

Fostering Inclusivity in Surf Life Saving Clubs - A Guide for Volunteers



As a surf lifesaving volunteer you hold a pivotal role in cultivating an environment that embraces diversity and promotes the success of all club members. Aiming for inclusivity doesn't demand an overhaul of how you operate; instead, it hinges on a mindset that values the unique strengths of each participant. Understanding and valuing that every individual is unique allows you to make necessary adjustments to ensure a safe, fun, meaningful and inclusive experience for all.

Key Strategies for Inclusion

- Embrace an open and welcoming attitude towards all individuals seeking your guidance.
- Prioritise their identity and ability over their disability, fostering a sense of individual empowerment.
- Be proactive, build awareness and educate other people about being inclusive. Share your ideas and experience with others.
- Engage in conversations with participants to understand their capabilities and channel efforts towards maximising their potential.
- Ensure that the physical environment is safe and free of potential hazards ensuring accessibility.
- Evaluate environmental, equipment, and coaching factors that might pose challenges for participants with disabilities and adapt these elements to cater to specific needs.
- Ask participants questions to better understand individual needs, then include them in deciding what supports and adjustments are needed and how to implement them.
- Take proactive steps to raise awareness and educate your club members on the significance of inclusivity, sharing your insights and experiences.
- Seek guidance and insights on inclusive practices from your participants' support network, fellow experienced volunteers, or other experts.

Your Commitments

- Ensure that all club activities are designed to be inclusive, leaving no room for exclusions.
- Always alert someone if you think you or someone else has been discriminated against and follow the steps in the Member Protection Policy.
- Comply with the guidelines outlined in the relevant SLSA Policies and Procedures e.g. Member Protection Policy, Child Safe Policy, Code of Conduct, etc.
- Be prepared to make necessary modifications to teaching style, rules, equipment and environments to facilitate the participation of individuals with disabilities.
- Acknowledge and appreciate the diverse skill sets that individuals with disabilities bring to the club environment.

A Final Reminder

Establishing an inclusive club environment requires some effort but it is very achievable. A lack of understanding and awareness along with attitudinal barriers (behaviours, perceptions and assumptions) may act as greater barriers to participation than physical constraints. All participants, regardless of their abilities, share a common love for surf lifesaving. By demonstrating a willingness to adapt and focusing on individual abilities, you can foster an inclusive club environment that benefits all members and the community your club serves.