

LANGUAGE GUIDE



About the Language Guide

This guide has been created to assist you in using person-centred language as an ASHM presenter, facilitator, or staff member. This means using language that puts people first and respects their identity, dignity, unique qualities, and strengths.

As health professionals, we are responsible for creating clinical environments free from stigma and discrimination. Using inclusive language is particularly important when discussing the health of transgender and gender diverse individuals, as well as HIV, viral hepatitis, and sexual health medicine.

ASHM encourages health professionals to use strengths-based language when discussing patients and case studies. Strengths-based language identifies opportunities to highlight and promote the existing strengths and capabilities of an individual to face a problem or concern, rather than focusing on the problem or concern and how the individual is coping. It acknowledges people can be resourceful and be a part of their own change.

Acceptable and appropriate language, first and foremost, is what is self-determined by the person or people we're talking about and if people identify themselves with a certain term or ask to be referred to in a certain way, that should be respected, and that terminology subsequently used.

ASHM acknowledges that language is constantly changing and evolving, communities and people are diverse and individuals within a community group may have different preferences when it comes to what language is used. This guide has been informed by community and sector stakeholders. We must respect any suggestions or requests made by members of the community we are referring to. On that note, this Language Guide is a living document, and ASHM welcome any feedback on language that needs to be reconsidered as communities and the words they use continue to evolve.

If you are unsure what terms or language is appropriate, it is OK to respectfully ask people their preferences with regards to pronouns and descriptive terms. It is important to not assume and ask regularly, as their response might change each time.

First Created	2023
Last Updated	May 2025
Changes made in the last update	Inclusion and update to terminology referring to <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Alternative barrier methods- Drug checking- Sexual orientation- People with disability- Regional terminology- Transmission

- People living/ diagnosed as AIDS-defining

Contents

About the Language Guide	1
Clinical Terms	4
Drug Use.....	7
Person-Centred Terms.....	9
Gender and Sexuality	15
Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Language	18
Regional terminology	20
Glossary	21
Resource list	25

Clinical Terms

Please note, other terms within the guide may be relevant. A person has many intersections and will not only be represented by one section of this language guide.

✓ USE THIS	∅ INSTEAD OF THIS	RATIONALE
People living with blood-borne virus (e.g., HBV, HCV, and HIV) or STI (e.g., Syphilis)	Infectious Transmitter Infected Contagious	A person is more than their positive status, and it is dehumanising and reductive to refer to them as infectious/a transmitter. This may not be accurate to their situation and contributes to the stigma surrounding BBVs and STIs.
People living with complications of advanced HIV People living/diagnosed as AIDS-defining	Full blown AIDS Person with AIDS AIDS patient	This terminology reflects the clinical condition related to HIV and recognises that they can now be treated.
Treatment has not been effective	Treatment failure Treatment did not work	Treatment failure may imply personal responsibility or "failure" on the part of the individual, or that the treatment will not work in the future.
Experiencing or reporting difficulty in accessing and/or taking medication regularly Experiencing challenges with adherence	Non-compliant Non-adherence Failed to take medication	'Non-compliant' or non-adherent may infer blame to the individual without consideration for extenuating circumstances. 'Failed to take medication' may infer blame to the individual without consideration for extenuating circumstances.
Groups indicated for testing	High-risk groups Risk populations	This wording may infer blame to the individual. For example, a person's country of birth should not be considered to be a "risk."
Condomless sex	Unprotected sex	Using "condomless sex" explains the absence of a specific barrier method rather than framing the act as inherently lacking protection. This shift in language aims to foster a more open and non-judgmental conversation about sexual health practices.

✓ USE THIS	∅ INSTEAD OF THIS	RATIONALE
		It is important to note that other barrier methods may be used by lesbians, wlw, and trans and gender diverse people, such as dental dams. Also PrEP and viral load suppression prevent HIV transmission.
HIV test	AIDS test	HIV is the virus that is being tested for. AIDS test is inaccurate.
HIV	HIV virus AIDS virus	AIDS is a condition not a virus that is caused by HIV if left untreated. HIV is an acronym for human immunodeficiency virus.
Acquire a blood borne virus Diagnosed with a blood borne versus	Catch a blood borne virus	This is not an evidence-based term and does not reflect the complexities of transmission.
People with a detectable HIV-RNA or viral load People with viraemia	Detectable or viraemic patients	These terms ignore the complexity of an individual and reduces them to their viral load status
Infant exposed to HIV HIV-negative infant exposed to HIV	HIV exposed infant HIV exposed uninfected infant	These terms define the infant according to their HIV status, but that is not how their identity should be defined.
Transmit	Spread Infect	These terms have negative connotations.
Vertical transmission Perinatally acquired	Mother to child transmission* *Please note, the use of mother to child transmission (or MTCT) may be appropriate when talking with people for whom English is a second language to reduce confusion, or in global contexts	This term can incidentally imply blame or responsibility for transmission on the mother. Additionally, mother is a gendered term and may exclude some parents.

✓ USE THIS	∅ INSTEAD OF THIS	RATIONALE
	where it is a commonly used and recognised term.	
Taking medication as recommended Adherent Concordant	Compliant	‘Compliant’ can carry a paternalistic tone, implying passive obedience, while the suggested alternatives focus on the collaborative and informed decision-making aspect of following medical advice. This change aims to foster a more respectful and empowering dialogue between healthcare providers and patients regarding medication adherence.
Menstruation products Period products	Feminine hygiene products	Not all people who need menstruation products identify as women or fem people. Trans men, non-binary people, gender diverse people may also menstruate.
Person with co-occurring needs Person with competing priorities	Lacks insight In denial Resistant Unmotivated Not engaged Non-compliant Chaotic	These terms may imply the person is at fault and does not recognise that people have complex lives with barriers to accessing services and resources, and multiple competing needs.
hepatitis B hepatitis C	Hepatitis B Hepatitis b Hepatitis C Hepatitis c	The word ‘hepatitis’ should always be lowercase unless it is at the start of the sentence or in an all-capitalised title. The type of hepatitis being discussed (e.g. B) should always be capitalised e.g. hepatitis B
Blood, amniotic fluid, semen, pre-ejaculate, vaginal fluids, rectal fluids, breast milk Bodily fluids responsible for transmission of hepatitis B (e.g. blood, semen or vaginal fluid)	Bodily fluids	Be specific about fluids included in transmission. The use of ‘bodily fluids’ can be misleading by suggesting all fluids from the body can transmit blood-borne viruses, which is not the case.

Drug Use

Please note, other terms within the guide may be relevant. A person has many intersections and will not only be represented by one section of this language guide.

✓ USE THIS	∅ INSTEAD OF THIS	RATIONALE
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Substance use • Non-prescribed use 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Abuse • Misuse • Problem use • Chaotic use 	<p>These terms may infer blame to the individual and assume the person has a problem.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Person who uses/injects drugs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Drug user • Drug abuser • Drug addict 	<p>These terms ignore the complexity of an individual and reduces them to their use of drugs and assumes they have a drug-related problem.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Person with a dependence on drugs • Person who uses (name of drug) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Addict • Junkie • Druggie • Alcoholic • Abuser 	<p>These terms have negative connotations in society and reduces an individual to their drug dependence, ignoring their complexity as an individual.</p> <p>A person's dependence on a drug should never be assumed. Unless they are seeking help and their dependence has been assessed, their drug use can be referred to without assuming a dependence and using person-first language.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Person who uses methamphetamine • Methamphetamine dependence 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ice addict • Meth addict 	<p>Methamphetamine and people who use methamphetamine have been stigmatised through multiple media articles in which the drug is portrayed as making people uncontrolled and violent.</p>

✓ USE THIS	∅ INSTEAD OF THIS	RATIONALE
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Person who uses heroin • Person with an opioid dependence • Person with a heroin dependence 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Heroin addict • Smack addict • Junkie 	When referring to a person's use of drugs of dependence, the word addict should never be used, and their dependence should not be assumed. In clinical settings, if there is known dependence and the person's dependence is relevant, this can be stated using person-first language.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Person experiencing drug dependence 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Suffering from addiction • Has a drug habit 	The use of 'suffering' may have negative connotations and may imply that the person is always experiencing hardship.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Person who is no longer using drugs • Person with a history of drug use • Person with a lived experience of drug use 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clean / stayed clean • Sober • Drug-free • Maintained recovery 	The use of 'clean' implies that drug use is dirty, or the individual was dirty, which is incorrect and contributes to stigma. Sober, drug-free and recovery terms are associated with belief systems in which drug use is a life-long illness you cannot control or overcome.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Person with a lived experience of drug use 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ex-addict • Former addict • Used to be a... 	These terms ignore the complexity of an individual and reduces them to their former use of drugs.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Poly-substance user 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Drug addict • Chaotic user • Uncontrolled drug use 	Many people who use drugs use more than one drug or use drugs in ways that aren't prescribed. Terms that assume the person has no control over their use is stigmatising and can make it difficult to explore reasons why the person may be using drugs in this way, and whether they have a problem associated with or impacting on their use of drugs.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Currently using drugs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Using again • Fallen off the wagon • Had a setback • Lapsed • Relapsed 	These terms present an individual's drug use as a failure or as their personal responsibility, without recognising that drug use can be influenced by many things and can be protective. These terms assume the person has a problem in relation to their use of drugs.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Service user • Person who is using a 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Patient • Client 	Terms like patient and client can be used in clinical settings and some AOD treatment services but are not preferred in many harm reduction settings as they have clinical connotations.

✓ USE THIS	∅ INSTEAD OF THIS	RATIONALE
service	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consumer 	These terms shouldn't be used in settings where the person is not receiving a service, such as when representing their community in a meeting or committee.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Person with multiple/more than one prescriber 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Doctor shopper 	Terminology relating to a person's use of more than one GP/prescriber should reflect reasons why a person might want or need to access more than one prescriber. These include having experience of stigma and discrimination, and not having their needs met by one prescriber
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Used syringe 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dirty needle • Dirties 	These terms imply an individual's blood is 'dirty', which is incorrect and contributes to stigma.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New syringe/needle 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clean syringe/needle 	Using 'clean' to refer to a new syringe/needle implies exposure to another's blood is 'dirty', which is incorrect and contributes to stigma.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Injecting equipment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Needles 	Injecting equipment refers to the entire range of tools used, not just the needle.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Drug checking 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pill testing • Drug testing 	<p>Drug checking preferred terminology nationally and internationally, as it accurately represents the process of checking drugs and is more inclusive.</p> <p>Drug testing in Australia refers more often to the workplaces and police enforced tests.</p> <p>Pill testing is drug checking however may be misleading as it excludes other forms of drugs than pills.</p>

Person-Centred Terms

Please note, other terms within the guide may be relevant. A person has many intersections and will not only be represented by one section of this language guide. It is important to note that the preferred terminology used below will not be appropriate for all communities and individuals and some people's preferences may be for language that is deemed 'incorrect' by this guide. Please consider the audience or individual you are communicating with, their specific language needs, and where possible use the terminology, they use. Also consider simplifying your language using plain English and best practice health principles where possible e.g. "pregnant women, and other pregnant people" or simply using the phrase "pregnancy". Also ensure that an interpreter is available for any people who may need one (i.e. people who use a language other than English, or people who are Deaf or hard of hearing).

✓ USE THIS	∅ INSTEAD OF THIS	RATIONALE
<p>*If you only know someone's name or how they look (includes patients and case studies)*</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use they/them pronouns • If appropriate, ask their pronouns 	<p>Do not assume someone's gender by using she/her or he/him pronouns based on their appearance or name</p>	<p>If unsure - ask! Ask 'What are your pronouns?'. When you do not know what pronouns someone uses, you can use they/them when referring to them or simply use their name. Note that this can apply to anyone, and not only people who you may assume are trans or gender diverse.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Breastfeeding person 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Breastfeeding women 	<p>The individual may not identify as a woman.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cisgender men and other people with a penis • People assigned male at birth 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Man/Men* <p>*It is appropriate to use man/men when your focus is on gender identity and not anatomy. However, these terms include trans men and exclude trans women and non-binary people. Therefore, if your focus is on anatomy (e.g. when considering STI testing) it is best to use language that makes this clear.</p>	<p>People of any gender may have a penis. We should not assume the gender of someone based on their anatomy, nor their anatomy based on their gender. Not all people with a penis are men and not all men have a penis.</p> <p>Do not assume the anatomy of someone's sexual partners based on the gender or pronouns that are used to refer to them.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cisgender women and other people with a vagina/uterus/cervix • People assigned female at birth 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Woman/Women* <p>*It is appropriate to use woman/women when your focus is on gender identity and not anatomy. However, these terms include trans women and exclude trans men and non-binary people. Therefore, if your focus is on anatomy (e.g. when considering STI testing) it is best to use language that makes this clear.</p>	<p>People of any gender may have a vagina/uterus/cervix. We should not assume the gender of someone based on their anatomy, nor their anatomy based on their gender. Not all people with a vagina/uterus/cervix are women and not all women have a vagina/uterus/cervix.</p> <p>Do not assume the anatomy of someone's sexual partners based on the gender or pronouns that are used to refer to them.</p>

✓ USE THIS	∅ INSTEAD OF THIS	RATIONALE
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Person who can become pregnant 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Woman/Women 	<p>A person who can become pregnant may be of any gender. Noting that this phrasing may not be appropriate for all communities (please see blurb for Person-Centred Terms)</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pregnant individuals • Pregnant person • Pregnant people 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pregnant women 	<p>A pregnant person might be of any gender. When discussing pregnancy and health generally, this language is inclusive of a wide range of experiences. It is good practice to use language that does not assume the gender of individuals. Noting that this phrasing may not be appropriate for all communities (please see blurb for Person-Centred Terms)</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Breastfeeding/Chest-feeding • Body-feeding • Nursing • Lactation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Breastfeeding 	<p>These terms are inclusive of a variety of experiences and people's relationship with their bodies. This language can be affirming for people who may not identify with the term breastfeeding, as well as people who have complicated relationships with their mammary glands or have a dysphoric relationship to their anatomy.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grandparents • Grandparent 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grandfather • Grandmother 	<p>It is best practice to use inclusive language that does not assume the gender of individuals. Noting that this phrasing may not be appropriate for all communities (please see blurb for Person-Centred Terms)</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Non-Pregnant parent • Non-Gestational Parent • Family Member • Support Person • Parent 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Father • Husband • Male Partner 	<p>It is best practice to use inclusive language that does not assume the gender of individuals. Noting that this phrasing may not be appropriate for all communities (please see blurb for Person-Centred Terms)</p>

✓ USE THIS	∅ INSTEAD OF THIS	RATIONALE
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Birth parent/Person • Labouring Person • Gestational Parent 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mother 	<p>It is best practice to use inclusive language that does not assume the gender of individuals. Noting that this phrasing may not be appropriate for all communities (please see blurb for Person-Centred Terms)</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Higher weight/BMI • Person with metabolic risk factors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fat person • Unhealthy weight • Weight problem • Overweight 	<p>For some people, these terms are highly offensive and stigmatised and reduce a person to their weight. Framing a person's weight as unhealthy or a problem implies the individual is the problem.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Person living with a mental health condition 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mentally ill • Suffering from a mental illness • Afflicted with a mental illness 	<p>These terms ignore the complexity of an individual and reduces them to their mental health condition while labelling it as a pathological condition and negative.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Person experiencing homelessness or housing insecurity/instability 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Homeless person • The homeless • Transient • Unhoused 	<p>These terms ignore the complexity of an individual and reduces them to their housing status. These terms also are not inclusive of people who may not consider themselves as experiencing homelessness but rather, who are experiencing housing insecurity.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Person with a disability* • People with disability 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disabled • Disability • Differently – abled • Handicapped 	<p>These terms ignore the complexity of an individual and reduces them to their disability. It is important to think about the person first, and their disability second.</p> <p>UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities: “Persons with disabilities include those who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments which in interaction with various barriers may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others.”</p>

✓ USE THIS	∅ INSTEAD OF THIS	RATIONALE
		*It is important to recognise that some people living with a disability may prefer identity-first language. This can include people with any disability, or particular groups such as Autistic and Deaf communities who may not define themselves as disabled.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organisation of Persons with Disabilities (OPD) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disability organisation 	An OPD is a community based organisation composed primarily of people with disabilities. At times, ASHM collaborations with OPDs therefore the terminology has been added.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Person who is or has ever been incarcerated • Person who is or has ever been in prison • Person who is or has ever been in a custodial setting • Person who is or has ever been in a correctional setting • Person who is in detention 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prisoner • Offender • Detainee 	These terms ignore the complexity of an individual and reduces them to their incarceration status, regardless of their current incarceration status.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sex Worker • Transactional sex 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prostitute • Hooker 	These terms have historically been used as offensive slurs and have negative connotations in society.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Multiple partners 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promiscuous • Sleep around 	These terms have negative connotations and can be seen as offensive. The term “multiple partners” is more neutral wording.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>*If you only know someone was born overseas, without knowing their migration status*</i> • Overseas born 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Immigrant • Migrant • Refugee • Asylum seeker 	These terms are highly specific and you may not know the particular background of the person or the case study. In that instance, it is not appropriate to make assumptions. You can be specific if you know for certain their circumstances

✓ USE THIS	∅ INSTEAD OF THIS	RATIONALE
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Culturally and linguistically diverse communities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ethnics • Foreigners • CALD 	<p>These terms denote a person as 'other', alienating them from the rest of society. This is offensive and incorrect. Where known, it is best to identify the community directly i.e., the Korean community. CALD is a reductive and simplistic term which ignores the complexity and variety of communities in our society.</p>

Gender and Sexuality

Please note, other terms within the guide may be relevant. A person has many intersections and will not only be represented by one section of this language guide.

✓ USE THIS	∅ INSTEAD OF THIS	RATIONALE
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transgender person • Trans person • Person who is transgender 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transgendered • Transsexual • Transgenderism • Pre-op/ post-op 	<p>These terms have historically been used as offensive slurs against trans people. 'Transgender' is an adjective, not a noun or verb, and so it shouldn't be used on its own. For example, it shouldn't be used to refer to a person as 'a trans' or 'the transgender'.</p> <p>Note that trans people may use any of these terms when referring to themselves or their experiences. In those cases, do not also use the terms or suggest a trans person can't use these terms for themselves.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sexual orientation • Same-sex attraction • Sexual identity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sexual preference • Gay lifestyle • Homosexual lifestyle 	<p>Preference suggests that non-heterosexuality is a choice, a concept often used to discriminate against the LGBTQIA+ community. Preference also suggests a selection from two or more choices, excluding bisexual people and pansexual people, among others.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Man/Woman • Man/woman with trans experience • Trans man/woman 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transman/transwoman 	<p>The conjunction of trans with man or woman is grammatically incorrect, i.e., we say 'tall man' rather than 'tallman.' Trans is an adjective and describes a person's experience.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cisgender 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Normal • Real • Not trans 	<p>Cisgender refers to someone whose gender aligns to what they were assigned at birth. Being cisgender does not make someone more 'real' or 'normal' in their gender experience than a trans person.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assigned/Presumed female/male at birth (AFAB/PFAB or AMAB/PMAB) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Biologically female • Biologically male 	<p>AFAB or AMAB should only be used when absolutely necessary. These terms do not, in themselves, provide a consistent understanding of a person's experience of gender or transition, or describe anatomy. 'Biologically female/male' should always be avoided as it is an inaccurate way to refer to any person's gender or sex characteristics.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gender affirmation/affirming 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transing 	<p>'Affirmation' language celebrates the experiences of trans people and encompasses the many ways in which people may transition, socially</p>

✓ USE THIS	∅ INSTEAD OF THIS	RATIONALE
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gender transition/transitioning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transgendering • Trans'd • Sex change • Sex reassignment 	and/or medically.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Intersex person 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DSD (disorders of sex development) • Hermaphrodite 	Use of 'disordered of sex development (DSD)' to describe intersex in medical settings entrenches a medical model that sees intersex bodies as intrinsically disordered. The terminology justifies forced and coercive medical interventions and so is linked to human rights violations. Some intersex people find the term offensive while others reclaim it. It is best used only by people born with variations in sex characteristics.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self-determined gender affirmation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Passing 	'Passing' is a term sometimes used by trans and gender diverse people to refer to a trans person who is perceived as cisgender. Often this refers to 'passing' as the gender they have affirmed. Passing does not determine the legitimacy of a person's gender and is not a goal that all trans people want to reach. This term should be used only by trans and gender diverse people.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gender-affirming healthcare • Transition-related healthcare 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gender reassignment • Sex change • Sex reassignment 	Gender affirming healthcare takes many forms, from social to medical, and there is no one way to affirm one's gender. Referring to transition-related healthcare as "reassignment" or "sex change" is inaccurate and reductive to trans experience.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gender-neutral job titles. In this example: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Police officer • Firefighter • Nurse 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gender-specific job titles. In this example: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policeman • Fireman • Male nurse 	Using gender-neutral titles is essential to promote inclusivity and respect for individuals of all gender identities, ensuring that language reflects and supports the diversity and equality of the people it serves.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bisexual people/person/man/woman 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bisexuals • A gay • Abnormal v normal 	It is appropriate to use terms relating to sexuality and sexual orientation as adjectives, rather than nouns. A person's sexuality cannot be assumed and omitting sexuality can

✓ USE THIS	∅ INSTEAD OF THIS	RATIONALE
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gay people/person/man/women • Heterosexual people/person/man women • Queer people/person/man/woman <p>This approach can be used when referring to sexual orientation.</p>		<p>contribute to assumptions of all people being of one sexual orientation. Increasing visibility of diverse sexual orientations reduces heterosexual bias and promotes inclusivity.</p> <p>It is important to avoid perpetuating stereotypes and further stigmatising diverse sexual orientations through presentations and case discussion.</p>

Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Language

The below guidance is applicable if you do not belong to Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander communities.

✓ USE THIS	∅ INSTEAD OF THIS	RATIONALE
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples • First Nations peoples 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aboriginals • Aborigines • Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders • ATSI • Indigenous • Blackfella • Native 	<p>Using Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander as an adjective is more person-centric, inclusive and empowering than using the terms Aboriginals or Torres Strait Islanders. The plural use of the word 'peoples' acknowledges the diversity of these communities. First Nations Peoples is predominately used in North America to refer to the original inhabitants of Canada, with some Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples feel the term First Nations peoples diminishes identity and homogenises Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures. Blackfella is a derogatory term that has been reclaimed by Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples and is highly likely to offend if used by someone from outside that group. The term ATSI should never be used in any documents or presentations.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussion a “burden of disease”, “disproportionate rates”, a “gap” etc. without contextualising and acknowledging the history of this country and the continuing impacts colonisation has on the inequity of health outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. 		<p>When describing disproportionate figures there needs to be context provided about why this exists. Without contextualising, this reinforces negative narratives and public perceptions and focuses on deficits and gaps of the health of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.</p> <p>It is imperative to acknowledge and recognise the state-sanctioned violence, oppression, and dispossession Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people continue to feel the impacts of.</p> <p>E.g., Due to the ongoing effects of colonisation, including poverty and inadequate housing and health service access, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are disproportionately affected by...”</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Elder's name 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aunty • Uncle 	<p>If you are not Aboriginal and do not have an existing relationship with an older Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander person, do not assume it is okay to call them Aunty or Uncle. These are terms of respect and reverence for senior people who are not necessarily a family member.</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Purpose 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mission • Intervention 	<p>In planning documents, it is more respectful to use the term purpose rather than mission. The term 'mission' has negative connotations for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and can cause distress.</p>
<p><i>Dependent upon context</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Language Group e.g., 'Larrakia people' • Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participants • Local Aboriginal community 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mob 	<p>Mob is a term identifying a group of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples associated with a particular place or country, a Nation, language group or an historical community. Depending on context it is appropriate for non-Indigenous people to ask an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander person "who is your mob?"</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nation • Language groups 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tribes 	<p>Nation refers to a culturally distinct group of people associated with a particular culturally defined area of land or country. Tribes implies a sameness of all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander language groups and can imply something that is negative or simplistic.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitoring 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tracking 	<p>Use of the term tracking can trigger memories of when under control of European officers Aboriginal people tracked other Aboriginal people, therefore it is more respectful to use the term monitoring in documents.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Elders 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • elders 	<p>Men and women in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities who are respected for, and are custodians of, wisdom and knowledge of culture, law and lore. Recognised Elders are highly respected people and as such the use of the word Elder should be capitalised.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Traditional Owners 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Traditional owners 	<p>Traditional Owners are highly respected and the words must be capitalised. Traditional Owners are a group of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples directly descended from the original Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander inhabitants of a culturally defined area of land or country.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Women's business and Men's business 		<p>NOTE: The terms Women's business and Men's business should be discussed in consultation with individual communities before use.</p> <p>For Aboriginal peoples these terms define gender-based roles and responsibilities that are core to spiritual belief systems, laws, and highly complex cultural values. Use of these terms trivially or without recognising their full cultural significance can cause offence. While</p>

	<p>Torres Strait Islander cultures do have gender based cultural beliefs and considerations, the terms Women's and Men's business should not be used.</p> <p>Considerations should also be made for individuals who may not identify with either binary gender. The terms Women's and Men's business should then be reconsidered to be more inclusive.</p> <p>Consultation with individual communities is paramount to ensure appropriateness.</p>
--	--

Regional terminology

✓ USE THIS	∅ INSTEAD OF THIS	RATIONALE
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Asia and Pacific Region 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Asian Pacific • Asia Pacific 	<p>There are cultural, structural, geographical and resourcing differences between Asian countries and the Pacific Islands.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Referring to the country itself • Referring to a region • Low-income, Lower-Middle income, Upper Middle-income, High-income countries 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developing countries • Third World v first world • Poor countries v Rich countries • Old World v New World • Global North v Global South • Orient • West v East 	<p>Many classifications and categorisations of countries and regions are outdated and problematic concepts. Many terms have negative connotations, racist implications and/or are geographically inaccurate.</p> <p>Considerations should be made when deciding how to refer to a region or country. Before using a classification or categorisation consider if it is more appropriate to refer to the countries by name or region.</p> <p>If there is a requirement to use a classification or categorisation, the World Bank assigns countries into four income groups outlined in the column.</p>

Glossary

In addition to the substitutions provided above, please find definitions for key terms below.

Term	Definition
Acknowledgement of Traditional Owners and Elders	Can be delivered by both Indigenous and non-Indigenous people. This practice demonstrates respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and recognises the importance of acknowledging Traditional Owners of the land and/or sea
Agender	This is an umbrella term to refer to someone who does not experience or identify with having a gender. This term includes a broad range of identities, and people may use other terms such as genderless, gender-free, or even also identify with other terms such as gender-fluid (with agender being one part of their experience).
Alcohol and other drugs (AOD)	Alcohol and other drugs is a term used to describe all drugs and is commonly used in reference to treatment services and responses.
Asexual	This is an umbrella term to describe individuals who do not experience sexual attraction or may have a low interest in sexual activity. There are a variety of experiences under this term, and it is important to not assume someone's sexual behaviours based on this identity.
Brotherboy	A term used by some Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to describe gender diverse people who have a male spirit and take on male roles within the community. Brotherboys often have a strong sense of their cultural identity. The spelling and use of this term may differ from area to area, and in some places, it has different meanings and may be used to refer to a friend.
Cisgender (cis)	A term used to describe a person whose gender is the same as what was presumed for them at birth.
Cissexism	This refers to the cultural and institutional bias and privileging of cisgender people. Cissexist ideology invalidates trans and non-binary genders, inaccurately believing that gender is determined at birth solely based on external sex characteristics and is binary.
Cisnormativity	This refers to the cultural and institutionalised assumption that everyone is cisgender, and that cisgender identity is preferred and 'normal'. This may result in cissexism, transphobia and behaviours such as misgendering, including using the wrong pronouns, or designing services, products, or campaigns that assume everyone is cis.
Folk/s	A gender-neutral term that can be used to refer to groups of people. Using folk is more inclusive than gendered terms like 'guys' or 'girls' and ensures people of all genders are

	included.
Gender	An internal sense of self that is a part of a person's social and personal identity. Some examples are man, woman, non-binary, agender, and genderqueer.
Gender diverse	An umbrella term describing the wide experience of human gender and gender identities, including terms that sit within and outside of Western concepts of gender, as well those terms that have been lost or are not yet known.
Gender Dysphoria	Gender dysphoria is the distress experienced by an individual when there is an incongruence between their experienced gender and several factors such as how others perceive their gender, misgendering, expectations of gender roles and/or physical characteristics.
Gender Expression	How an individual appears, dresses, speaks and behaves in relation to their sexuality or gender identity.
Genderqueer	A term used by some people who don't experience static categories of gender. Some people use genderqueer, gender non-conforming and non-binary interchangeably and others don't. Some people use the term to identify their gender as non-normative, e.g. someone could identify as both non-binary and genderfluid.
Gender Minority	Describes individuals whose gender identity or gender expression differs from their assigned sex at birth. For some, this term may be preferable to gender nonconforming or others.
Gender Nonconforming	Describes an individual whose gender expression does not conform to, or align with, society's expectations of gender expression, behaviours and internal experience.
Harm reduction	Refers to policies, programs and practices that aim to reduce negative impacts associated with drugs without necessarily reducing or stopping drug use. Well known harm reduction includes needle and syringe programs and safer using education.
Harm minimisation	Refers to Australia's response to drugs, also known as the 'Three Pillars' of supply reduction, demand reduction and harm reduction. Supply reduction mainly refers to law enforcement approaches aiming to stop drugs from entering the country or being manufactured and sold. Demand reduction aims to reduce people's use of drugs, and mainly includes drug prevention education and alcohol and other drug treatment. Harm reduction is a system of approaches that aim to reduce harms associated with drugs rather than reducing or stopping drug use.
Heteronormativity	Refers to the default assumption held by society that everyone fits into one of the two binary genders (male or female) and is heterosexual, or 'straight'. It assumes that the 'norm' is binary, usually cisgender, who are attracted to the opposite sex and anything outside of this is 'abnormal'.
Hijra	Term used in South Asia, particularly the Indian subcontinent, to describe trans feminine,

	trans women, sometimes intersex, third gender and related experiences. There is a long and ancient history of hijra communities, and many live together within defined kinship systems over generations.
Intersex	Intersex people have innate sex characteristics that don't fit medical and social norms for female or male bodies, and that may create risks or experiences of stigma, discrimination and harm. There are numerous ways to be intersex and the word intersex is used as an umbrella term. People may find out they are intersex at different life stages including when they are born, during puberty, while trying to conceive a pregnancy or by random chance. Intersex people are a diverse population with many kinds of bodies, sex characteristics, sex assignments, genders, identities, life experiences and language preferences. People with an intersex variation may or may not use the word "intersex" to describe themselves.
Misgendering	This term is used when someone uses language (to address another person) that does not match their gender, which may include using the wrong name, pronoun or title for someone. Misgendering can have a significant impact on a person's wellbeing and mental health. Similarly, there are terms like 'deadnaming' which are used when someone is addressed with a name they no longer use.
Non-binary	This is an umbrella term for any number of gender identities that sit within, outside of, across or between the spectrum of male and female. A non-binary person might identify as gender fluid, trans masculine, trans feminine, agender, bigender etc.
Pronouns	Pronouns are words that we use to refer to a person when talking about them, without using their name. This includes she/her, they/them, he/him, xe/xir and others.
Queer	An umbrella term sometimes used to describe individuals who consider their gender identity or sexual orientation as outside of societal expectations.
Sistergirl	Sistergirl is a term used by some Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander gender diverse people that have female spirits and take on female roles within the community, including looking after children and family. Many sistergirls live a traditional lifestyle and have strong cultural backgrounds. The spelling and use of this term may differ from area to area, and in some places, it has different meanings, and may be used to refer to a friend.
Sorry Business	A term used during the time of mourning following the death of an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander person. The term can also refer to the past practice of forcible removing children from their families. In many Aboriginal communities there is a prohibition on naming someone who is deceased, which may last for months or even years
Third Gender	This refers to individuals who may identify as neither a man or a woman, both or a combination. This term is often used by and for people who are from the Global South and sit outside of Western conceptions of gender.
Transgender (trans)	People whose gender is different to what was presumed for them at birth. Some examples

	are trans men, trans women, and non-binary people.
Welcome to Country	Protocol where Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Traditional Owners welcome others to the land of their ancestors.

Resource list

This ASHM Language Guide was written in 2018 and revised in 2024. The guide acknowledges and references the following sources:

- ACON, *A Language Guide: Trans and Gender Diverse Inclusion*, ACON, NSW, 2019
- ADF, *The Power of Words Guide*, Alcohol and Drug Foundation, 2019
- American Psychological Association. (n.d.). Guidelines for psychological practice with lesbian, gay, and bisexual clients. <https://www.apa.org/pi/lgbt/resources/language>
- Australian Government, *Style manual: Gender and Sexual Diversity*. Retrieved from <https://www.stylemanual.gov.au/accessible-and-inclusive-content/inclusive-language/gender-and-sexual-diversity>
- Centre for Aboriginal Health, *Communicating Positively: A Guide to Appropriate Aboriginal Terminology*, NSW Government, NSW, 2019
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2018). *Let's stop HIV together: A guide to talking about HIV*. <https://www.cdc.gov/stophivtogether/library/stop-hiv-stigma/fact-sheets/cdc-lsht-stigma-factsheet-language-guide.pdf>
- Department of Children, Youth Justice and Multicultural Affairs, *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander: Respectful Language Guide*, Queensland Government, QLD, 2020
- EmbraceU, *Language Guide: Sexual health, STIs and BBVs for trans, gender diverse and non-binary people*, EmbraceU, 2021
- IHRA, *Intersex for allies*, Intersex Human Rights Australia, VIC, 2021
- LGBTI, *Inclusive Language Guide: Respecting People of Intersex, Trans and Gender Diverse Experience*, National LGBTI Health Alliance, NSW, 2015
- Mental Health Coordinating Council, *Recovery Oriented Language Guide: Third Edition*, NSW, 2022
- Metreau, E., Young, K. E., & Eapen, S. G. (2024, July 1). *World Bank country classifications by income level for 2024–2025*. World Bank Blogs. <https://blogs.worldbank.org/en/opendata/world-bank-country-classifications-by-income-level-for-2024-2025>
- NAPWHA, *Language and style guide*, National Association of people living with HIV/AIDS, NSW, 2008
- NUAA, *Language Matters*, NSW Users and AIDS Association, NSW, 2017
- Nursing License Map, *How to Use Inclusive Language in Healthcare*, Nursing License Map – Nursing Blog, 2021, USA
- People with Disability Australia. (2021). *PWDA language guide: A guide to language about disability*. <https://pwd.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/PWDA-Language-Guide-v2-2021.pdf>
- PFC, *People First Charter: recommended terminology for research and publications related to HIV*, People First Charter, 2021
- PHAA, *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Guide to terminology*, Public Health Association Australia, ACT, 2020
- SHV, *LGBTQIA+ Inclusive Language Guide*, Sexual Health Victoria, VIC, 2022
- Sosa, K, *Say This, Not That: A Guide for Inclusive Language*, The Diversity Movement, 2020
- UQ, *UQ Guide to Using Inclusive Language*, The University of Queensland Australia, QLD
- The Trevor Project. (n.d.). *Understanding gay & lesbian identities*.

<https://www.thetrevorproject.org/resources/article/understanding-gay-lesbian-identities/>

- University of Bristol. (n.d.). Inclusive writing: Sexual orientation.
<https://www.bristol.ac.uk/style-guides/writing/inclusive/sexual-orientation/>
- Victorian Government, *LGBTIQ Inclusive Language Guide*, Victorian Government, VIC, 2021