INTRODUCTION

As the community of the followers of Jesus Christ we try to live with the value of inclusivity which offers people a sense of belonging and acceptance.

We are conscious of the role that language plays in shaping our understanding of ourselves, of others and of God. Inclusive language can enhance our relationships with one another.

These Guidelines are offered to increase our awareness and enable us to use language inclusively when speaking and writing.

LANGUAGE AND GENDER

Generics and personal pronouns
The Bible was undoubtedly written in a very male-centred culture where women's role was very limited indeed. This led to its tendency to assume that being male is the norm and to use male pronouns as generic language. Women's experience and perspective is omitted or under represented. Sometimes the use of language makes women invisible e.g. the use of the words 'sons' and 'brothers' to describe the believing community even when women are included. At other times the exclusive use of masculine pronouns and images in relation to God has worked to celebrate the experience of men leaving women's

experience unnamed, secondary and ultimately less valid.

Here are some useful alternative ways of saying things:

Concerning people

Instead of	Use
men	people, women and men, everyone, all
mankind	humanity, people
sons	sons and daughters, children, heirs
brothers	sisters and brothers, friends
forefathers	ancestors, forebears, mothers and fathers

- 'By this shall all men know that you are my disciples' becomes 'By this will others know that you are my disciples' (Aust Hymn Book 571)
- Gen 1:26 'God said 'Let us make man in our own image....' has been translated as 'Then God said 'Let us make humankind in our image....' (NRSV)

Concerning God
Here are some ways of speaking about God which do not have gender bias:

Creator, Liberating God, Redeemer, Source of our being, Sustainer, Renewer, Reconciler, God of Peace, Friend, Loving God, Holy One, You who are truth, light and love.
- 'May his face shine upon you' may be said as 'May *God's* face shine upon you'

- 'God created the world and then he rested' becomes 'God created the world and then rested'

Sex role stereotyping
Occupational terms or job titles that relate to only one sex are inaccurate and discriminatory and should be replaced with neutral generic terms such as
- chairman   chair, convenor
- altar girl   altar server
- headmaster/mistress   principal

Word order and word choice
As men usually precede women in expressions such as *men and women* and *his and hers*, try reversing the order occasionally.
When describing the same characteristics in women and men use similar terms. The following examples illustrate how women and men are often described, although circumstances may be identical.

women words	men words
aggressive/pushy	assertive/ambitious
domineering	strong
hysterical	angry
stubborn	firm

Titles and forms of address
As a general rule use a first name, a neutral title or nothing. For women the use of *Miss* and *Mrs* identifies marital status as well as title whereas *Mr* refers only to title. The use of *Ms* is recommended to all women where

the parallel *Mr* is applicable, and when a woman's preferred title is unknown. As with men, a woman's preferred title should be respected when known.

Patronising expressions and stereotypes
Avoid patronising expressions such as love, dear. The word *ladies* should only be used when *gentlemen* would be appropriate for a male in the same situation.
The following are examples of stereotypes which could be considered demeaning
- the girls in the office
- you think just like a man

LANGUAGE AND DISABILITY

Reference to a person primarily in terms of their disability stereotypes the person and is depersonalising. Many words used to describe disability are outdated and inaccurate. If describing people with disabilities is necessary, the following terms are considered appropriate:
- people with disabilities (not the handicapped/disabled)
- people with intellectual or developmental disdisabilities (not the mentally handicapped)

Other appropriate terminology includes vision impaired, hearing impaired, intellectually impaired. Do not use the term *normal* or *able-bodied* in contrast. The terms victim or sufferer tend to dehumanise a person and emphasise powerlessness e.g.
an AIDS sufferer   a person with AIDS
polio victim   a person with polio

LANGUAGE AND INDIGENOUS PEOPLE OF NEW SOUTH WALES

Some Indigenous Australians object to being called Aborigines. Generically the term Koori is used. However at the local level, it is common for people to identify the country to which they belong, e.g. Waradjuri, Bundjalung, Kamilaroi, Tharawal, etc.

LANGUAGE, ETHNICITY AND IDENTITY

Australia is culturally diverse and reference to ethnicity is inappropriate unless there is a valid reason e.g. Samoan choir

It is also important to describe people in terms of who they are rather than who they are not

Instead of   Use
- non-Catholic   other Christians
- non-Christian   people of other faiths

IMPLEMENTATION OF GUIDELINES

It is important to ensure that the principles of these Guidelines are reflected in all church documents and publications. Care should also be taken in speaking, especially in formal settings such as preaching.
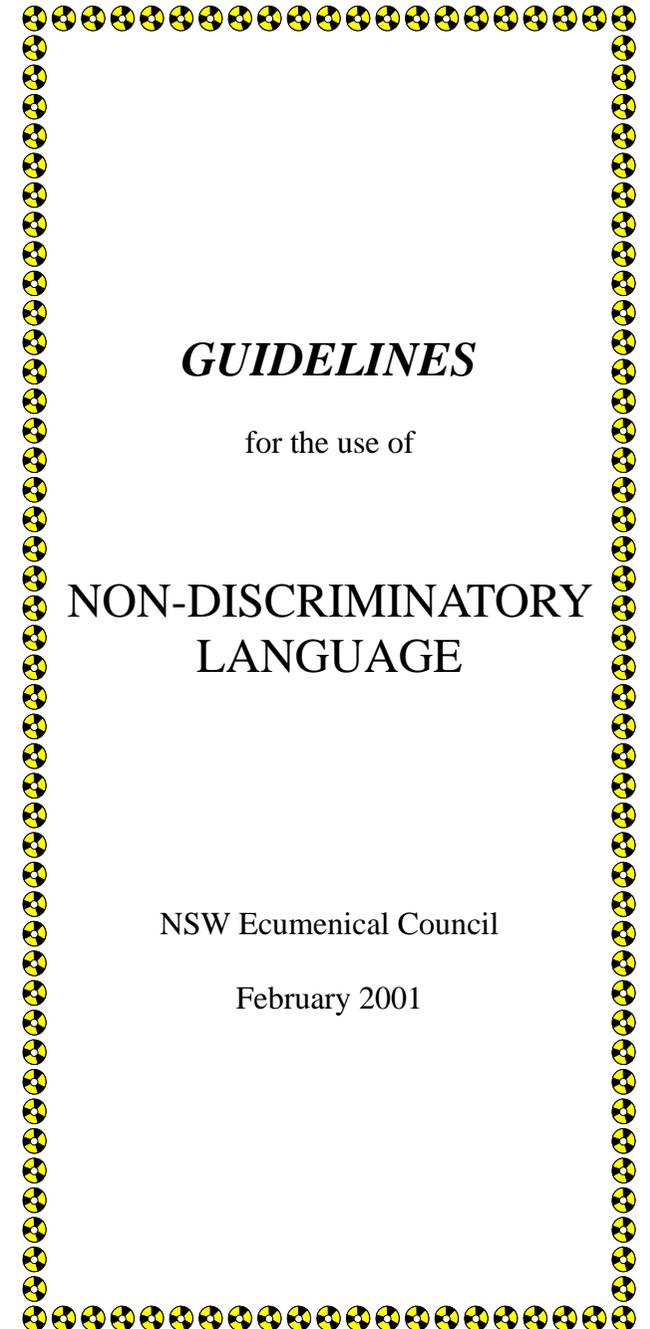
GUIDELINES

for the use of

NON-DISCRIMINATORY LANGUAGE

NSW Ecumenical Council

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