



**Murraylands
Gymnastics
Academy**

Equitable Access & Inclusion Policy

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**Based on the Inclusion Policy
by Gymnastics Australia
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1. Policy Overview

The Policy provides a management framework for the Murraylands Gymnastics Academy (MGA) to address barriers experienced by women and girls in accessing and using community sport infrastructure. It also works to ensure that equitable access to facilities lead to better programming, development and overall wellbeing outcomes for women and girls.

This policy's purpose will ensure all voices, concerns, and experiences, are integral to the design, implementation, monitoring of policies and programs. [See survey results below, and [reference here](#)].

This policy aims to ensure the Murraylands Gymnastics Academy complies with all current legislation, plus also supports State/Federal Government physical activity/inclusion related policies, while working in-line with the Gymnastics Australia (peak-body) inclusion efforts.

The overarching theme of this policy and subsequent plans are to strengthen participation, wellbeing and connectivity in gymnastics and gym sports – all which will have a greater impact on the lives of many in our Murraylands region.

The policy and its plans aim to progressively build capacity and capability at the MGA in identification and elimination of systemic causes of inequality for women and girls, other genders, races, diverse groups, those with a disability, those with cultural beliefs or other special needs groups. This policy aims to positively impact program development and delivery, communication and delivery of gymnastics and gym sport training and competition at all levels.

Through development of this policy, the MGA will influence, support, design and deliver (in collaboration with partners and stakeholders') gender inclusive and accessible, welcoming, safe and fit-for-purpose community gymnastics facilities and programs.

The MGA has already started to – and will continue to engage and consult throughout the design phase of any new, upgraded or repurposed gymnastics facilities and programs – or other relevant community sport infrastructure.

The MGA acknowledges that it's important to consider and prioritise all current and future planning, policy, service delivery and practice as they relate to community sports infrastructure.

At an overarching level, the MGA aims to:

- 1.Ensure women, girls and all diverse groups have equitable access to sport and recreation facilities and programs managed by the MGA**
- 2.Foster positive sport, recreation and social participation experiences for women, girls and all diverse and minority groups.**
- 3.Increase usage of all gym sport facilities, equipment and programming by women, girls and all diverse and minority groups.**



2. GOVERNANCE SUMMARY

Murraylands Gymnastics Academy (MGA) is governed by Gymnastics Australia (GA), the national governing body for gymnastics within Australia. GA and the eight state and territory associations are responsible for managing eight Gymsports, which include Men's Artistic Gymnastics, Women's Artistic Gymnastics, Rhythmic Gymnastics, Gymnastics for All, Aerobic Gymnastics, Acrobatic Gymnastics, Trampoline Gymnastics and Parkour. MGA is committed to ensuring the vision and purpose of this policy, as set out by GA, are implemented to reflect inclusive and equitable practices.

3. VISION

Murraylands Gymnastics Academy continues to support all gymnasts and specifically reduce participation barriers, ensuring women and girls, people with a disability or chronic health condition, those from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds and the LGBTQIA+ community have fair, safe and inclusive opportunities to access the sport of gymnastics.

4. POSITION STATEMENT

Murraylands Gymnastics Academy is committed to providing a safe, fun and inclusive environment for all people. Being an inclusive sport not only reflects our core values, it also reflects the diversity of our local communities. We have a zero-tolerance to any form of bullying, harassment or vilification towards people with diverse sexualities, genders, ability, backgrounds or cultures. This includes forms of homophobia, biphobia, transphobia, racism, sexism, ableism, interphobia, and xenophobia. We are dedicated to helping people lead happy, healthy and active lives. MGA celebrates diversity of sex, gender identity, gender expression, sexual orientation, intersex status, physical attributes, ability, skill, cultural background, ethnicity, location, religious or political beliefs, life stage, and will not tolerate discrimination in any form.



5. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to support and facilitate an inclusive environment that embraces diversity. It sets out MGA's commitment to ensure everyone bound by the policy is treated with respect and dignity and is protected from provocation, discrimination and abuse.

MGA will engage with its governing body, Gymnastics Australia, and industry leading diversity organisations to review and develop policies, guidelines and practices to ensure individuals of all sex, gender identity, gender expression, sexual orientation, intersex status, physical attributes, ability, skill, cultural background, ethnicity, location, religious or political beliefs and life stage, are provided the opportunity to participate in all aspects of gymnastics.

All MGA members, employees and volunteers shall, within their areas of responsibility, take reasonable steps to remove any barriers which exist to programs and services, and the physical, social, and virtual environment.

MGA will provide reasonable adjustments to programs and regulations to ensure that people of any sex, gender identity, gender expression, sexual orientation, intersex status, ability, skill, cultural background, ethnicity, location, religious or political beliefs and life stage, can successfully participate in all aspects of gymnastics

MGA will directly or indirectly provide education opportunities to ensure coaches, judges and clubs can be confident in creating an inclusive and welcoming environment.

Individuals who require services or modifications have a responsibility to specify requirements to be met to assist MGA and its' members to meet their commitments.

This policy will be regularly evaluated and revised through consultation to maintain continuous improvement in programs, services and facilities for people with disabilities.



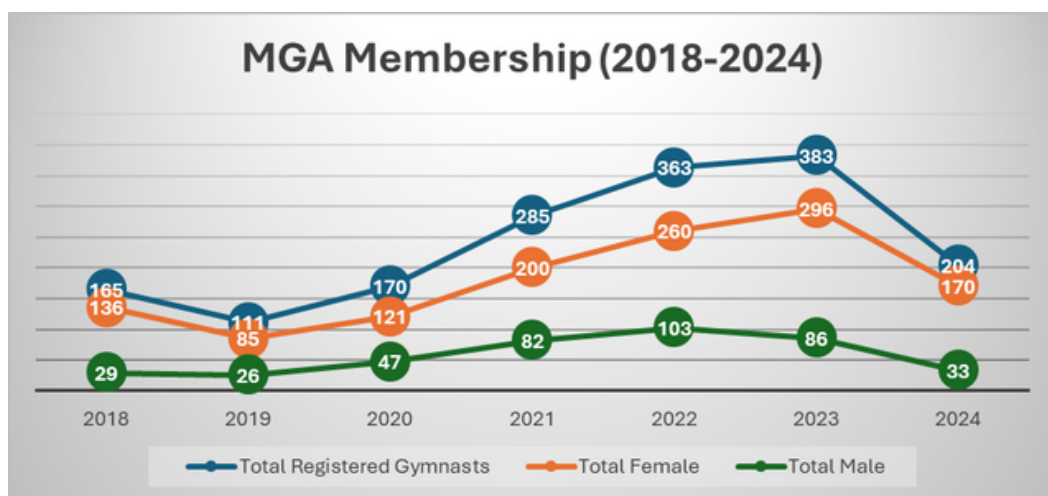
6. BACKGROUND

Sport and active recreation are critical for a healthy community – none more so than in regional and remote areas. Sport provides the opportunity for enriching our communities through the promotion of respect and fair mindedness for all people, while also supporting the physical and mental wellbeing of all in our community.

Sport reaches across age, gender, cultural background and demographic groups. Gymnastics in particular (and gym sports), at a grassroots or elite level can have remarkable outcomes for young girls and women from a range of diverse backgrounds. It has evolved dramatically over the 40 years of our club's existence and is now one of the most inclusive sports available in the world. Where many decades ago it was created for a particular body type and athleticism – it is now open to all, with requirements on all coaches ensuring all athletes are supported to improve and compete against only themselves overtime, or simply join in the fun of functional movement.

Gymnastics traditionally (and currently) is dominated by female athletes – and this is the primary reason we need better facilities for our women and girls in this sport. Girls come to the MGA because they are seeking comfort and support in a 1-1 athlete environment where they don't necessarily need to be a part of other team sports which dominate country towns (although this is still available through the MGA). This club was awarded Gymnastics South Australia 2022 Most Inclusive Club and it is intended to keep this momentum going through a range of strategies and programs as set out below.

Throughout the MGA's 40-year history, it has grown dramatically (see Figure 1 below).





In our first season of 1985, the club began with 30 members. In our best season ever (2023) we reached almost 400 members. Our strongest and most exciting number on record – with the vast majority being female. However, this was short-lived as our ageing and dilapidated rental facility was flooded by damaging rains, causing the roof and other infrastructure to fail, and significant long-term impacts of this closing down gymnastics for some 6 months from November 2023.

Over time, the MGA has supported (and continues to support) strong membership from our local Ngarrindjeri First Nations community, with this number increasing each year, and a recent survey noting approximately 31 members identified as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander (almost 9% of our members).

Further, we have a big CALD community, supporting families and athletes who are from different countries and cultures, including Islander, Thai, Central Asia, Dutch, Maori, European, Danish, South African, Bosnian, Phillipino, Indian, Muslim, American, Italian and Korean.

Data from our 2023-24 membership, also shows that we support 8 x athletes who identify as LGBTQIA+, including one young non-binary athlete.

We also pride ourselves on, and have exceptional outcomes in supporting women and girls with learning challenges, disabilities and mental illness. Over the past year, we have supported more than 60 athletes with a range of challenges, including ADHD, anxiety and depression, diabetes, physical disability, intellectual disability, limited mobility, heart disease, auditory processing, sensory issues. This includes running specific programs for 'Special Olympics' and one for children with sensory challenges. We have also trained our coaches and volunteers to work with these athletes to support them directly and appropriately.

What we have found through the gym sports programming that we run, is that it provides these girls an identity where typical team sports don't work for them. They are instead 'gymnasts' – and they can use that terminology confidently, without having to compete at a high level, or even compete at all. They can simply participate in one or more physical training sessions a week with a goal to simply have fun, stay active, and/or improve their own capabilities. There are no winners or losers in gymnastics – simply self-improvement.

All of this being said, **we have put a strong focus on less competitive and more inclusive sports opportunities – but we cannot do this without a sustainable and modern facility that allows equal access for all.**

What we see now typically, is that the rate of female gymnastics athletes drop off at two key points in their development:

1. Age 5 years: When they move from parent-partnered Kindergym. to recreational gymnastics
2. Age 12 years: Often around puberty, or when young girls explore other interests (recent feedback also tells us that cost and body image become a prohibitive factor)



We want to keep Murraylands girls and women in gymnastics and gym sports for life – and our plans for this are ambitious, but realistic.

Typically, a female dominated sport such as gymnastic does not have facilities as modern, good, or deriving as much investment and sponsorship as male-dominated sports such as football, basketball and cricket. Even up against other popular female sports such as netball in the Murraylands, we have similar junior playing rates – but far less opportunity to ascertain funds, and therefore to create the budgets that would allow us to fund and build our own facility.

Gymnastics is for the community, but it's athlete focused, not outwardly public-facing. Our training areas are intentionally private to protect the safety and wellbeing of our girls; our facilities are indoors and secure for the same reasons. But we are limited in terms of doing gymnastics 'just anywhere'. We cannot simply move to a new facility on different weeks as other common team sports do. Our facilities have strenuous safety requirements.

This means we cannot fundraise through the likes of canteens, bars, events, entry fees sponsorship signage or other such efforts – we are limited in our opportunities. Ensuring we take opportunities to raise funds for a new facility through grant funding is the only way we will realise the facility we need to cater for our growth.



7. DATA + NEED DRIVING FACILITIES

What we know is that the demographics of the Murraylands region are incredibly diverse, and the need for inclusive and equitable programs and facilities are critical to community wellbeing. Like many regional centres, it is football, cricket, netball and basketball which drive the majority of funding for sports – and even though gymnastics had the fastest growing membership of the past decade – our facilities got worse.

Since the floods halted our gymnastics program in late 2023, membership numbers have dropped by almost 50%. This is due to a range of factors, but the majority being:

- a) During the six-month shut-down period athletes stopped gymnastics, and moved on to other sports.
- b) Athletes went to other clubs further afield (ie. Adelaide or Mt Barker) where facilities were in-tact.
- c) The new much smaller training shed we moved into in June 2024 (est 70% smaller than previous) meant that class sizes were cut and therefore friends could not participate together, so some quit.
- d) The smaller space and lower ceilings meant apparatus and some training moves could not safely be used, so older gymnasts stopped participating or went elsewhere (ie. no trampoline or bars can be used; and older gymnasts cannot flip for low height of ceiling).
- e) Because of smaller classes in the smaller spaces families could not accommodate different programming times so have not been able to bring their children back.

Each of these issues can be alleviated by building a new facility that allows multiple classes to train at once, all apparatus to be set up and stay-up, all-ages athletes having the space they need to train, and larger classes being run a popular time-slots.

Further, the space will be modern and appealing to people of all backgrounds, ensuring we can keep athletes (and in particular females) in a safe, welcoming, comfortable and positive space for gym sports.

The critical nature of this equitable access and inclusion policy also takes into account the growth of the region, and specifically the residential development being built on the edge of Murray Bridge. Projections from this development note plans to:

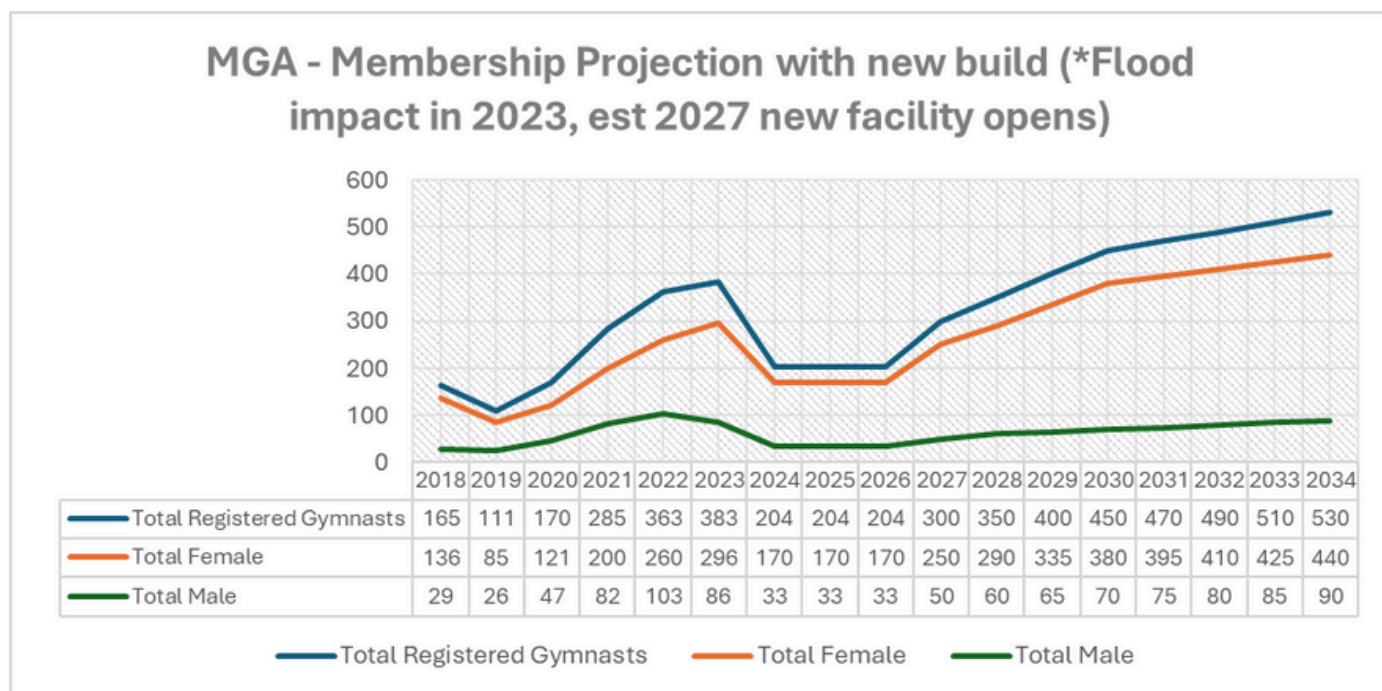
• Develop 1860 hectares of farmland south of the South Eastern Freeway into an extension of the city's urban area, with:

- Build 17,100 new homes over 40 years
- Create a community that incorporated seven new schools
- Create six neighbourhood centres with local shops and services



Based on this, and our growth over the past 8 years (prior to 2023 flooding), we estimate that our gymnastics membership numbers could double between now and 2030, if we can build our own, larger custom-build gymnastics facility – in an area where there is room for future growth as well.

This is our ultimate goal, and the data backs up this plan – see Figure 2 below.



Furthermore, while the data projection set shows that overall gymnastics numbers will likely soar with a new facility, it will be our female athletes in the popular age categories of 0-16, and older women ages 50+ who benefit most.

Conversely – without a new facility to move in to for the MGA between now and 2030 – we expect the following impacts:

- Numbers of gymnasts will continue to decline as frustrated people move to other sports with better facilities/program times;
- Volunteers and coaches will move on to other sports, jobs and clubs;
- The reputation of gymnastics and the MGA club will decline as we struggle to energise volunteers, athletes and the broader community in outdated, small, dilapidated facilities.
- Potential closure of the MGA, where athletes closes club will be Mt Barker – a further 50-200 kilometres away from their homes.



With the current momentum behind gymnastics post-Olympics, a passionate group of volunteers and coaches, recent award wins and data showing potential – now is the time for gymnastics to develop and grow for the best of our whole community.

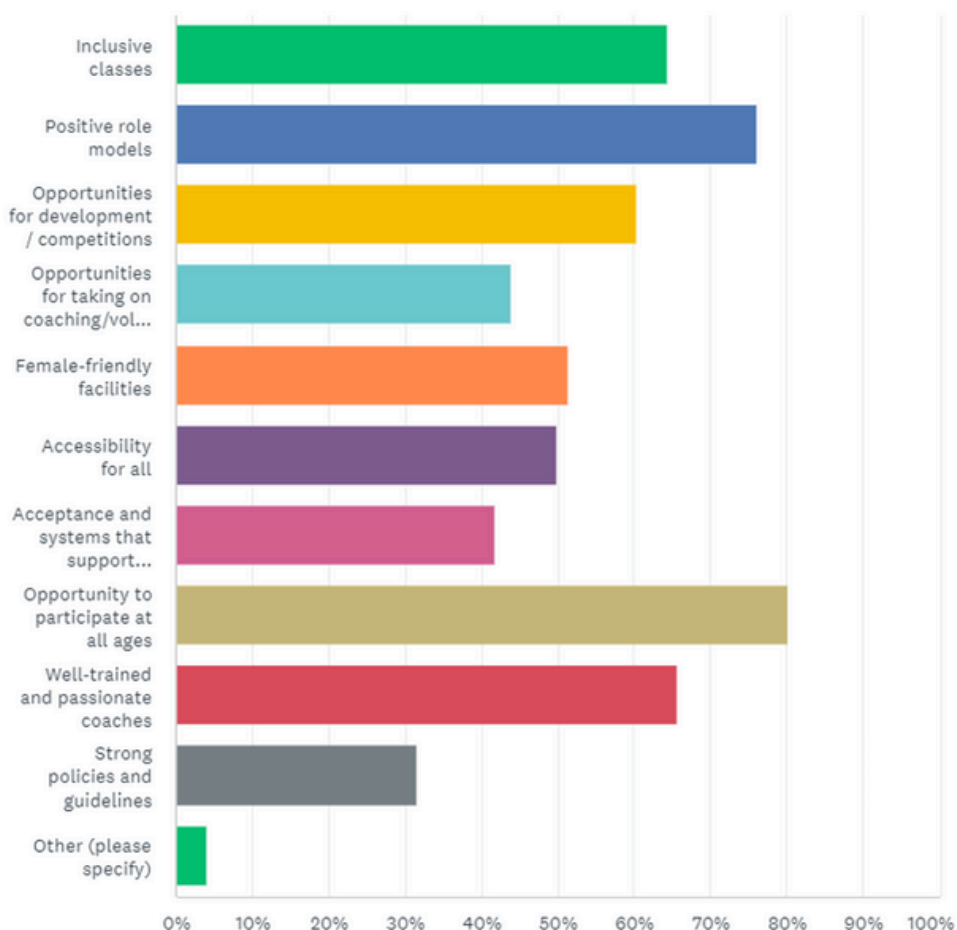
The MGA is well positioned to design and implement programming and a major facility build that progress gender equity, inclusivity and opportunity in community sport.



8. Statement of Intent

This Statement of Intent establishes the expectation that gender equality and inclusivity is considered and prioritised in all current and future planning, policy, service delivery and practice as they relate to community sports infrastructure.

In developing this statement, the MGA reviewed its recent survey findings with club members and community, which outlined that the key features people believed the MGA supported women and girls were multiple and varied (see numbers below).





MGA recognises that gender equality is:

- the attainment of equal rights, responsibilities, and opportunities of women, men, trans and gender diverse people. Equality does not mean that women, men, trans and gender diverse people will become the same but that their rights, responsibilities, and opportunities will not depend on their gender.
- the provision of fairness and justice in the distribution of benefits and responsibilities based on gender.

Further, the MGA recognizes that the term inclusion refers to what we do to ensure our diverse community is reflected in sport participants. Being inclusive means:

- being proactive in the way we plan, lead and control the delivery of sport and recreation opportunities for everyone.
- everyone in our diverse community, regardless of their gender, age, race, culture, religion, sexual orientation or ability, is afforded a range of opportunities to participate.
- a person is not defined by a single characteristic such as their age, religious affiliation or sexual orientation. Yet some communities are under-represented in sport participation.

The MGA will lead inclusive activities to support opportunities and greater participation by:

- People with disability
- Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Intersex (LGBTQIA+) communities
- First Nations people
- People from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds
- Women and Girls
- Older adults
-

In addition, people who are experiencing social or economic disadvantage are less likely to participate in organised sport or be physically active. In understanding the need for inclusion in gymnastics and gym sports, it is important to remember that individuals may identify with some, or all, of these characteristics. These concepts above, recognise that people may have different needs and power related to their gender/background and these differences should be identified and addressed in a manner that rectifies related imbalances.



9. PRINCIPLES

The MGA's Equitable Access and Inclusion Policy has six principles that guide and provide clear direction for change. This Policy and any related action plan are based on these six principles of inclusivity, full participation, equal representation, encouraging and supporting user groups, and prioritising user groups committed to equality. These principles are as follows:

1. Community sports infrastructure and environments are genuinely accessible, welcoming, safe, and inclusive.
2. Women, girls and those from diverse backgrounds can fully participate in all aspects of community sport and active recreation, including as a player, coach, administrator, official, volunteer and spectator.
3. Women, girls and those from diverse backgrounds will have equitable access to and use of sport infrastructure:
 - of the highest quality available and most convenient
 - at the best and most popular competition and training times and locations
 - to support existing and new participation opportunities, and a variety of sports.
4. Women, girls and those from diverse backgrounds should be equitably represented in the sport sector workforce including in leadership and governance roles.
5. The MGA encourages and supports all user groups who access and use community sport infrastructure to understand, adopt and implement gender equitable and inclusive access and use practices.
6. The MGA prioritises access, use and support to all user groups who demonstrate an ongoing commitment to gender equitable access and use of allocated community sport infrastructure.

The MGA acknowledges:

- the disadvantaged position some individuals have had in the sport and recreation sector because of their gender, ability or background
- that achieving gender and cultural equality will require diverse approaches
- that achieving equality and inclusion will require diverse approaches for men, people with disability, First Nations peoples, LGBTQIA+ people and people from culturally and linguistically diverse communities to achieve similar outcomes for all people.

The MGA will:

- engage fairly and equitably with key stakeholders, facility user groups and club members regardless of their gender/background, in a positive, respectful, and constructive manner,
- engage in the process of Inclusive Impact Assessments (IIA) to assess the implications on all members, for any planned action, including policies, programs and communications;
- engage with the broader sport community to assess the implications for diverse groups, of any planned action, including policies, programs and communications.



10. SCOPE

The scope of this Policy is to support MGA to take positive action towards achieving gender equity and inclusion in the access and usage of community sports infrastructure.

The Policy applies to:

- all/any infrastructure owned or managed by the Murraylands Gymnastics Academy and all of its gym sports programs.
- any MGA club, team programs, communications, and services
- any MGA involvement in the design, construction of new and improved and ongoing maintenance of community sport infrastructure.
- all community members and activities

11. Compliance and Monitoring

The MGA commits to undertake regular assessments on all current facility and areas of activity - and use policies and processes to consider opportunities to strengthen gender equitable access and inclusion for all.

The MGA commits to developing an Action Plan (underway now – draft attached) to remove barriers and improve equitable and inclusive access and use of gymnastics facilities in alignment with the principles.

12. Related Policies and Legislation

- [Working for Women: A Strategy for Gender Equality](#)
- [Gender Equity in Sports Governance \(Australian Government\)](#)
- [Workplace Gender Equality Act 2012](#)
- [South Australia's Women's Equality Blueprint](#)
- [Disability Services Act 1986](#)
- [Disability Discrimination Act 1992](#)
- [SA: State Sport and Infrastructure Plan](#)



13. Policy Definitions

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander:

The term Indigenous is also used to refer to Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. According to the most widely adopted definition of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander (the 'Commonwealth working definition'):

"An Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander is:

- a person of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander descent;
- who identifies as being of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander Origin; and
- who is accepted as such by the community with which the person associates."

This definition was developed during the period 1967 to 1978 and is now widely accepted by Commonwealth and other government agencies.

Diversity:

The concept of diversity encompasses acceptance and respect. It means understanding that each individual is unique and recognising our individual differences.

LGBTQIA+:

An initialism which stands for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Intersex and asexual (and the plus holds space for the expanding and new understanding of different parts of the very diverse gender and sexual identities). It is used to refer collectively to these communities. The 'LGB' refers to sexuality/sexual identity; the 'T' refers to gender identity; and the 'I' refers to people who have an intersex variation. 'Q' can refer to either gender identity or sexuality.

Inclusion:

This is the term used to outline a range of options to cater for people of all ages, abilities, sex, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, or social economic and cultural backgrounds, in the most appropriate manner possible.

Multicultural:

- Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) Census, meaning one or more parents born overseas.
- CALD, meaning Culturally and Linguistically Diverse communities (not Anglo Celtic and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander backgrounds).
- NESB, meaning non-English-speaking background.

**People with a disability:**

The Disability Services Act 1993 defines 'disability' as meaning a disability:

- which is attributable to an intellectual, psychiatric, cognitive, neurological, sensory or physical impairment or a combination of those impairments.
- which is permanent or likely to be permanent.
- which may or may not be of a chronic or episodic nature.
- Which results in substantially reduced capacity of the person for communication, social interaction, learning or mobility and a need for continuing support services. It is crucial to understand that people are not only defined by categories like these, but are unique multi-faceted individuals shaped by a broad range of influences, this is the foundation of individuality and diversity.



14. CHANGES TO THE POLICY

Changes to this policy must be submitted to the MGA Committee for review and approval. Once a change has been approved, the policy will be updated. In addition, Murraylands Gymnastics Academy is committed to ensuring all policies are up-to-date and reflect current practices. The latest review date is recorded at the beginning of each policy – and will be reviewed annually.

Next Review Date: 30 August 2025