Women/people from different socioeconomic groups Women/people living in poverty Women/people experiencing poverty	<p>Avoid using "poor women" which "implies that being poor is an inherent characteristic of who they are, rather than the situation that they are in. It also implies that women and girls who live in poverty are a homogenous group and primarily characterized by their economic situation" (Oxfam).</p>	<a href="#">Oxfam Inclusive Language Guide</a>
People who've experienced / are experiencing violence People/women with lived experience People/men who use violence	<p>Respect Victoria and the sector are increasingly moving away from the term 'victim survivor.'</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Note people who have experienced violence have different preferences about how they identify and may choose to use victim survivor.</li> </ul> <p>Avoid phrasing like 'who have lost their lives' – this is passive and implies they are to blame for violence.</p> <p>Similarly, avoid use of the term 'perpetrator,' as it focuses on the identity of the individual rather than the behaviour. Use 'men/people who use violence' where possible.</p>	
Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Use comma between "Monitoring" and "Evaluation".</li> <li>Use full name in first instance, after which the acronym "MEL" may be used.</li> </ul>	

# Acknowledgements

The following are used in Respect Victoria publications and other documents.

## **Acknowledgement of Country**

Respect Victoria acknowledges Aboriginal peoples throughout Victoria as the First Peoples and Traditional Owners and Custodians of the lands and waterways. We pay our respects to their Elders, past and present. We proudly acknowledge Aboriginal communities throughout Victoria and their ongoing strength in practising the world's oldest living cultures. We recognise the significant and ongoing impacts of colonisation and commit to working alongside First Nations communities to effect change.

## **Statement of commitment to Aboriginal self-determination**

The cumulative effects of individual, institutional and societal violence, colonisation and racism over generations continue to harm Aboriginal peoples. This has contributed to the severity and disproportionate impact of family violence on Aboriginal women, families and communities to this day, and created the conditions that significantly increase the risks and barriers to accessing support.

We recognise the ongoing leadership role of Aboriginal communities and organisations in addressing and preventing family violence and violence against women, and will continue to work in collaboration with First Peoples to eliminate this violence.

Self-determination is the foundation for better outcomes for Aboriginal communities. True self-determination means that Aboriginal peoples and communities are at the centre of approaches to address family violence and violence against women. This includes recognising and respecting the strength and diversity of Aboriginal peoples, families and communities across Victoria, and the leadership role of Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations in violence prevention.

Telling the truth about Victoria's past and making agreements about how we move forward are key to self-determination and ensuring a more just future for Aboriginal peoples. Respect Victoria supports the recommendations of the Yoorrook Justice Commission and Treaty between First Peoples and the Victorian Government. Respect Victoria's work to prevent family violence against Aboriginal peoples and violence against Aboriginal women is informed by the principles of self-determination set out in *Dhelk Dja: Safe Our Way – Strong Culture, Strong Peoples, Strong Families*. We are firmly committed to working in collaboration with Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations to create a more equitable, respectful and safe community.

## **Lived experience acknowledgement**

Respect Victoria acknowledges the significant impact of family violence, violence against women and all forms of gendered violence on individuals, families and communities. We recognise the strength and resilience of the children, young people and adults who have, and are still, experiencing this violence.

We pay our respects to those whose lives were taken, and to their loved ones. We keep at the forefront in our minds all those who have experienced gendered violence and abuse, and for whom we undertake this work.

# Referencing

Respect Victoria's preferred citation style is [Vancouver](#). Vancouver cites reference to someone else's work in the text using a number in round brackets at the end of a sentence, before the full stop. A sequentially numbered 'Reference list' at the end of the document provides full details of the corresponding in-text references. References are listed in numerical order, in the same order in which they are cited in the text. Full references can be listed in varying styles but should be consistent across the document.

For example:

The evaluation conducted one month post intervention showed that 60% less violence was perpetrated against their current dating partner by adolescents in schools that received the full Safe Dates program compared with schools that only received the community component (1).

Reference list:

1. Foshee VA, Bauman KE, Arriaga XB, Helms RW, Koch GG, Linder GF. An evaluation of Safe Dates, an adolescent dating violence prevention program. American Journal of Public Health. 1998;88(1):45-50.