



# INCLUSIVE CLUBS, LEAGUES AND ASSOCIATIONS

## WHAT DOES INCLUSIVE FOOTBALL LOOK LIKE?

A safe and inclusive club, league or association ensures that people from a range of different backgrounds feel valued and welcomed and have equal access to opportunities and resources, creating a safer environment.

All football programs and activities should encourage and support safe and inclusive experiences for all children and young people including those who identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander, children and young people with disabilities, children and young people from culturally diverse backgrounds, and children and young people who identify as LGBTI+, transgender and/or non-binary.

**!** An inclusive club or association is an important element of safeguarding but should also be approached as its own initiative. There are a significant number of resources available to assist club, leagues and associations improve the way they approach inclusion. Below are a few starting points.

## DEFINITIONS

**A Child:** someone involved in footy who is 12 years or younger - usually a player but may also be a sibling of a player or child of an adult at the club.

**A Young Person:** someone involved in footy who is between the ages of 13 and 18 years old - usually a player but could also be an umpire or in another role at the club, or a sibling or child of a player.

**Adult:** someone involved in footy who is over the age of 18 - this could be a coach, manager, umpire, club official, AFL staff member, player, volunteer, and/or a parent.

## WHAT ARE THE 7 PILLARS OF INCLUSION?

**Play by the Rules** provide the following overview of the 7 Pillars of Inclusion including easy to implement strategies to improve your club, league or association's approach to inclusion.

The 7 Pillars model identifies common elements that contribute to creating inclusive environments that reflect the communities we live in today.

The seven pillars are:

ACCESS

ATTITUDE

CHOICE

PARTNERSHIPS

COMMUNICATION

POLICY

OPPORTUNITIES

**i** For more information and resources go to [www.playbytherules.net.au/got-an-issue/inclusion-and-diversity/inclusion-and-diversity-what-can-you-do](http://www.playbytherules.net.au/got-an-issue/inclusion-and-diversity/inclusion-and-diversity-what-can-you-do)

For some examples of this in action in other sports, go to [www.playbytherules.net.au/got-an-issue/inclusion-and-diversity/inclusion-and-diversity-in-action](http://www.playbytherules.net.au/got-an-issue/inclusion-and-diversity/inclusion-and-diversity-in-action).

## HOW CAN WE IMPROVE THE EXPERIENCE OF OUR ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE?

- Acknowledge the Traditional Owners of the country your club is located on. Find out who they are, find out how to pronounce their name and acknowledge them as the true owners of the land when you have important events and ceremonies.
  - Better yet - acknowledge country before games, or even training.
  - Teach the acknowledgement to children and young people around the club so they can do it too.
- Display an Acknowledge of Country and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander flags in your club.
- Locate local Indigenous artists and consider purchasing artwork to use in printed materials, posters or around the club
  - Better yet - seek a grant to have a local artist design your club's Indigenous round guernsey.
- Connect with the families of the Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander children and young people in your club. Get to know them so they can see that your club is a safe place for their kids, not just physically but culturally too.
  - Invite an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander family member or community member to be on your committee so they can guide you in the best way to provide a culturally safe club or association for other families in the future.
- Call out racist or discriminatory behaviour, including side comments and jokes, that may single someone out for their cultural identity.
- Remember English can be a second, third or fourth language for some Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people, especially in remote communities.
- If you have a Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP), consider how you can include Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people in it - invite them to have a say.

## HOW CAN WE IMPROVE THE EXPERIENCE OF OUR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE FROM CULTURALLY DIVERSE BACKGROUNDS?

- Run information nights in partnership with community leaders to help parents learn the game. If families have just arrived in Australia, they may not know the rules yet.
- Acknowledge important events, days of celebration and traditions that are relevant to the children, young people and their families from diverse backgrounds in your club.
- Display artwork and flags that represent diverse cultures.
- Remember English may be a second language for many families. Make sure that the information you provide in English doesn't use jargon or complicated language. Where possible, provide key information in a range of languages to improve accessibility for people.
- Ask children and young people about their background, their heritage and culture. Show them and their families that you are genuinely interested and that everyone is welcome at your club.
- Call out racist or discriminatory behaviour including side comments and jokes, that may single someone out for their cultural identity.

## HOW CAN WE IMPROVE THE EXPERIENCE OF OUR LGBTI+ CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE?

Some ways you can make your club, league or association safer and feel more welcome:

- Make the time to get to know LGBTI+ children, young people and their families to understand the barriers they may face and how you can support them at your club.
- Ask for pronouns and use them correctly or initiate the discussion by sharing your own.
- Avoid making assumptions about people based on their physical appearance.
- Encourage positive discussions amongst children and young people and call out discriminatory behaviour.
- Introduce an activity day or event where families of LGBTI+ children and young people are encouraged to interact with other families at your club. Contact your State/Territory football body for further support on planning an LGBTI+ event.
- Where possible have gender neutral toilet facilities and/or consult with transgender and non-binary children and young people about how you can accommodate their needs at your club.
- Review and update uniforms to be more inclusive for the LGBTI+ community - seek their input into the decision-making process.
- Diversity on your committee is essential to ensure the views of all members of your community are represented. Invite a member/s of the LGBTI+ community to join your club committee.



For a range of valuable resources to assist your club or association in the inclusion of the LGBTI+ community, go to **Pride in Sport** and/or **Proud2Play**. There is a useful **inclusion checklist** that can provide a helpful starting point to reflect on, and improve, your current practice.

## TRANS AND GENDER DIVERSE YOUNG PEOPLE

In 2019, Sport Australia along with eight other National Sports Organisations committed to supporting greater inclusion of trans and gender diverse people in sport. **The Guidelines for the Inclusion of Transgender and Gender Diverse People in Sport** are specifically designed to support community sport in best practice approaches to trans and gender diverse inclusion.

You must familiarise yourself with these guidelines as part of club, league and/or association's responsibilities.

The **AFL's Gender Diversity Policy** and **Companion Guide** for community football provides further information and guidance for clubs, leagues and associations.

## HOW CAN WE IMPROVE THE EXPERIENCE OF OUR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE LIVING WITH DISABILITY?

Some ways you can make your club inclusive:


- Ask the child or young person directly, or their parents/carer or family members, if there is anything you need to know to best support their participation - think about physical access as well as communication aides.
- Do not make assumptions - every disability is different so do not underestimate someone's ability. Proactively ask the individual, carer or parent how the person with disability would like to be involved in a playing or non-playing role.
- Tour of club and introductions - the first time they're at the club, introduce them to existing staff and regulars and provide a tour of the club. This creates a sense of comfort and a welcoming environment for the child or young person the first time they enter the club.
- Encourage positive discussions amongst the children and young people and call out discriminatory behaviour.
- How to talk to a person with disability.
  - Avoid using terms like 'special needs', 'handicapped' or telling them they are inspirational.
  - Use, person-first language, 'person with disability' which helps identify each other as people rather than being defined by a disability.
  - If a person with disability attends the club with a carer, parent or interpreter, don't speak only to the carer, continue to make eye contact with the person directly, the carer is there to offer support if required.
- Check-in with the child or young person with disability to make sure they are settling in well and make adjustment where necessary.
- Complete a venue accessibility checklist - positive showing of inclusion is when children and young people with disability can access all the parts of your club that a person without disability can access.
- Assess physically accessible spaces and paths e.g accessible toilet, a portable ramp. Seek community support to upgrade facilities and equipment to make it is easier for children and young people with disability to participate.
- Ensure there is representation of children and young people with disability - use diverse range of images and videos of people with disability on your website, social media, club newsletters to show you are a welcoming and inclusive club.
- Arrange Disability Inclusion awareness training for staff and coaches.




For a range of valuable resources on making your club or association inclusive for people with disability go to [www.playbytherules.net.au/search?q=disability+inclusion](http://www.playbytherules.net.au/search?q=disability+inclusion)


## EXAMPLES OF INCLUSIVE SPORT


1. Umpire clinics are typically run on a Sunday, but there is a local regional clinic coming up that will be held on a Saturday. Stuart's family are members of the Jewish community, and his father explains Stuart will be unable to attend the regional clinic as they do not engage in any activities on the Sabbath. You could respond by saying:

 "No worries, I understand that is important to you. We look forward to having Stuart back next Sunday" OR


 "What? But we need him! Can't you just skip that rule for one week?"


2. Danika is a young Aboriginal woman playing in the under 18's. During a game you hear a parent on the side-line say 'I bet she is only in the team to tick a box. That is someone else's spot she is taking. It is unfair'. You don't think Danika has heard the comment, so you could:

 Move over to the parents and firmly but respectfully say 'I heard your comment. What you said is disrespectful and racist and there is no place for that here.'


 Ignore the parents because you don't want to make a scene.


3. Everyone makes mistakes along the way, be willing to actively learn from experiences.

 An effective way to learn is by checking-in with a person with disability and asking for feedback.

 You might accidentally slip up at training and say to someone "are you blind?" when they miss a catch, recognise that you made a mistake and try not to do it again.

4. At the beginning of the season as the team is getting to know each other:

 Introduce yourself using your pronouns and invite others to do the same. Yes, you may be coaching the 'girls' team, but this invitation simply says 'If you would prefer something else, that is ok, it is safe to say that here'.

 Rather than addressing the team with the greeting 'Hi guys', use more inclusive and gender neutral terms like "Hi folks", 'Hi team' or "Hi everyone'

 **REMEMBER** – The way you respond to these matters can have a significant impact on whether a child, young person and their family feel included and welcome in the sport community. We want all kids to be safe, feel safe, play safe.