



Australian Institute
of International Affairs

AIIA NATIONAL OFFICE

DIVERSITY & INCLUSION GUIDELINES



AIIA NATIONAL OFFICE DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION CONDUCT GUIDELINES

INTRODUCTION

The following items are the diversity and inclusion guidelines followed by the AIIA National Office. The office recognises that a clear diversity and inclusion policy should be the norm for all organisations involved in discussion of public policy matters.

It also recognises that certain demographic groups are underrepresented in debate on international affairs, which leads to a depletion of the talent pool and of a variety of perspectives in that debate. The best way to encourage greater participation among underrepresented groups is to demonstrate that speakers from such groups are not only welcome but indeed are currently contributing to the debate. This applies as much to general discussion on international affairs as to discussions focused specifically on identity issues.

Numerous high-quality studies have also shown that diversity in governance structures leads to better quality decisions and enhanced information sharing. A diversity and inclusion policy, thus, is not a performative exercise, but carries clear practical benefits for organisations.

Sections of the guidelines below emphasise gender, a reflection of the fact that men are most obviously overrepresented in international affairs think tanks and the foreign policy community in general. Unequal “gatekeeping”—which manifests, for example, in: lack of effort among event organisers to foster networks outside the usual list of invitees; the disproportionate relegation of speakers who are not men to events about gender; and the “staying power” of old boys’ networks—is a well-documented and unwelcome phenomenon in the think-tank and other industries related to international affairs.

To note Silvia Mishra and Rajeswari Pillai Rajagopalan, scholars writing for the Observer Research Foundation (ORF), India’s most prominent international affairs think tank:

“conference organisers who decide whom to call as experts need to be aware that there are a number of women experts who are equally, if not better qualified, to engage in discussions on these issues. Of course, the situation is actually worse because this often happens despite awareness of women experts. Organisers tend to consciously or unconsciously pass over them despite their acknowledged expertise. Highlighting the works of women experts and promoting visibility via conferences and panels is essential because these habits are unlikely to be broken unless consciously exposed.”

Certain practices, like the enforcement of a “no manel” rule or the recognition by male leaders that others can sometimes represent their organisation, for example, are an easy first step. Some may argue that policies and guidelines that “target” men while not dealing with others in exactly the same way are “anti-male” and in themselves discriminatory. Yet, that would be incorrect. The guidelines are about diversity and, importantly, inclusion: nothing below mandates the exclusion of men from any event.

The guidelines do, however, allow for the organisation of all-women panels and meetings, which some, including, for example, Mishra and Rajagopalan admittedly find problematic. Nevertheless, surveying the numerous events offered by international relations think tanks, including our own, one can hardly surmise that structures discouraging men from better engagement in international affairs, including any prevalence of “womanel,” are a particularly pressing problem requiring a policy response.

Despite frequent references to gender in the following guidelines, the guidelines aim to address a broad range of diversity issues. The AIIA National Office’s definition of “diversity” aligns with that of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) in recognition of the fact that people may identify with multiple “diversity groups.”

Given the breadth of diversity issues, however, rigid quotas and other “quantitative” measures designed to include all marginalised identity groups can be tokenistic, divisive, and impossible to achieve. Like DFAT, the AIIA National Office emphasises that diversity is intersectional. Thus, identifying networks and practices which have traditionally structured the debate on foreign policy, prioritising diversity, even if initially among particular diversity groups, and clearly putting inclusive policies into practice will create a welcoming, attractive atmosphere for all potential participants who wish to engage in the debate and discussion on international affairs and foreign policy.

As we have seen already with the ORF, respected think tanks, including Chatham House, an organisation closely associated with the early formation of the AIIA, and other highly reputable institutions in knowledge industries don’t ignore diversity issues, wave them away as too difficult, or use language designed to belittle them or dismiss them. As responsible industry leaders they work to address such issues. It’s an industry standard that several of our key stakeholders already practice and expect from their partners.

Indeed, professional event managers are explicitly now taught to avoid unequal gatekeeping and are increasingly calling it out when they see it. Serious policy scholars and key demographic groups like the nation’s youth actively engage on platforms like Twitter, where criticism of such practices can be at its most immediate. Aside from the fact that promoting diversity and inclusion fits well within our mission of promoting knowledge, understanding, and engagement in international affairs, and, indeed, carries institutional benefits such as improving the quality of discussion and decision making, the AIIA is at risk of being seen as lazy, out of touch, old-fashioned, and irrelevant if we do not promote diversity in our practices. We are also at risk of producing second-rate product.

The following guidelines are an operational matter not a governance issue. They apply to all paid staff at the AIIA National Office. They do not apply to those AIIA board members who are not National Office staff. Insofar as they do not contradict AIIA Board policy, their implementation will occur irrespective of any board decision. They do not constitute new policy. They are a codification of the way the office is already run.

As independent organisations in free association with the AIIA, the state and territory branches of the institute are responsible for their own positions on diversity.

Dr Bryce Wakefield
National Executive Director
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An illustration on the left side of the page shows the profiles of several people of different ethnicities and ages. A Black woman with her hair in a bun is at the top, followed by a person with spiky red hair, a man with a beard and a white head covering, and others in various colors. The background is a mix of orange, blue, and white.

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NATIONAL OFFICE COMMUNICATION

1. The AIIA National Office will consider how it can most effectively reach a diverse audience, including through its management of the AIIA website, social media, use of plain language, and participation in conferences and other forums.

NATIONAL OFFICE EVENTS

2. AIIA National Office events will be programmed with diversity of thought as well as background in mind. The AIIA National Office avoids organising panels and events of more than two people where all speakers and moderators are men.
3. The staff of the AIIA National Office involved in events planning and publications prioritise building networks of interesting and talented experts on international affairs who are not usually offered a platform to speak in Australia and actively engages these experts in events and publications.
4. Particularly for panel events with multiple online speakers, care will be taken to include speakers from a particular region when that region is the focus of discussion. When race or other “diversity issues” are likely to be a focus of the discussion, events will be likewise organised with due care to relevant diversity groups.
5. No member of the AIIA National Office will plan an event at the premises of an organisation that excludes members according to gender, sexual orientation, or ethnicity.
6. Potential partners of the AIIA National Office must be made aware of the office’s diversity and inclusion guidelines before event planning can proceed.
7. The AIIA National Office will not allow any of its branding material to appear in any event that does not conform to these guidelines. It will avoid renting its conference space or any other facilities at cost to organisations whose principles and practices are opposed to these guidelines.

EXTERNAL EVENTS

8. While it may not be possible to know the guest list in advance, where possible, AIIA National Office staff will take care to avoid attending formal work events with people from several organisations where all attendees are men, particularly closed-door discussions on foreign policy.
9. When invited to speak on panels, AIIA National Office staff will ask who the other participants are. AIIA National Office staff will decline to speak on panels where all panellists are men.
10. No member of the AIIA National Office will attend any event in Australia at the premises of an organisation that excludes members according to gender, sexual orientation, or ethnicity.
11. Staff of national office should state the reason when declining to participate in events under this policy. Except in regard to item 10, they should ideally nominate somebody else who would further the objectives of the policy to participate in the relevant event in their place.
12. Excluding the weekly mailout for online events by AIIA branches, the AIIA National Office will not advertise via social or other media any event that does not align with these guidelines.

COMMITTEES OF THE BOARD

13. When discussing appointments to committees of the board with board directors and stakeholders of the AIIA, committee chairs who are staff of the national office will pay attention to diversity. As diverse representation improves the quality of decision making, AIIA National Office staff will encourage diverse representation on committees.

BRANCH SUPPORT

14. The AIIA Board has determined that the AIIA National Office should actively support the AIIA Branches. Should any branch seek the assistance of the office in formulating or implementing a diversity and inclusion policy of its own, AIIA National Office staff will work with branch representatives to assist them.



STAFFING

15. The AIIA National Office runs an inclusive staffing policy. Full time staff are recruited according to a competitive search that follows a fair hiring process in which all candidates are considered on the basis of their skills, qualifications and abilities. Interns are recruited by a similar process.
16. For all staff and interns, the AIIA National Office will consider issues of diversity regarding expectations of the relevant role and selection and appointment processes to ensure there is no direct or indirect discrimination throughout the process.
17. Particularly in terms of event management, staff and interns at the AIIA National Office will receive training on the importance of diversity, and how to ensure it is a consideration in the workplace. Diversity and inclusion are, for example, covered in training on how to run events.
18. Harassment is always wrong, but minorities and those who feel they do not have a voice may be particularly vulnerable. Everybody should feel safe in the workplace. At the AIIA National Office, harassment prevention measures are clearly explained to all staff and interns during an induction process. Staff and interns must feel safe in reporting any harassment during the course of and in connection with their work at the AIIA to the national executive director.
19. If the national executive director is considered the source of harassment, staff or interns should report the alleged harassment to the national operations manager, who will report it to the AIIA national president and/or vice president.

BREACH OF POLICY

20. Should staff at the AIIA National Office breach these policies, the office will act to rectify the breach where possible. Under no circumstance will staff of the AIIA National Office attempt to moderate the breach by referring to the difficulty of working toward diversity or to the hard work of its staff or volunteers.





