



# **Drama Australia**

## **Equity and Diversity Guidelines**

**March 2005**



# DRAMA AUSTRALIA EQUITY AND DIVERSITY GUIDELINES

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## PREAMBLE

Drama Australia as the peak national organisation for drama educators seeks to affirm commitment to diversity and the notions of equality, equity and access as these are manifested in Australian society. The organisation believes that appreciation of diversity is important in order to understand and provide for the special needs of individuals. It is important that Drama Australia and its member associations reflect on the ways in which *gender, sexualities, disability* and *cultural and linguistic* issues impact on drama education. This document seeks to support those involved in educational drama of young people and adults in Australia in these areas of diversity. The policy seeks to engage with contemporary thought and practice, develop understanding and awareness and offer advice to educators on ways to address these issues.

*This document has been prepared for the member associations of Drama Australia for consideration and comment.*

*While reasonable checks have been made to ensure its accuracy, no responsibility can be accepted for errors and omissions however caused.*

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*It is envisaged that this document when fully endorsed by Drama Australia shall be distributed to all member associations and posted on the Drama Australia website ([www.dramaaustralia.org.au](http://www.dramaaustralia.org.au))*

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**Sandra Gattenhof**,  
Director of Projects, Drama Australia;  
**Sue Davis**,  
writer of Drama Australia's (then NADIE) first Gender Policy document on which this current document was built;  
**Patrizia Ferrara**,  
Drama Australia Equity and Diversity Policy Project  
Officer and writer of Cultural and Linguistic Diversity policy section;  
**Christine Hatton**,  
writer of Gender Equity policy section;  
**Richard Sallis**,  
President, Drama Australia and writer of Sexualities policy section;  
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***The Drama Australia Equity and Diversity Guidelines are guided by the terms of liberatory politics that underpin drama pedagogy and practice.***

## GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The Drama Australia Equity and Diversity Guidelines are guided by the terms of liberatory politics that underpin drama pedagogy and practice. The key terms that are used as frames of reference throughout these guidelines are notions of:

- *Equity*...Principles of fairness, social justice and respect for individuals and their contexts underpin the various practices and processes of drama in education.
- *Inclusiveness*... The notion of inclusiveness in drama involves more than providing access. In order to be included it is important that participants also feel recognised and valued within the full range of drama experiences.
- *Pluralism*...This is a philosophy where there is an acknowledgment of difference, of multiple perspectives, of multiple truths and identity locations. Drama processes and products are often multi-vocal and collaborative endeavours.
- *Diversity*...In the world of the arts diversity is highly valued. A diversity of participants in a group enriches all involved and enables an exchange of ideas, perspectives and stories to fuel the artistic process in drama.
- *Empowerment*...Empowerment of individuals involves freedom from constraint and the freedom to develop towards one's human potential. In drama education 'empowerment' can happen at various levels: the personal, cultural, communal and social/political (Neelands 1996:29) through a variety of processes.

As drama educators we are committed to the rights of individuals to learn and imagine new possibilities about themselves, others and their communities through their experiences in drama. In complex contemporary educational settings within our country, drama teachers need to not only be aware of but critically engage with issues of identity, equity and diversity within their daily practices. This will ensure that participants' perspectives and voices have a valued place within their dramas and in turn, that the drama processes work to enhance, extend and enrich the ongoing stories of participants' lives.

Drama, with its foundations in play, story and performance, offers an important and powerful site for *imagination, analysis* and *representation*, where identities and perceptions about individual and cultural identities can be challenged and re-interpreted within the art form. Drama Australia is committed to upholding the rights of individuals to learn freely and experiment in drama modes and contexts without prejudice constraint or ridicule. As a collaborative art form drama enables participants to communicate, create and question; to open up issues, themes, characters or stories so that participants can "see anew, understand ourselves more fully, expand our thinking, and understand how that thinking has been shaped by our social positions. It is an opening-up process that must, at all costs, leave open the possibilities of alternative ways to see or hear or live the story (Gallagher (2000: 82-83)."

Drama Australia encourages its members to continue to engage in the dialogue these guidelines begins, so that new approaches and insights can be generated about what equity and diversity really means in practice.



# GUIDELINE STATEMENTS

## Cultural and Linguistic Guideline Statement

Drama Australia and its member associations are committed to:

- *Acknowledging* cultural and linguistic diversity in the community when developing school curriculum
- *Identifying* and incorporating the diverse cultural perspective's of the school
- *Establishing* classroom practices that reflect and value the characteristics of culturally and linguistically diverse communities
- *Confronting* incidences of prejudice, racism and ethnic stereotyping, and deal with them through facilitated interaction and negotiation
- *Ensuring* that the ethnic backgrounds of all students are acknowledged and appreciated, and that all students understand that their background is integral to Australian national identity
- *Learning* to pronounce students names correctly
- *Encouraging* students in the drama classroom to express their own cultural identity or identities and maintain their home language
- *Allowing* opportunities for students to use their first language



## Disability Guideline Statement

Drama Australia and its member associations are committed to:

- *Recognising* that a diversity of ability in a drama group enriches all participants.
- *Ensuring* processes used in drama are inclusive, offering access to and encouraging respect and acceptance of individuals with a range of ability.
- *Recognising* the barriers to participation in the arts for people with disabilities and advocating and facilitating the provision of drama and theatre experiences for them.
- *Advocating* the use of drama in education as a means for promoting awareness and understanding of disability and disability issues.
- *Encouraging* the use of curriculum materials, drama resources and performances that represent disability and associated issues.
- *Identifying*, supporting and promoting models of best practice in drama education involving people with disabilities, increasing awareness of disability and /or exploring disability issues.



## Gender Guideline Statement

Drama Australia and its member associations are committed to:

- *Valuing* the contribution of women as well as men to the development of drama education and to drama history.
- *Advocating* the use of drama in education as a means for exploring the ways gender is constructed both in our society and others.
- *Ensuring* language and processes utilised are non-sexist and inclusive.
- *Gathering* and monitoring data about gendered participation in arts education and the arts industry.
- *Encouraging* the use of curriculum materials and drama resources that represent a broad range of gender roles and issues.
- *Recognising*, supporting and disseminating work in drama education that explores relevant gender issues.



## Sexualities Guidelines Statement

Drama Australia and its member associations are committed to:

- *Countering* biases, stereotyping, prejudices and normative assumptions in relation to sexualities and young people
- **Contesting** behaviours in drama that perpetuate heterosexism and heteroprivilegism
- *Encouraging the use of inclusive* discourse in relation to sexualities that is not based on traditional or power-related cultural stereotypes
- *Inclusive* strategies for drama teaching that allows for and respects difference in relation to sexualities
- *Ensuring* that drama courses are free from content that limits the inclusiveness of sexualities.



## Guidelines into Practice

### Cultural and Linguistic Diversity - Guidelines into Practice

Drama educators in Australia need to:

- Reflect on your own opinions and views on Australia's cultural and linguistic diversity
- Model inclusive, positive, non-racist behaviour in the drama classroom, playground and staff room
- Foster sensitivity to others people's practices and beliefs
- Share information about your own cultural background
- Find out about the cultural and language backgrounds of your students in your school
- Treat students as individuals – don't make assumptions based on stereotypes of particular groups
- Seek out, use and share learning resources, for example, plays, videos, books, performances, etc., which include the perspectives of culturally and linguistically diverse communities
- Make sure students from all backgrounds feel confident to participate and perform in front of the class
- Make use of translations, interpreters and language support staff
- Include drama activities that celebrate cultural and language diversity
- Through various activities challenge stereotypes
- Encourage positive interaction between students in the drama classroom
- Evaluate your own teaching practice and teaching and learning materials for bias and sensitivity
- Conduct and/or Initiate staff development opportunities, which aim to increase cross-cultural understanding.



## Disability – Guidelines into Practice

Drama Educators in Australia need to:

- *Adopt* an inclusive approach to drama that encourages, facilitates and supports access for individuals with a range of abilities.
- *Recognise* the barriers to participation in drama activities for people with disabilities including physical, attitudinal and financial, and endeavour to facilitate their involvement in drama.
- *Ensure* drama classrooms and workshops are places in which there is respect and acceptance of a range of abilities.
- *Consider* what individuals can do rather than what they can't do.
- *Plan* drama activities that not only include participants with disabilities but will stretch all participants so they can fulfil their potential.
- *Use* and insist on an attitude of respect and the use of appropriate language and terminology when discussing and referring to disability.
- *Challenge* stereotypes or derogatory depictions and representations of disability in drama work.
- *Provide* opportunities for integration and collaboration between people with disabilities and the non-disabled in drama activities in order to break down barriers, increase awareness and understanding and build positive relationships.
- *View* performances by individuals with disabilities theatre companies that involve people with disabilities as role models and to inspire understanding and awareness in the non-disabled.
- *Seek* information about the various differences in ability of individuals in drama classes so that their needs are understood and catered for. Remember to consult the person with the disability as no-one understands their particular disability in the same way that they do.
- *Provide* opportunities for people with disabilities to gather together to create drama and theatre and to self-advocate by presenting disability issues or by simply presenting themselves to the broader community.
- *Refer* to texts and resources to increase awareness and understanding of current thought and practice in the area of drama and disability.



## Gender - Guidelines Into Practice

Drama educators in Australia need to:

- *Adopt* inclusive, gender-aware practices in drama teaching and assessment
- *Use* process drama, devised performance and text based drama to explore the means by which gender is constructed and performed in drama and in cultural contexts.
- *Analyse* gender roles in plays from different eras and cultures and the social discourses that underpin playwright's or director's intentions.
- *Offer* examples of texts, roles and performances that present alternative and positive representations of femininities and masculinities so that students learn about gendered performance as they reflect upon and deconstruct drama, discuss which are more highly valued and why.
- *Experiment* with cross-gender roles.
- *Use* and encourage students to use non-sexist gender inclusive language.
- *Provide* opportunities for students to work in single sex group at times.
- *Encourage* female students and teachers as well as male to develop skills in technical areas. (i.e. lighting and sound, use of computer technology)
- *Ensure* that the scripts selected provide strong learning opportunities for girls as well as boys.
- *Interrogate* gender stereotypes, which may be identified in drama scripts, performances and student work.
- *Challenge* roles and representations in drama works that reflect restrictive gender codes that exist in popular culture
- *Explore* issues such as sexual harassment, domestic violence and sexual assault, masculinity and violence, anorexia and body image, sexuality and homophobia.
- *Analyse* the amount of time and attention spent with students in classrooms by gender.
- *Collect* school data on participation rates in the arts and drama. Examine the way the arts are valued in the school culture. (ie through number of awards, assembly items, school events etc)
- *Collect* data about achievement levels by gender and explore reasons for any gender differences. (eg through student interview, analysis of school culture etc)
- *Conduct* a gender analysis of drama resources. (plays by women/men, male/female roles in plays, gender breakdown of jobs in theatre programs).
- *Help* develop students' sense of gender esteem as they create and perform in drama
- *Provide* strong drama role models and mentors from within or outside the school environment who have successfully eluded gender traps in drama, performance or the arts generally.



## Sexualities – Guidelines into Practice

Drama educators in Australia need to:

- *Remember* that in any class you teach it is likely that a percentage of the students are or will be in time same-sex attracted
- *Be aware* of our biases, stereotyping, prejudices and normative assumptions in relation to sexualities and young people
- *Be prepared* to respond to anti-gay, anti-lesbian or anti-bisexual slurs just as you would racist or sexist slurs
- *Contest* behaviours in drama that perpetuate heterosexism and heteroprivilegism\*
- *Avoid* any outward signs that might be construed as supporting heteroprivilegist attitudes, and thus offending the lifestyle choice of certain students in your class or other staff at your school
- *Use inclusive* discourse that is not based on traditional or power-related cultural stereotypes
- *Consider inclusive* strategies for your drama teaching that allows for and respects difference
- *Avoid perpetuating* stereotypes and prejudices in relation to sexualities
- *Audit* your courses in relation to heteroprivilegism\*
- *Refer* to young people constructing their sexual identity as a positive aspect of growing up, rather than as a ‘problem’
- *Help ensure* that issues pertaining to sexuality that arise in drama are openly discussed (with confidentiality to those involved) with the greater staff of the school
- *Establish* tolerance and non-harassment as a group norm\*\*
- *Make* one of your drama class ‘rules’ that discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation is not acceptable
- ***Don’t shy away from*** discussing aspects of sexualities in your drama classes, as you consider appropriate given the context of your school
- *Keep up-to-date* with educational/academic papers and publications to do with sexualities and schooling
- *Refer to texts* such as those in the ‘Works Cited’ part of this document for further guidance and advice

\* as defined by Crowhurst, 2002

\*\* (From Ollis et al, 2000)



## Discussion Papers

### Cultural and Linguistic Diversity – Guidelines

#### Introduction

The Cultural and Linguistic Diversity policy has been developed to assist all teachers and practitioners within the fields of drama and theatre practice. As a national educational organisation, Drama Australia is committed to the ideal of cultural inclusiveness and to the notions of equality, equity, choice and access as these are manifested in a multicultural society. The focus of Drama Australia is on national issues in drama education. It is a voice of advocacy and representation in national forums. Drama education is an engaging and innovative field that allows both teacher and learner to explore and apply drama and theatre work throughout discussion, exploration, reflection and performance.

#### Cultural and Linguistic Diversity in Australia

Australia is one of the most culturally and linguistically diverse nations in the world. This diversity has always been embedded in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander societies and has been broadened over the last two hundred years with the arrival of people from over one hundred and fifty distinct cultures from around the world.

Language Diversity is an important characteristic of Australian society. While English is the dominant language, many people speak a language other than English as their first language within their families and communities. Over two hundred languages other than English are spoken in Australia today.

Numerous students are multi or bilingual. Many of these are first-generation Australian, but a considerable number are second- and third-generation, where in their home and social environments, the main language is not English, or English shares the dominant place with another language.

Australia is a leading nation in becoming one of the first countries to launch a National Policy on Languages. Recognising that different ethnic identities are often rooted in their specific languages, the Lo Bianco Report (1987) proposed that the education system allow students to learn English and at least one other language.

Schools play a very important role in the development of attitudes, values and critical thinking. The creation of a cultural and linguistic policy is to ensure that racism and prejudice do not develop to hinder individuals participation, and that all students are assisted to develop understandings and skills that will enable them to achieve their full potential, and to participate effectively and successfully in a multicultural society.

Cultural and Linguistic diversity is a policy for all Australians. It is a policy that promotes respect by all cultures and one that allows Australians the freedom to maintain and celebrate their languages and cultures within a socially cohesive framework of shared values.



### **Why is Cultural and Linguistic Diversity an important issue for drama teachers?**

Australia is one of the most culturally and linguistically diverse countries in the world and our schools reflect this. The presence of young people from such a wealth of cultural backgrounds presents a unique and empowering educational environment. Developments in social and cultural theory provide ways of understanding the arts. Drama education in all its forms can be practiced and valued in diverse social and cultural contexts. Drama education provides learners to express reflective and personal experiences from early childhood years. David Hornbrook recognises the individual expressiveness by stating that;

*If drama teachers are to be serious egalitarians then they must give their pupils access to the narratives of this historical consciousness, for these stories are the key to understanding, articulating and eventually determining circumstances and material and moral lives...In a culture itself composed of 'multi-cultures' these narratives will themselves reflect and celebrate a diversity of ethnic traditions within the context of society as a whole (1989:107).*

Equipping teachers to build effective relationships with parents, students and staff from different cultures, linguistic and religious backgrounds is a key for improving student learning in a diverse community.

At present, numerous Australian schools promote cultural dialogue, as it is valued as an essential part of learning. It is seen to provide students with an education that allows for cathartic and diverse understanding. Many of these students, who are usually bilingual, apply their own cultural identity as a powerful tool into the curriculum.

Geert Hofstede a theorist in the study of cultural differences, recognises that growing up in a bicultural environment can be an asset to a child...having foreign friends, hearing different languages spoken, travelling with parents who awake the children's interests in things foreign are definite assets. Learning at least one other language – whatever the language – is a unique ingredient of education for multicultural understanding (1991:239).

Yet, knowing what to do with all these cultural ingredients, which students possess, can be confronting for the teacher. No doubt, a culturally sensitive methodology needs to be implemented by the teacher in order to establish a culturally inclusive class.

Applying Hofstede's cultural understanding upon teachers that 'culture is learned, not inherited' (1991:5) enables teachers to understand that human errors frequently occur in the classroom. All drama teachers carry their own personality, culture and characteristics into the classroom environment, which can heighten, influence or impinge learners. Yet, teachers especially need to be aware of the circumstances in which cultural diversity operates. As Harris and Moran state that "the first step in managing cultural differences effectively is increasing one's general awareness. We must understand the concept of culture and its characteristics before we fully benefit by the study of cultural specifics and a foreign language" (1996:135).



**Discussion paper and policy statements have been written for Drama Australia by Patrizia Ferrara, DALO for Drama Victoria, August, 2003.**

The cross-cultural challenge which Australian drama teachers confront at present is to accomplish awareness for themselves first and then for their learners. However, without professional guidance and the correct knowledge about cultural and linguistic diversity, drama teachers will remain powerless to the many problems, which arise from the misunderstanding of cultural and linguistic awareness. In order for drama teachers to understand and appreciate Australia's cultural and linguistic diversity, care must be applied across the large multicultural body of students and staff within the nation.

### **Related Policies**

Through official policies, governments in all Australian states have promoted the idea of multicultural Australia for more than three decades. The aims of these official policies, summarised in the report entitled *Multiculturalism for all Australians: our developing nationhood* (Zubrzycki, 1982:12) are to foster a society that utilises the contributions of all its citizens, and celebrates their diverse backgrounds.

Education has also played an important part in the drive by each state to promote multicultural policies. National and state educational documents support this emphasis. For example, the Victorian Government's *The Curriculum Standards and Frameworks for the Arts*, (CSF Board of Studies, 1995:4) states that the material in the curriculum should address the principles of equal opportunity for all students. It should reflect the range of abilities and cultural diversity of the student population "and the broader Australian and international context".

The publication of the 1978 report of the review of post-arrival programs and services for migrants entitled *Migrant Services and Programs*, known as the Galbally Report, launched multiculturalism in becoming official government policy.

The Galbally report saw schools as critical in the development of a climate in which the concept of multiculturalism could be understood and promoted. Multiculturalism also became an influence in schooling with the establishment in 1978 of the Committee on Multicultural Education by the Commonwealth Schools Commission and the subsequent funding of the Commonwealth Multicultural Program (MEP).

Despite a wealth of information from policy documents and reports, some researchers have suggested that there is little evidence that teaching practices in Australia present multiculturalism either as a political tool to combat inequality, or as a socially cohesive force. A leading exponent of this argument in Australia is Fazal Rizvi (1986, 1994) who suggested that although schools have embraced the values of equality of opportunity and pluralism since the 1970s, there was little evidence of this in the average art classroom (Rizvi, in Gunew and Rizvi, 1994:54).



**Cultural and Linguistic  
Guidelines Statement**  
(see p3)

**Cultural and Linguistic  
Diversity -  
Guidelines into Practice**  
(see p7)

## Glossary of Cultural and Linguistic Diversity Terms

### **Assimilation**

Until the 1960s, the Australian Government policy aimed to ensure that immigrants were assimilated into Australian society, with a view to achieving harmonious settlement. Immigrants were expected to 'blend in' with the dominant cultural group, discarding their own cultures, languages, customs and traditions in order to become completely 'Australian'.

### **Asylum seeker**

A person who, after fleeing his or her own country, seeks protection in another country.

### **Australian Aboriginal person**

A member of the indigenous peoples of Australia.

### **Australian Multiculturalism**

The Australian Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs states that:

The term Australian Multiculturalism is the way Australians address the challenges and opportunities of cultural diversity. It is a term, which recognises and celebrates this diversity. It accepts and respects the right of all Australians to express and share their individual cultural heritage within an overriding commitment to Australia and the basic structures of values of Australian democracy (2001).

### **Citizenship**

In 1948, the Nationality and Citizenship Act created status of 'Australian citizen'. Previously, Australians had been 'British Subjects'. Citizenship entitles individuals to vote, to stand for parliament, and to apply for an Australian passport. Citizenship also requires an oath or affirmation of allegiance to Australia, obedience to Australian laws, compulsory voting at federal and state elections, jury service and defence of Australia.

### **Cultural and or linguistic group**

A group of people, racially or historically related, having a common and distinctive culture, often including a common language.

### **Cultural Identity**

A person's sense of self identity related to their notion of belonging to a particular cultural and ethnic group.

### **Dictation Test**

A written entry test that gave Australian immigration officials the power to exclude any non-European immigrants. Immigrants could be required to pass a language test in any European language. If they failed, they were refused entry. The cornerstone of the 1901 Immigration Restriction Act, it was used until 1958.



### **Displaced Persons**

People made homeless and stateless as a result of war, civil war, or the changing of borders by international treaty. After World War 2, enormous numbers of Europeans became stateless. Between 1947 and 1954, more than 170,000 Displaced Persons arrived in Australia, as part of an international resettlement program.

### **Immigration Restriction Act, 1901**

Passed by the Australian Parliament in 1901, shortly after Federation, this Act was the cornerstone of the 'White Australia Policy'. It created a series of barriers and disincentives to entry by non-British immigrants.

### **Integration**

From the late 1950s to the late 1970s the Australian Government replaced its 'assimilation' policy with one that promoted integration of immigrants into Australian society. The approach acknowledged that immigrants could become 'Australian' while retaining aspects of the cultural identity and heritage.

### **Migration Act, 1958**

The first major federal legislation relating to immigration policy since 1901. The 1958 Migration Act abolished the Dictation Test as the method of screening immigrants to Australia. The Act also introduced an entry permit system as the means of controlling immigration. The Act was amended in 1983, replacing the term 'alien' with 'non-citizen' and ending the favoured treatment of British nationals.

### **Multiculturalism**

Since the late 1970s, the Australian Government has promoted multiculturalism in place of 'integration'. Multiculturalism encourages all Australians to maintain their customs and traditions while respecting those of others. At the same time, all Australians are expected to respect and comply with the basic structures and principles of Australian society. Practical measures for achieving a multicultural society have included public funding for the delivery of culturally specific welfare and educational services.

### **Racial Discrimination Act, 1975**

Australian Government legislation which prohibits discrimination on the grounds of race, religion, colour, descent and ethnicity.

### **Refugee**

A person who has fled his or her country of origin in fear of being persecuted because of race, religion, nationality, political opinion, or membership of a particular social group. Annual quotas for refugee immigration and resettlement are set by the Australian Government's Humanitarian Program.

### **White Australia Policy**

A phrase used to describe the restrictive immigration policies of the colonial and Australian Governments from the 1850s until the 1970s that aimed to maintain a predominantly white population in Australia. The phrase first appeared in the 1880s and the 1901 Immigration Restriction Act soon became popularly known as the 'White Australia Policy'. The policy remained in force into the 1960s, when it was gradually dismantled, and was finally disbanded with the passing of the 1975 Racial Discrimination Act.



## Food For Thought

### A Fish out of Water

The creation of *Inhlanzi Amnazi – As Fish Out Of Water* – provided the students involved with the opportunity to consciously examine their lives and cultural conditioning (Barnes, 1999: 175)

Their sense of who they are, to what degree they are products of their cultures and to what degree they are free agents for creating change is more clearly defined. And most importantly, they have experienced the potentialities and realities of multiculturalism (Barnes, 1999: 178).

In spite of the difficulties, the resistances and the challenges, it seems that an intercultural performing arts project in a school setting can provide powerful opportunities for participants to engage with, learn about and transform cultural values, meanings and artistic practices... an intercultural arts curriculum requires an educational and aesthetic framework that builds cultural links and respects diversity. In order to begin to build an intercultural aesthetic, students need experiences that encourage them to explore, create, express and interpret culturally specific and trans-cultural symbols, metaphors and stories.

(Kate Donelan, NJ, 23:2, 1999, p.78)

In many ways, plays challenge and expand the depth of our experiences as human beings as they explore the social, political and cultural aspects of society. The play helps make meaning of our world. So – whose play is it anyway? It should belong to us all as it reflects and expresses the total human condition, and provides us with the opportunity to recognise for ourselves the differing conceptions of the world. However, the voice that has shaped the Australian play and our national identity emanates from the male perspective. It has marginalised many other voices and created inequity in the representation of all Australians in the mainstream culture... the time has come to hear the individual melodies of these marginalised voices creating a true polyphonic expression of our cultural diversity.

(Judith Gadaloff, 1999:6, Mask Magazine, Summer/Autumn)

Australia's culture is a continuum of Aboriginality, British tradition, history, heritage and more recently cultural diversity. It is still emerging and evolving. So the many voices that make up our diversity will impact on this cultural continuum and our Australian identity.

(Judith Gadaloff, 1999:6, Mask Magazine, Summer/Autumn)

*Toward Culturally "Resonance-able" Teaching.* It is time for those of us who work with young people to acknowledge and overcome our own discomfort about discussing race and work toward productive ways to act responsibly because of and despite it. This means not only recognizing own racial and ethnic identities but also the racial and ethnic identities of the young people we serve.

(Sharon Grady, 2000: 32)

‘Culture is learned, not inherited. It derives from one’s social environment, not from one’s genes. Culture should be distinguished from human nature on one side, and from an individual’s personality on the other, although exactly where the borders lie



between human nature and culture, and between culture and personality, is a matter of discussion among social scientists'.  
(Geert Hofstede, 1991: 5)

Cultural differences manifest themselves in several ways. From the many terms used to describe manifestations of culture the following four together cover the total concept rather neatly: symbols, heroes, rituals and values.  
(Geert Hofstede, 1991: 5)

An extract from the play *Kin* (a play that portrays the pain of living between two cultures). *Kin* was developed by Sidetrack Theatre Company to combat racism and explore how cultural difference works in Australia.

Ali: We are losing you. You are drifting away from us.

Leila: I'm not drifting anywhere. I don't go to discos, I don't hang around with guys, I haven't changed my name to Leanne. I'm still Palestinian, aren't I?

Ali: Maybe you want to do these things? Maybe you want to be a politician? What use is this Party, Leila? For who?

Leila: So I shouldn't get involved? Don't meet other people. Don't get interested in what's happening here. Just shut myself off the rest of Australia and live in our little world. Like you and Mum?

While multiculturalism has made some inroads into the teaching of social studies and other humanities, the arts have continued to be regarded by most teachers in a culturally blind manner, neutral with respect to particular values they might embody or express.  
(Fazal Rizvi, 1994: 55)

Schools have talked about building a common culture – a harmonious multicultural society in which all cultural traditions can be maintained  
(Fazal Rizvi, 1994: 62)

Cultural Diversity is a pressing issue for drama educators in the 1990's. If we intend equity for all students, we need to find pedagogies that recognise differences, especially cultural differences.  
(Jennifer Simons, 1998:69)

When the student does not have English as the first language or comes from a different social or cultural background, the task can then be very difficult indeed. ... Every drama teacher needs to judge an effective balance between ambiguity and risk and to decide when and if to shut down alternate possible meanings in an improvisation (Jennifer Simons, 1998:71).

When students have different cultural backgrounds, these backgrounds need to be factored into teaching. (Jennifer Simons, 1998:72)

Ours is a nation of immigrants and indigenous peoples. A new world with an ancient past. A grand symphony with many melodies...It can all be embraced, both the past and present, the ancient and the new. To do this, we need to share our stories and narratives, our aspirations and dreams, our histories with all their shades of light and dark, and the many melodies that make up this diverse symphony of ours.  
(Arnold Zable, 1998:24)



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## Theatre Companies

Arena Theatre Company, Victoria

Black Swan Theatre Company, Perth



Deckchair Theatre Company, Perth  
 IRAA, Victoria  
 Melbourne Workers Theatre, Victoria  
 Sidetrack Theatre Company, Sydney

## Organisations

Chinese Museum, Melbourne - <http://home.vicnet.net.au/~mcah>  
 Golden Dragon Museum, Bendigo Museum – <http://users.netcon.net.au/gdmb/>  
 Jewish Museum of Australia, St Kilda, Victoria  
[www.jewishmuseum.com.au/index.htm](http://www.jewishmuseum.com.au/index.htm)

## Web Resources

ARTnews Australia [www.artnews.com.au](http://www.artnews.com.au)  
 Australian Immigration site – [www.dimia.gov.au](http://www.dimia.gov.au)  
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## Disability - Guidelines

### Introduction

Drama Australia as the peak national organisation for drama educators seeks to affirm commitment to diversity and notions and exemplars of equality, equity and access that are incorporated in the contemporary issue of human rights action within Australian society. The organisation believes that appreciation and acceptance of diversity is important in order to understand and provide for individual need. It is important that Drama Australia and its member associations reflect on the social construction of disability and the ways that drama education can respond to individual need. This document seeks to assist those involved in educational drama for young people and adults in Australia in the area of disability. It offers a brief consideration of definitions of disability and associated terms. Reflecting on contemporary ideas and practice, it also includes consideration of issues to do with understanding and awareness of individual need as well as the provision of access and opportunities in drama for people with disabilities. Finally it offers advice to educators on ways to address issues involved in inclusive drama education.

### Understanding Disability and Related Terminology

It is important at the outset to establish an understanding of the terminology of disability. In the general community there tends to be a lack of understanding and good deal of inconsistency in the use of terms and yet getting the terminology right is critical both as a matter of accuracy and respect for people with disabilities. The language is important for understanding the perspective of the people concerned.

It is also important to understand that disability is a social construct and that social attitudes, **behaviour and practice relating to physical or intellectual difference are central to 'disability'**. The idea of disability being socially constructed places the focus on barriers in the environment including attitudes of others as being 'disabling' because they prevent people from participating on equal terms in many aspects of society (Walsh & London 1995). In particular, schools can be 'disabling' when in order to function efficiently the system is structured in ways that fail to accommodate student diversity beyond very narrow prescribed limits (Christensen 1996). If the manner in which such schools run is seen as unproblematic then 'the source of students' difficulties is seen to reside in their disabilities or defects rather than the limitations and defects of schooling' (Christensen, 1996, p.65). **Schools need to value diversity and students with disabilities 'must learn that "different is not bad" and that their differences often make them interesting and talented' (Smith 2000, p.7).**

In an effort to create some shared understandings of terms, the World Health Organisation (WHO) defines the term 'disability', 'impairment' and 'handicap'. A **disability** is 'any restriction or lack of ability (resulting from an impairment) to perform an activity in the manner or within the range considered usual for a human being'. **Impairment** is the 'loss or abnormality of psychological, physiological, or anatomical structure or functions'. A **handicap** is 'a disadvantage for an individual resulting from impairment or disability, that limits or prevents fulfilment of a role that is normal for that individual' (WHO in Ashman & Elkins, 1998). It is **useful** to have an understanding of these distinctions although they tend to reflect a medical model defining disability in terms of diagnostic categories. There is a risk involved in applying labels when the label ('blind', 'deaf', 'physically impaired', 'autistic' etc.) becomes the defining feature of the person rather than that person being viewed as a complex, multi-faceted, fully human person' (Christensen, 1996, p.65).

According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) an estimated 19% of the Australian population has a disability. The definition of disability used by the ABS is broad. It includes physical, intellectual, sensory and psychiatric disabilities. Disability can be even more broadly defined to include physical disfigurement, neurological, and learning disabilities, and presence of disease causing organisms in the body such as HIV/AIDS. When considering people with a particular kind disability it is important not to assume that individuals are affected by disabilities in the same way or to the same extent. Disabilities affect people in many different ways and often in ways that are not necessarily visible or obvious.



The commonly accepted way of referring to people with disabilities in Australia is the 'people first' approach. It is considered more appropriate to say 'people with disabilities' rather than 'disabled people'. The emphasis is on the individual, as a person first, and not on the disability. People with disabilities are people first and foremost and should not be defined by their disabilities. When discussing disability it is better to avoid referring to people who do not have a disability as 'normal' rather they are 'non-disabled' (Walsh & London, 1995).

### **Disability, Discrimination and the Law**

Drama Australia needs not only to ensure that any disabling barriers to participation in drama be dismantled but also to embrace the guiding principles of the federal **Disability Discrimination Act 1992**. The DDA 1992 applies throughout Australia and provides protection against discrimination based on disability. The DDA seeks to ensure and encourage acceptance of the view that people with disabilities have the same rights before the law as the rest of the community. The DDA takes an all encompassing view of disability as outlined in the previous section. Its definition also encompasses a disability that presently exists, previously existed but no-longer exists or may, due to a known circumstance, exist in the future. The DDA also covers discrimination that may occur as a result of being a carer or associate of a person with a disability. The guiding philosophy of the DDA is that community life should be accessible to all individuals and Drama Australia shares this philosophy.

### **The Benefits of Drama**

Drama can offer benefits for all people involved in it and people with disabilities may benefit from involvement in drama in the same ways that any other person does. However, for people with disabilities the benefits can be even more enabling.

Involvement in drama activities can offer people a sense of community and belonging. This is of particular importance to people with disabilities whose 'otherness' can often set them apart and lead to feelings of exclusion and isolation. The opportunity for self-expression is important because to 'create something that successfully expresses a feeling or belief, is to engage with those cultural aspects of human life which join people together regardless of any individual physical or mental differences' (Kempe 1996, p.6). Drama can also provide opportunities for the development of new social, physical and perceptual skills that can be of benefit in life beyond the drama session. For people with learning disabilities drama offers an **active teaching and learning** style across the curriculum. 'Through generating high levels of energy and motivation, drama offers the possibility of powerful and memorable learning experiences' (Peter 1995, p.v). Drama can also be seen to offer 'another form of expression or communication for people who may be limited in traditional means of expression' (Walsh & London, 1995, p.12). Furthermore, drama and theatre can provide ways of examining creatively the experience of disability and can provide a means to express positive images of people with disabilities to the broader community.



## Drama as Art and Drama as Therapy

Drama, as an art form, provides an important means of expression and communication and an opportunity to develop deeper sensitivity to and understanding of life experiences. Creating drama is central to humanity. Aesthetic activity proves we are alive and is a manifestation of our humanity (Kempe 1996). Participation in drama activity can offer all people positive experiences that lead to increased wellbeing. Drama, like other art forms, may also be therapeutic when, for example, it offers individuals a greater sense of competence and self-worth. Drama educators with particular skills sometimes employ drama as therapy for individuals or groups within certain areas of individual need. These areas that focus on the therapeutic aspects of the drama work include dramatherapy and psychodrama.

In her book 'Introduction to Dramatherapy' (1998) Jennings states 'Dramatherapy is the application of theatre art in clinical, remedial and community settings with people who are troubled or unwell. Whereas theatre art could be termed preventative in relation to mental health, dramatherapy is curative' (p12). Jennings outlines some specific aims of dramatherapy including 'enabling communication, stimulating new thinking, providing means of resolution, developing new skills, transforming unhelpful experiences, looking at choices, enacting new journeys, understanding gender issues, exploring politics and so on' (1998, p. 33). Psychodrama is a dramatic art form that involves participants in acting through problems rather than merely talking them through. Pioneered by psychiatrist Jacob Moreno, psychodrama is said to produce a healing, cathartic effect that has the power to liberate individuals from their difficulties and can serve as a form of psychotherapy (Nolte 2000). Psychodrama sessions involve certain protocols and processes that a practitioner would need to be highly familiar with. While psychodrama tends to focus on an individual within the group, dramatherapy more often involves group process and interaction.

The notion of drama as therapy can be limiting in relation to disability if it prevents people with disabilities from having their work taken seriously. Involvement in drama by people with disability should not be considered therapy just because they have a disability. Furthermore, people do not have to have a disability in order to experience therapeutic benefits from drama activity. **While drama therapists tend to look at the disability with the aim to help or heal specific problems, the drama educator looks at the ability of each individual and fosters that ability by teaching and developing skills and providing opportunities for exploring drama as an art form. Drama educators working with groups of people with disabilities may find the literature available in the area of dramatherapy useful in informing their practice even though they do not consider themselves as therapists.**



## Implications for Drama Educators

### Accommodating Different Abilities

Drama is a highly accessible art form. However, despite this there are many barriers to participation in drama and other areas of performing arts for people with disabilities. These include attitudinal barriers, access issues and financial constraints. Drama educators need to be mindful of these barriers and prepared to facilitate involvement in drama for people with disabilities.

Involvement in drama should be encouraged and facilitated for students with disabilities in educational settings. Integration involves more than simply providing access, students with disabilities need to feel recognised and valued (Rizvi & Lingard 1996). Drama educators need to adopt practice that allows all members of drama classes, regardless of ability, to have an opportunity for expression. The drama classroom or workshop should be considered by educators and participants to be an inclusive place in which there is respect and acceptance of a range of abilities. Drama educators should seek to inform themselves about the various differences in ability of individuals in their classes so that they may better understand and cater for their needs. A strengths based approach needs to be adopted by drama educators with emphasis in drama classes on what the participants can do rather than what they can't do. Activities should offer students with a range of abilities opportunities for success.

In addition to inclusion opportunities there is also a place for 'segregated' drama and theatre groups for people with disabilities. Such groups may provide an opportunity for people with disabilities to meet others, explore issues related to their disability and celebrate 'disability culture'. The drama activity that these groups are involved in can range through the spectrum of dramatic play, drama and theatre. Performances by people with disabilities can provide opportunities for self-advocacy by presenting disability issues or simply presenting themselves to a wider audience. People with disabilities can be empowered when they have an opportunity, through performance, to give something of themselves to an audience (Raphael 2003). Participants derive a sense of belonging and a feeling of community through their involvement in such drama groups. There is also a healthy relationship of interdependence arising from the process of working collaboratively and co-operatively towards the common goal of creating drama and theatre for performance. This feeling of belonging is particularly important for people with disabilities whose 'otherness' can often prohibit them from being included.

### Drama as Powerful Pedagogy for Understanding Different Abilities

Drama in education is a powerful pedagogy. Drama experiences can be created to help challenge assumptions and develop awareness and deeper understandings of issues and ideas related to disability. Carefully structured drama experiences can also help to develop empathy towards people with disabilities. Experience with curriculum materials and drama resources that represent disability and associated issues as well as having an opportunity to see performances by people with disabilities can inspire



*Discussion paper and guideline statements have been written for Drama Australia by Jo Raphael, Lecturer in Drama Education, Deakin University, Victoria. August, 2003.*

understanding and empathy in the non-disabled. As John Dewey explained, artistic creations are ‘the only media of complete and unhindered communication between man and man that can occur in a world full of gulfs and walls that limit community of experience’ (1934, p.105).

Due to a range of factors, people with disabilities, particularly those with profound intellectual or physical disabilities, have very often been segregated from the mainstream. When disability is unfamiliar, people with no known disabilities feel awkward when confronted with disabilities (Grady 2000, Horitz 2001). They may feel unprepared for interactions with a person with a disability. Compounding this issue is the fact that disability is not often openly discussed. Drama can also provide an opportunity for bringing groups of people with intellectual disabilities together with non-disabled. Drama can be seen as a bridge between the marginalised and the mainstream (O’Connor 2000). There are models of practice in this area. For example, a class of secondary school students and their drama teacher meets regularly with a group of young people with intellectual disabilities from a nearby special developmental school for drama workshops. In another example a group of tertiary students preparing to become secondary teachers of drama, work alongside adults with intellectual disabilities in a community based drama group. In both these examples the collaborations have positive outcomes for all involved as barriers are broken down and awareness and trust develop. Outcomes described include positive relationships among participants, friendships, increased social and communicative interactions, increased self-esteem and high levels of motivation and academic engagement (Kempe 1996; Raphael 2003).

**Disability -  
Guideline Statement  
(see p5)**

**Disability -  
Guidelines into Practice  
(see p9)**



## Food for Thought...

*The arts tend to draw people together. They foster cooperation, group work, and helpfulness. The arts promote a deeper understanding of other civilizations, religions, and cultures. Diversity is prized in the artist's world. Differences are not only okay but are welcome. Our schools too must learn to treasure difference. Children with learning disabilities must learn that 'different is not bad' and that their differences often make them interesting and talented. (Smith 2000, p.7)*

The arts still tend to be undervalued in mainstream let alone special education, generally given lower priority than 'the basics', than conceptual and skill development in other words. However this may be based on a misconception of the arts as chiefly concerned with emotional development and as being essentially 'non-intellectual'. This perspective misses the scope of the arts for *integrating* knowledge, skills and creativity. (Peter 1995, p.1)

*Over the centuries we have created the concept that artistic creation is the responsibility of a few gifted individuals. In so doing, we have denied the majority of individuals within our urban and technologically advanced society their birthrights: that, as a human being, everyone has the right to make his or her own 'unique creative thumbprint'— one that no one else could make. We all have a need to make this 'mark', not because we necessarily wish to be the reminders to a future generation of a long-lost culture but because each creative mark reaffirms the self. It says 'I am here', 'I have something to express'. (Warren 1993, p.3)*

To create something that successfully expresses a feeling or belief, is to engage with those cultural aspects of human life which join people together regardless of any individual physical or mental differences. Using the arts as a vehicle by which people can acquire new social, physical, communicative or mental skills will of course help them to understand and survive in the world outside the drama session. (Kempe 1996, p.6)

*'There is a lot more goes on outside the drama than you would ever believe that has to do with the drama.'* (Jenny- parent/carer describing her son's development from involvement in a drama group.)

Research shows us that developing theatre skills leads to increased confidence and greater ease in coping with complex social structures. For people with learning disabilities in a society where their culture is often marginalised, participatory theatre offers a model where space is created for Learning Disabled culture to be honoured, exchanged and developed. (Ling 2000, p.3)

*The first time I met him he said that he loves drama because it's a way of expressing his imagination. And he knows that lots of people look down on them because they've got disabilities and for him drama is where he can feel safe and it is his thing and he can do what he wants. (Student teacher of drama working with a drama group for adults with intellectual disabilities).*

I think that's the brilliant thing about drama in this context is that people with disabilities in society are restricted but in drama they are not at all. All those restrictions are taken off... they can be a policeman, they can be a teacher, they can be a mother, a father, they can be anything they want to be. I mean all of us are like that too I guess. (Student teacher of drama working with a drama group for adults with intellectual disabilities).



*We are sitting on chairs in a circle and I am asking the participants why they come to drama. 'I like drama.' said one.*

*'You just like it?'*

*'I like it, yeah.'*

*'Anything about it particularly? Why do you come?' I addressed them all ' Why do you come to drama?' I pressed them. George responded 'Can I answer that? Because it's different. It gives us a chance to prove ourselves to be more better than being before.'* (Description of an interview with members of a community based drama group for people with disabilities).

... it is something of a novelty for a disabled person (the performer) to be put in complete charge of two hours of a group of people's lives (the audience). It is rare for disabled people to be encouraged to take that responsibility in the full knowledge that if they do not succeed and that audience walks out, or expresses condescension or pity, they have failed. So responsibility and risk walk hand in hand, and for the disabled person who takes the responsibility - and succeeds - it is especially gratifying. (Tomlinson 1986 p.13)

*...performance gives the performer power. This is true of any performance by any person anywhere. The fact that an audience recognises a performance results in its attention being focused on the performer. ...Now all this may seem rather academic, but for a disabled person it can seem nothing short of revolutionary. For it is not generally accepted by society that disabled people are initiators of activities, that they are in charge, or can take command. (Tomlinson 1982, p.10)*

I love doing drama because I like being with other people its like one big family and I'd love to do more drama. Hopefully I'd like to be in a famous group of drama one day...because I love acting and being able to act and that. Using my talents and skills and stuff. And I love being with other people and I'd love to see more people in the drama group...because it would be more fantastic than what it is now. (Jill - member of a drama group for people with disabilities).

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## Films, Video, Plays

Doggett-Williams, J. (1992). *The Everyone In Show* (J. Doggett-Williams, Director). Melbourne: Produced by Reinforce, SKA TV.

Noonan, C. (c1980). 'Stepping Out: the birth of a theatre of the mentally handicapped' (C. Noonan, Director). Sydney: Binnaburra Film Company.

Gulls by Robert Hewett

A compassionate comedy about a brain-damaged man who is cared for by his sister at a beach cottage. Unable to converse with those around him he uses a bitter wit to share with the audience his feelings and observations on the predicament which he finds himself. 2 Acts - 2M, 2W

Cosi by Louis Nowra

## Theatre Companies

Back to Back Theatre, Geelong, Victoria

Weave Movement Theatre, Melbourne

Australian Theatre of the Deaf, Sydney

## Disability Arts Organisations

DADAA – Disability Arts, Disadvantage Arts, Australia

Arts Access, Victoria

Accessible Arts, N.S.W.

Access Arts, Queensland

Arts in Action, South Australia.

DADAA ACT, Australian Capital Territory

DADAA (WA), Western Australia

DADAA, Tasmania



## Introduction

As a national educational organisation it is important that Drama Australia, and member associations, reflect on the ways in which gender issues impact drama education. Drama education is a field in which women and girls dominate numerically – both in teacher numbers and student participation rates, however, conversely, male history, knowledge, language and interests have been more likely to be represented in curriculum materials and resources in drama. In general terms there is strong male participation in the arts industry and arts bureaucracies in Australia, despite the dominant numbers of girls in western drama classrooms. It is important for drama associations and their teachers to attend to issues of gender, equity and diversity to ensure that all students have access to and are enriched by their experiences in drama and the arts.

Within Australia, research and policy has clearly identified some of the ways in which boys and girls are often subject to different expectations and outcomes from education based on their gender. The first national policy that aimed to address these different outcomes was endorsed in 1987: 'The National Policy for the Education of Girls.' This was reviewed and built upon through a National Action Plan for the Education of Girls 1993-97. In recent years, concerns have been increasingly expressed about boys' education and the ways in which gender roles can be constructed in ways that lead to limiting experiences for boys as well as girls. This has led to the development of 'Gender Equity: A Framework for Australian Schools' (1997).

It is important that Drama Australia as a national education association plays a leadership role in providing advice to drama educators on ways to address this policy and the related educational issues. Through identifying gender issues that exist in the drama classroom, educational institutions and society more generally, drama educators can contribute effectively to addressing gender within a range of contexts.

## Gender Equity - Guidelines

### Understanding Gender

Gender is one of various "identity locations" (Grady 2000) that shape us as individuals. Gender informs our self-concept, our behaviours and our interactions with others in daily life and in artistic production. Gender patterns and signs are constructed, shaped, performed and read in terms of cultural norms and discourses.

Because gender is socially constructed it is important to understand how social discourses, power and knowledge impact the ways in which different genders are constructed and performed. Biological sex differences do not adequately explain differences in gender identity or justify the social and political inequalities that have existed over time. The experience of gender and related disadvantage and discrimination does not occur in isolation, and intersecting features such as race, ethnicity, ability/disability, social class and material circumstances impact on the experience of gender.

If gender is seen as socially constructed it is therefore not fixed, but can and does change. The construction of gender varies in different cultures, historical periods and social groups. There is no single way of being male or female, although certain constructions of masculinity and femininity tend to be more highly valued than others within their cultural contexts. Gender can be seen as performative, where social roles, codes and signs are repeated to conform or resist dominant cultural norms. Education can play an important role in challenging and broadening gender roles.

### Implications for Drama Educators

Performance and art making are acts of cultural production. Drama in education as a powerful pedagogy is well poised to highlight social issues and practices, challenge assumptions, understand difference and promote positive self and other understandings. Through the core collaborative practices in Drama of symbolic representation, enactment and reflection students can be encouraged to imagine possibilities and stage alternative representations in the safety of the dramatic process. Drama learning experiences encourage students to make meanings from complex human interactions, stories and performances. The understandings generated in drama are often useful for students beyond the learning episode itself and feed into their everyday lives. The art form of drama offers a safe performative space for re-authoring, re-thinking and rehearsing identities, roles and ideas for life.

The drama educator is instrumental in encouraging learning about the way gendered identities are staged and interpreted in dramatic forms and individual lives as well as in wider society. Teacher's personal histories and perceptions of gender inform the way they interpret gender in the classroom (Goodson 1991:144). The educator's choice of language, strategies and texts all influence the way gender is framed,



enacted and analysed in the drama experience. A gender-aware drama educator needs to understand the ways in which gender is constructed, performed and resisted in dramatic representation, education, individual lives as well as in social discourses.

### **Boys and Drama Education**

There is a growing concern in education about boys' under achievement with literacy issues featuring strongly in educational debates as well as the gender strategies of individual schools and systems. Educators need to be aware of how the construction of gender influences male participation and achievement in arts and cultural pursuits, where they are not as highly valued as participation and achievement in other fields, such as sport.

White male experience has been traditionally universalised and has supported oppressive patriarchal structures throughout literature, theatre and history. Peter Middleton (1992) argues that because of this there is a lack of critical awareness and self-understanding for men of their own position in relation to others. He believes male identities are in part defined by a sense of unease, displacement and lack of certainty (cited in Nicholson 1999). Gender-aware drama educators need to recognise the way theatre, knowledge and society has been fashioned through the lens of a dominant white male view. In terms of dramatic processes, drama educators need to raise boys' awareness of gender issues and codes, offer positive learning experiences inclusive of a range of masculinities that challenge boys to imagine possibilities in the way they analyse, create and perform in drama.

### **Girls and Drama Education**

Women's voices, stories and dramas have been excluded and undermined throughout history. This is reflected in the under-representation of women in literature and theatre history. The male gaze still effects the ways in which women are represented and perceived onstage, in film, media, technologies as well as in society. School drama curriculum materials often focus on masculine theatrical traditions, playwrights, directors and actors. This dominant male view of dramatic art can suggest to girls that their ideas, stories and experiences have no relevance in drama. Paradoxically girls feature in large numbers in drama classrooms at secondary levels, where they can play with dominant discourses in performative ways.

Popular culture and the limitations of gender stereotypes present many challenges for educators wanting to raise girls' gender esteem and identity development. Maxine Greene (1995:191) reminds us to notice "the young girls who have hesitated (out of embarrassment, out of lack of confidence) to consult their own ways of knowing". Researchers from various fields have investigated girls' experiences of education and the ways in which cultural discourses effect and disrupt girls' development and relationships (Gilligan 1995, Walkerdine 2001, Gilbert 1991, Hey 1997, Pipher 1995). It is important for drama educators to recognise and use dramatic processes to support



*Drama Australia gratefully acknowledges the work of the original writer of this document, Sue Davis, Drama Australia Special Project Officer Gender Equity, as well as the writer of this revised policy document, Chris Hatton, DALO for NSW EDA.*

the development of voice and agency for girls as individuals and as dramatic artists. In a classroom context this means providing challenging texts, roles and processes that invite girls to voice their views, make and analyse their creative decisions and tell their stories. Drama educators should recognise the significant work of feminist playwrights over the past few decades in raising issues about gender and in working towards representing the full range of women's experiences. The works of feminist playwrights offer challenging texts for dramatic investigation for both girls and boys.

## **Drama and the National Framework For Gender Equity in Australian Schools**

### **CURRICULUM, TEACHING AND LEARNING**

In the selection of texts, topics and processes for learning, it is important for drama educators to choose material that is produced by both female and male writers and which provide female and male students with a range of roles, which represent many different ways of being female or male. It is important to challenge students to understand and analyse the ways in which gender is constructed and performed in words, signs, symbols and structures in drama and in cultures.

### **VIOLENCE AND SCHOOL CULTURE**

Drama education often provides opportunities for students to explore gender identity, sexual discrimination and harassment through processes and texts. The work of drama educators and artists has often been important in exploring these issues with students.

Drama contributes significantly to the culture of schools in terms of providing opportunities for community celebration and recognition through performance. Often the private investigative work of classroom drama is shared and can challenge school-based audiences to reflect upon local stories and important experiences and wider social issues. Drama enables students to voice their concerns in the public domain and within their particular school culture. Drama educators often seek to provide students with safe environments and supportive structures through which students can develop their understandings of selves and others.

### **POST-SCHOOL PATHWAYS**

Drama educators should explore with students the gendered experiences of artists in the arts industry. While males may be seen to be under-represented in arts classrooms they are not under-represented in the arts workforce. Approximately 60% of professional actors are male and approximately 70% of senior artistic and decision-making positions are held by men (ABS data). Employment patterns which



## Gender Equity Guideline Statement (see p6)

## Gender Equity Guidelines into Practice (see p10)

exist in the broader society whereby males are more likely to occupy management and decision-making positions are reflected in the arts industry.

Drama Australia and its members should value the contribution of women in the field of drama education and encourage their participation in decision-making processes. Whilst women make up the majority of drama teachers, most school decision-making positions and the senior academic roles in universities are more likely to be held by men.

Recognition should be given to the significant work women have conducted in the areas of community arts, children's theatre and amateur theatre which has often been unrecorded or not highly valued.

## VIOLENCE AND SCHOOL CULTURE

Drama educators in Australia need to:

- **explore** the depiction of different kinds of harassment and violence in plays (eg a range of Australian plays) and shifts and changes in ways these issues are dealt with and portrayed, as well as the intended effect upon the audience.
- **encourage** the development of a supportive environment in the drama classroom – address experiences of harassment and violence that may arise and disrupt the learning process.
- **discuss** experiences of harassment that some boys might have because of their involvement in the arts.
- **identify and challenge** oppressive language, behaviours and views that inhibit student learning in drama
- **use** strategies that encourage listening, dialogue, and understanding so that students feel empowered to collaborate and create effectively in drama
- **support** student exploration of harassment and violence issues through documentary drama and other student devised work.

## POST-SCHOOL PATHWAYS

Drama educators in Australia need to:

- **analyse** and discuss arts participation patterns (school, university, workforce, arts consumption) with students.
- **ensure** that girls as well as boys are provided with opportunities to develop skills in a range of areas that relate to participating in drama/theatre post-schooling. (directing, technical and backstage work, writing, administration)
- **explore** notions of gender, paid and unpaid work, the division of labour, workforce hierarchies and the implications of this for participation in the arts post-schooling. (as an artist, volunteer, consumer etc)
- **discuss** gender related work issues, (audition procedures, agencies and expectations, employment and unions, childcare and career paths)



## Food for Thought...

Although it is possible to recover the works of a handful of women dramatists from the past, these are individual exceptions to the rules that have excluded women from this most public of arts and professions rather than evidence of a female tradition surviving with the male sphere. The rise of the director as the central authority in western theatre has further institutionalised existing tendencies towards hierarchy and elitism, and the valuation of male action above all else. It is hardly surprising therefore, that some feminist critics have judged drama and theatre to be intrinsically male forms, privileging linear forms of crisis and conflict, and representing only these as the 'normal tensions of the human body..,

*Susanne Greenhalgh (1989)*

The very choice of these themes indicates an acceptance of masculine culture; pioneering brave adventures into the heart of darkness to visit tribes or the wild west, a concern with colonisation, dominance and acts of aggression. At times there is an embarrassed reference to girls, who are encouraged to take male roles, such as miners, explorers and footballers, presumably because in the context of the drama they appear more interesting, but without any discussion of sexual politics. In this context, the drama becomes not about empowerment but about power; role play itself thrives on conflict, and it is ethically problematic if the main aim is not to explore different cultural, artistic or historical practices, but to colonise the wisdom of the practitioner.

*Helen Nicholson (1995)*

There's a change for someone to be someone else . . . Girls more than guys, say "I don't like my body. I don't like my hair", so they find they can be someone else.

*(Year 10 Girls, Gender Equity and the Arts Report, Pg 10).*

Q: Will you be taking Drama/theatre Studies in years 11 and 12?

Bill: I think I'm worrying about VCE. It's not our future. We're just doing the subject now to have fun. Other subjects like maths are more important. you have to make a future you know. (p15)

Q: There aren't many boys in your Drama class. Why do you think that is?

Angie: Drama is considered 'unmanly' because it is expressive. it's not like metalwork and the subjects that boys like.

*From Gender Equity and the Arts Report. p17*

For the young people I interviewed, particularly those in the self-conscious phases of adolescence, the ability to "hide" in drama was a high priority. They commented on how drama makes thoughts, feelings and ideas publicly visible, but were aided when they felt that the focus was on the dramatic form itself rather than, as they saw it, themselves. It was surprising to me, and warrants further study, that many students in the 11-14 age range commented on the place of performance in drama, which they saw as offering a kind of protection of self-revelation, to which they could bring their own experiences, feelings and interpretations, but in, as one boy put it, a "kind of disguise".

*Helen Nicholson ( 1999: 106)*



The point of drama education is not to transmit a particular ideology or to leave unchallenged the things we think we believe, but to see anew, understand ourselves more fully, expand our thinking, and understand how that thinking has been shaped by our social positions. It is an opening-up process that must, at all costs, leave open the possibilities of alternative ways to see or hear or live the story...It is one means of dismantling seductive, stereotypical images, of resisting the limited and limiting discursive and aesthetic representations of self / other.

*Kathleen Gallagher (2000:82-83)*

I used to fall for this one and say, "I'm not very good on structure", but having read a lot of women's plays and women's writing in general, I have come to the conclusion that this is a very male concept that a play should have a beginning, a middle and an end. My plays have a mood structure – that is how most expressionistic drama works

...  
What I set out to do as to present women on the Australian stage where they had not appeared except as sex symbols, or with rather dopey lines addressed to brilliant young men who were the heroes – rather the reverse. I wanted to create human beings who were women.

*Dorothy Hewett (weekend Australian, March 14-15, 1992)*

There are many more female students at arts schools than male and women tend to stick to their course much more and see it through. But after graduation they all disappear and it's the men who end up as artists because pressures like looking after the kids and domestic responsibilities take over for women. They put their creative work second whereas a male is more likely to put his work first and offload his domestic concerns on the women.

*Sandi Young in DEET, Women and Work.*

## Related Policy Documents

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Nicholson, H. 'Genre, Gender and Play' in NADIE NJ Vol 19, No 2, 1995

Nicholson, H. 'Performative Acts: Drama, Education and Gender' in NADIE NJ Vol 19 No 1, 1995.

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Commonwealth resource documents titled “*Schools Work Towards Gender Equity*” developed to ‘assist principals and school staff to look at their own gender equity needs and determine what action they need to undertake to bring about gender equity reform’ **National Report on Schooling in Australia 1998**.

[www.icponline.org/feature\\_articles/f11\\_01htm](http://www.icponline.org/feature_articles/f11_01htm)  
“Those Damned Boys Again! How to Get Boys Achieving” by Dr Peter West  
[www.detya.gov.au/schools/publications/2002/boyseducation/Boys\\_Report\\_Final1.pdf](http://www.detya.gov.au/schools/publications/2002/boyseducation/Boys_Report_Final1.pdf)  
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## Sexualities - Guidelines

### Introduction

This policy statement is centred on two aspects of sexuality and young people:

- Breaking the silence in education surrounding young people and their sexuality
- Addressing behaviours that seek to limit the definition of sexuality in the eyes of young people

### What is 'sexuality'?

Some definitions:

**Sexuality** is 'the inclination to be attracted sexually either to people of the opposite sex or of one's own sex or both' (Misson 1996: 13).

**Sexual orientation** is 'an enduring emotional, romantic, sexual, or affectionate attraction to individuals of a particular gender' (Fordham: 1998:14)

While sexuality differs from gender there are however interrelationships between the two constructs. So, where young people in schools may experiment with aspects of their developing gender identity, so too do they explore facets of their sexuality. This can be a volatile aspect of development for many young people and is something that should be treated with sensitivity, especially because sexuality can challenge values and moral attitudes of parents, teachers and other students. It is advised that this section of the Drama Australia policy is read in conjunction with that on 'gender'.

In contemporary society sexuality is seen as being a matter of identity (Misson 1996). Sexuality is not sex (although acts of intimacy between consenting people of a legal age may be an expression of their sexuality). Sexuality is more linked to love than to a physical/genital act of sexual expression. However, even today many schools tend to shy away from discussing sexuality in any depth or relevance to the lives of young people (Davis 1999). Partly this is due to misunderstandings and misconceptions.

### Why is there a need for a Drama Australia Sexualities Policy Statement?

*Drama Australia* advocates that as an organisation its member associations are proactive in the consideration of ways in which issues pertaining to sexuality impact on drama pedagogy.

Young people are staying at school longer (Dwyer and Wyn 1998). As such schools are only one (albeit a significant) part of their complex lives, which may include part time work, relationships and in some instances issues of housing and parenthood. Increasingly young people are now open to more diverse ways of living and are exposed to more choices about how to live their lives.

In the past five years issues pertaining to sexuality and school education have risen in prominence in educational considerations. With the available published research on this aspect of the development of young people it is now timely that national educational organisations such as Drama Australia formulate policy statements and guidelines in relationship to sexualities.

Contemporary thinking about education acknowledges that just as it is accepted that young people have a gender identity, so too do they have a sexual one. In similar ways to gender construction, sexualities are 'negotiated, repressed, disciplined, formed and shaped' (Wyn 1999: 1). This has already led to the imperative that schools accept that issues of sexual identity should be included in any 'whole of school' approach to student welfare (Wyn 1999:1). However, just as in the wider society, issues of sexuality are perhaps still one of the last taboos when it comes to open discussion and



debate. Young people in particular can be disenfranchised because of the attitude of some adults, including educators, that young people should be seen and heard, but not openly display their sexuality.

### **Understanding sexualities**

Academic research into sexualities (especially in regards to issues of same-sex attractiveness) has, over the past two to three decades slowly moved from quantitative to qualitative methodologies. The significance of this is that the qualitative research has arguably uncovered more than previous studies on how people of all ages live their lives (Gamson: 2000). *Qualities* pertaining to human sexuality have been studied rather than *quantities* (what's it like rather than how much and how many). For example Foucault's *History of Sexuality* (1978) brought to attention the need for more research on the social construction of sexualities.



## Implications for Drama Educators

Grady (2000) reminds drama educators that within in any class there is representation from many cultures. This includes cultures based on racial and ethnicity, gender, sexuality, class and ability. She asks Primary or Secondary Drama teachers (or generalist Primary teachers teaching drama activities) to consider where as educators do our biases, belief systems and assumptions come from and how can we navigate between our own world view and that of the students we teach. She argues for a pluralistic pedagogical perspective in the arenas of drama education and theatre for and by young people. The more we are aware of our biases, stereotyping, prejudices and normative assumptions, then the better placed we are to ensure that the work of our drama students is similarly informed. Grady asserts that 'what can no longer be tolerated' are biases of gender, racial and ethnic orientation, social class, *sexual orientation* and disability.

### Same-sex attracted youth

While sexuality pertains to all sexual orientations (see above) it is perhaps same-sex attracted youth who are most at risk from bullying and other forms of victimisation in schools because of their sexuality or perceived sexuality (Dyson et al: 2003). In 1998 a national report on the sexuality, health and well-being of same-sex attracted young people found that 59% had been either physically or verbally abused and that nearly 70% of this abuse had taken place in schools (Ollis et al, 2000).

In the late 1990s the SSAY (same-sex attracted young people) research project was conducted in Australian schools. A survey of 750 young people between the ages of 14-21 (Hillier et al, 1999) who in some way identified as being lesbian, gay or bisexual found that that about half of the respondents reported being verbally and/or physically abused because of their sexuality. The majority of this abuse took place at school (Hillier, et al, 1999: 59) and can be linked to homophobia.

### Homophobia

Crowhurst (2002:25) describes homophobia as being 'conscious or deliberate actions that target or position people which are same-sex attracted (or who are assumed to be), in limiting, in discriminatory or in violent ways'. He also uses the term to refer to 'limiting social practices that target same-sex attracted people as a category or type' (Crowhurst 2002:25). Grady (2000) cites a number of reasons for homophobia, which have a particular relevance in relation to a school context. These include, a fear of those who are 'different', 'strongly held religious beliefs', hatred taught during childhood, revulsion of the act of same-sex activity, a low self esteem which is manifest in the need to hate others, with gays being one of the target groups.

Misson (1996) states that for many years homosexuality 'could not be let into language, and certainly as something that could not be named as love'. It is important that drama educators begin to break this silence and start using the term and perhaps consider 'the conditions of its common silence' (Misson 1996).

### Heterocentric discourse

Crowhurst (2002) discusses *heterocentric discourses* which he says take place in subtle ways. Here it is what is *not said* that is just as significant as what *is* said. For



example, consider when, a drama teacher sets up an improvisation where she/he says it is about a couple buying a house. The teacher goes on to tell the class that they must decide why he and she have decided to buy this particular house. This is an example of an unconscious heterocentric discourse on behalf of the teacher. The question the teacher has posed implicitly suggests that the only 'couples' that buy houses are ones comprised of a male and female. This perpetuates not only a stereotype but also may result in a same-sex attracted student in the class feeling excluded and devalued.

In this instance the teacher could have asked the students to instead consider why 'the couple' or 'partners' (rather than specifying 'him and her') were buying the house. As Misson (1996:12) points out, in regards to the area of sexualities, work in drama can be counterproductive if 'students are led into or confirmed in patterns of thought and feeling that are not liberating but constricting to either themselves or others'.

### **Heterosexist discourse**

**Heterosexism** – The assumption that heterosexuality is the norm and that everyone is heterosexual. (Dyson et al: 2003).

Heterosexist discourse can take place in any school, but may be more prevalent in schools, which are based on a particular ideology (e.g. such as some denominational schools). Here what is perpetuated is 'a hierarchy of sexualities where heterosexuality within marriage is positioned as the only acceptable or fully realised expression of sexuality' (Crowhurst 2000 citing Epstein and Johnson 1994 and Marr 1999).

The Drama teacher in a school where heterosexism pervades may find it difficult to openly counter such discourse. Teachers who wish to be more inclusive in relation to sexualities in their curriculum planning and execution may find that to do so would place them at odds with the ideology of the school. This can place the individual teacher in an ethical dilemma of conscience over educational pragmatism. Drama Australia advises that educators may need to take into consideration their own school context in this regard. For example Ollis et al (2000) recommend that it is best to avoid 'debating religious arguments. If a person has strongly held views it may be more productive to discuss sexuality issues in terms of how the person is feeling rather than debating ideas'.

Drama Australia recommends that, irrespective of the context of the school there are still actions that may be enacted:

- Ensuring that material for use in the drama class and for school productions does not actively promote heterosexism
- Allowing students the right to choose characters for role-plays and so on rather than dictating character combinations which may inadvertently promote heterosexism
- Checking heterosexist behaviour from students
- Ensuring that drama/theatre related material that is shown to other classes at the school is not heterosexist in nature
- Including activities in the Drama class that promotes self-esteem.



### **Heteroprivilegism**

Crowhurst has coined the word 'heteroprivilegism'. He contends that heteroprivilegist discourses 'privilege' heterosexuality and 'simultaneously seek to limit the expansion of non-heterosexual sexualities – in subtle and in obvious ways' (2002:25).

### **Heteroprivilegism and drama students**

Allowing students to behave in heteroprivilegist ways, which go unchecked, should also be addressed. In this fictitious example, imagine that a Drama teacher is running a play rehearsal after school. She/he asks a group of students to engage in some stage business. One of the students thinking that what is being asked of him/her is silly or not very good uses a colloquial term and says, 'That's gay'.

In the example above, what is the teacher do? Does she/he ignore the comment and keep going with the rehearsal? Does she/he reprimand the student? Does she/he tell the student that the use of such a term is homophobic? Does the teacher explain to the student why the comment is homophobic? Does he/she set/reset 'rules' of the rehearsals to exclude such comments and explain why? Does she/he engage in a combination of the above?

This teacher should not allow for such behaviour to go unchecked, however, more can be done than to just label the behaviour for what it is. If a Drama teacher is aware that such discourse is used he/she should endeavour to 'unpack the obvious and subtle structural factors that support and enable such comments to be generated in the first place' (Crowhurst 2002: 26-27). This may not necessarily occur on the spot, but perhaps in a future drama lesson.

Drama Australia advocates that Drama teachers engender a safe and supportive environment for same-sex attracted youth. This will be achieved by an on-going process of countering heteroprivilegism. While such a process should, ideally, be part of a 'whole school' approach, if nowhere else, the drama classroom (and associated co-curricula drama/theatre activities) should be one site at the school where students can feel protected from heteroprivilegist discourse from both teachers and students. In particular, their Drama teacher should be a positive role model in this instance. Drama teachers need to consider ways in which they can positively affect change in this area in their classrooms. Books such Sharon Grady's 'Drama and Diversity' (see 'Works Cited' list) can be helpful. This book provides further information on ways of countering discrimination in drama and includes lesson plan ideas for activities based on a range of social issues, including sexualities.

### **Making assumptions about the sexuality of our students**

It would be incorrect to presuppose that the student who said, 'That's gay' in the above example necessarily identified as being heterosexual. Sexuality is a most complex construct and discourses related to it are similarly full of ambivalences. As Crowhurst says, 'homophobic values can be accessed by young people who identify as same-sex attracted as well as by those who identify as straight' (2002:26). And it should also be remembered that some same-sex attracted young people publicly make derogatory comments about lesbians and gays to deflect attention away from him or herself (Crowhurst 2002:26-27). This is one reason why any discussion about homophobia to any student in any context should be done so with sensitivity and without preconceptions.



Sexualities discussion paper and policy statements have been written for Drama Australia by Richard Sallis, President of Drama Australia and Lecturer of Drama Education at University of Melbourne, August 2003.

**Sexualities -  
Guideline Statement  
(see p7)**

**Sexualities -  
Guidelines into Practice  
(see p11)**

In the day-to-day drama class teachers may find that students portray stereotypical depictions of same-sex attracted people and/or people exhibiting a range of sexualities. It is a commonly accepted educational principle that stereotypical depictions of people based on ethnicity, gender and ability is no longer accepted. Drama Australia advocates that stereotypical depictions in drama of people based on their sexual orientation is not acceptable, especially where such behaviour is deemed to be heteroprivilegist in nature.

#### **Are You Gay, Sir?**

is the title of an article by Michael Crowhurst (1999) where he discusses the circumstances that led to him coming out to his students in a Secondary school. This story brings up a number of relevant issues for drama teachers. Gay or lesbian teachers can experience similar difficulties experienced by gay or lesbian students where the hegemony of a school is largely heteroprivilegist.

There is a tendency for students to speculate on the sexuality of their teachers, and it seems particularly their drama teachers (Sallis: 2001, Mc Donald: 2000). Swedberg, Chapman, Sykes (2002) staged a drama performance called 'Wearing the Secret Out: A Drama Performance about Homophobia in Physical Education'. This performance of ethnographic research was based on North American Physical Education teachers who identified their sexual orientation as being lesbian or gay. Just as in this play, in any school there is a likely to be a range of sexualities amongst the staff as well as the students. Sensitivity in regards to a range of sexualities should be considered when choosing material for performance. Stereotypical depictions of sexuality are no longer acceptable because they can strengthen public misconceptions and this can leave some students and teachers feeling excluded or devalued.

Drama Australia advocates that its members are sensitive to the particular needs of teachers for whom their sexuality poses difficulties for them in the culture of the school. For example for gay or lesbian teachers it is an 'individual decision ... to choose to disclose their sexuality to staff or students and in what context they talk about their lives' (Ollis et al, 2000). Staff at a school who are not same-sex attracted can help to contest stereotypes surrounding sexual preference by 'not disclosing their sexuality to students or constantly talking about husbands, wives and children' (Ollis et al, 2000).

#### **Sexuality, discrimination and the law**

It is important to remember that there are Commonwealth laws that ensure that all students can learn in a safe and supportive environment.

Of particular relevance are:

Commonwealth Sex Discrimination Act 1984

Commonwealth Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Act 1986

Under common law teachers have a special duty of care for their students, which extends beyond school hours and premises.



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