



## Palms Australia

# Equity, Diversity and Inclusiveness Policy

### *Introduction*

This policy addresses the principles and practice of equity, diversity and inclusiveness. It is consistent with the **Mission, Vision** and **Values** of Palms Australia that emphasise cooperative relationships based on inter-dependence and solidarity. It recognises the value a diverse and multi-talented Board, staff and volunteer cohort can bring to the delivery of Palms programs, leading to increased development effectiveness in Australia and in Majority World communities.

The policy supplements Palms Australia's commitment to Equal Employment Opportunity principles and practice that are legislative requirements applying to positions for directors and employees. In all its organisational and volunteer positions Palms Australia encourages applications from women and men, people with diverse cultural backgrounds, including Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians, and people with a disability.

It is a policy that supports human rights justice recognising that it is unjust to marginalise and exclude people from access to opportunity. It is an intention of the policy to contribute to the elimination of discrimination against people based on gender, ethnic group, country of birth, political or religious affiliation, age, health status and people with disabilities. We seek culturally appropriate consideration from partner organisations around the world for implementation of similar principles and practice in communities where Palms international volunteers go to work.

### *Gender*

In upholding gender equity strategies, Palms Australia seeks to achieve fairness and justice in the distribution of benefits and responsibilities between women and men, recognising that different approaches will ensure more representative and equitable outcomes.

### Palms Board

For the Palms Australia Board, at least one-third of the Directors are to be women and at least one third are to be men. As the Board is elected by the members of Palms Australia at an Annual General Meeting for a three-year term, gender balance will be sought in the nomination of Board candidates and members will be sent this policy with pre-selection and electoral information.

### Management

Palms Australia seeks to have a gender balance in its organisation particularly in management positions. Where imbalances exist in the organisation, Palms Australia will use gender equity as a guiding principle for nomination, selection and /or secondment of staff to senior management positions. This principle of gender balance will be taken as an added weighting where nomination,

selection and/or secondment to senior management positions are based on the relative ability, skills, experience and suitability for the position.

### Work/Life Balance

Palms Australia is also committed to providing staff and volunteers with a work/life balance that recognises the family, caring responsibilities and other personal commitments. Staff and volunteers are encouraged to discuss with management how they can best achieve that balance within their Conditions of Employment. This may include: access to part-time work, flexible working arrangements, study leave and other career development opportunities and extended maternity/paternity leave provisions. Palms Australia will give priority to being responsive to the importance of staff and volunteers achieving work/life balance.

Palms Australia's commitment to promoting gender equality and empowering women in our global programs is outlined further in our **Gender and Development Policy**.

## *Disability*

### Overall approach

Palms Australia is committed to making our products, services, workplace and culture welcoming and supportive of people with a disability. Palms understands that disability is relevant to every aspect of our operations – donors, employees, volunteers, communities, suppliers and key stakeholders. This builds on the Palms Australia policy related to Gender Equity, which recognises the value of diversity in its staff, volunteers and office holders.

### Employees

Palms Australia is committed to increased participation for people with disabilities as employees, office holders (including board members) and volunteers. Our recruitment methods give people with disability the opportunity to show their ability to do the job and we undertake reasonable adjustments to the workplace, including suitable technology to accommodate the needs of staff and volunteers with a disability.

### Documents and communications

Palms Australia is monitoring and updating its website to meet access standards. Palms follows guidelines for making our publications accessible. Palms documents are generally provided in formats (including Microsoft Word) that can be read by screen readers and other access technology. Other alternate format documents are also generally available on request.

Palms engages in a variety of electronic communications, such as the website, social media (Twitter, Facebook), and e-newsletters and appeals. Programs and applications used are chosen with accessibility as one of the key criteria for use.

### Accessibility of technology

Palms Australia will continue to build on existing accessibility features of the website, electronic communications and social media to ensure that staff, volunteers, donors and stakeholders have the best experience in carrying out their work responsibilities or when accessing information and engaging with Palms Australia. Palms Australia uses mainstream access technology and software as part of its office set-up and provides any necessary reasonable adjustments to meet the specific needs of people with a disability.

### Disability and overseas communities

Palms Australia recognises that many of the communities that it operates in have challenges with basic infrastructure needs, including the needs of those with disabilities. Palms work with local communities to develop appropriate local solutions to particular needs.

Palms Australia volunteers (especially those with health and allied services backgrounds) actively promote an inclusive view of disability and seek to assist communities move from traditional views of disability (where it is often hidden or shunned) to a more human rights based, inclusive approach.

The briefing and orientation for volunteers includes information on approaching issues around disability, tailored to the specific cultural approach of the community in which they will be working.

### Disability and overseas volunteer placements

Palms volunteering opportunities are open to people with disabilities. The assessment of volunteers for overseas placement includes reviewing any reasonable adjustments to accommodate the needs of the person with a disability.

Palms recognises that overseas volunteers may also be vulnerable to temporary or episodic disability (particularly stress-related conditions) as a result of living in more challenging environments, with cultural changes and distance from family and friends. Palms has developed robust support and orientation programs, including extensive orientation briefings, in-country support and debriefing at the end of the assignment, to support and manage volunteers.

## *Cultural Diversity*

Recognition of the value of cultural diversity is at the core of the work of Palms Australia. It is the central tenant of **Palms Vision, Mission and Approach** to International Development Volunteering.

### Overall approach

Palms Australia is committed to making our products, services, workplace and culture welcoming and supportive of people from all cultural backgrounds – employees, volunteers, donors, communities, suppliers and key stakeholders. This is a further recognition of the value of diversity in its staff, volunteers and office holders.

### Employees

Palms Australia encourages participation for people with diverse cultural backgrounds as employees, office holders (including board members) and volunteers. Our recruitment seeks ways to encourage people with diverse cultural backgrounds providing opportunity to show their ability to do the job. Employees are encouraged to share cultural understandings especially on the occasion of special cultural events and celebrations.

### Documents and communications

Palms is continuously expanding documentation that can reasonably be expressed in the language of partner organisations including forms and information booklets.

### Cultural Diversity and volunteer placements in overseas communities

Palms international volunteering opportunities are open to people from all cultural backgrounds.

Where English is not broadly a language of communication in communities to which volunteers are sent Palms Australia engages In-Country Program Coordinators able to speak the local language and prepares and encourages our international volunteers to learn the local language. The briefing and orientation for volunteers includes information on language learning. Language resources are provided for volunteers to take to their placement.

### *Acknowledgement*

Palms Australia acknowledges Alex Varley (CEO, Attitude Foundation Ltd) as an advisor on mainstreaming Disability Inclusive Development into programs. DFAT's 'Development For All 2015-2020 Strategy for Strengthening Disability-Inclusive Development in Australia's aid program' was also referred to in the process of developing this policy.