



## Campbelltown Theatre Group Inc.

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## Statement of Diversity Regarding Casting and Representation

### CTGi's Hairspray Jr. 2021

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*At its core, Hairspray is a story about acceptance and inclusion (and rejection and exclusion) during the early days of the civil rights movement. Therefore, the production team and Campbelltown Theatre Group strongly believe the only way to clearly and appropriately tell that story, the cast members in the production must accurately reflect the characters as written in the character descriptions contained in the script. The character breakdown below is based on the casting section of the Hairspray Jr. director's guide/script, supplied by Musical Theatre International.*

In December 1963, producers at Baltimore's WJZ-TV cancelled the Buddy Dean Show rather than integrate the popular teen dance program. Which means rather than let the Black teens dance on the television show with the White teens they shut down the whole show.

No one would have even thought of this event except that one of the show's fans, a then very young John Waters, remembered. Twenty-five-years later Waters wrote and produced a movie called Hairspray, which was later re-written into a stage musical.

Hairspray is a utopian reimagining of the Buddy Dean show but in this version the protesters succeed in creating racial change. As the whole show is predicated on examining racism and the American Black White divide of the 1960s, the casting of the roles within this show are clearly stated in terms of 'Black' and 'White' roles. The authors note and character descriptions highlight the importance of casting Black and White actors as appropriate.

As CTGi is a community theatre company which is committed to diversity and inclusivity, we thought hard about these definitions in terms of appropriate casting. We have consulted widely and understand that Black is a definition several groups identify with in an Australian context.

Firstly, to clarify Black is capitalised and refers to a cultural group and not a colour. The experience of Blackness in Australia is evidenced through diasporas and indigenous communities relating through common experience and through the power of relationships.

Black kinship in Australia includes the African diaspora, Indigenous Australians, Maori and other South-Sea Pacific Islanders. For these reasons any auditionee for a role described as 'Black' must adhere to these parameters.

People of all other ethnic descents are encouraged to apply for all other roles, even those auditionees who identify as a person of colour.

As the external consultant on this casting panel, I am more than happy to discuss the above requirements with anyone. Transparency, inclusion and understanding is of the utmost importance to the Hairspray JR. team and to us at CTGi.

We are so excited to have a script that treats diversity in casting with such importance.

**Christina Donoghue**

Diversity Liaison Officer 2021