

GENDER EQUITY POLICY

Rationale and Policy Considerations

To create an environment that supports, reflects and promotes gender equitable and inclusive behaviours and practices, it is crucial for our Service to examine our value and belief systems. We are committed to promoting confidence and self-esteem in all children and acknowledge the uniqueness and potential of each child.

Philosophy

To ensure children are treated with respect and equality, our Service believes the rights for all children to have access to and participation in, the same experiences and activities irrespective of gender. To ensure that positive attitudes towards gender equity are encouraged and supported within our Service and community. Children will be encouraged to develop a sense of pride and self-worth, as they develop respect for each other's rights and responsibilities.

Legislation and Government Requirements

- Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010 (SA)
- Education and Care Services National Regulations
- Privacy Act (1988) Commonwealth
- Australian Human Rights Commission (2013)
- Early Childhood Australia Code of Ethics 2006
- Early Years Learning Framework 2009
- Equal Opportunity Act 2010
- Privacy Act 1988
- Sex Discrimination Act 1984
- United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989)

National Quality Framework

Education and Care Services National Regulations 155-156

National Quality Standard for Early Childhood Education and Care

Elements 5.1, 5.1.1, 5.1.2, 5.2, 5.2.1

Early Years Learning Framework for Australia

Strategies for Policy implementation:

Early childhood educators are in a unique position to influence children's development and create environments that encourage equal and respectful relationships. Gender plays a significant role in the lives of children as it defines masculinity and femininity. These are socially constructed roles, behaviours, activities and attributes that society considers 'appropriate' for a person based on their sex. Breaking down gender stereotypes from a young age, helps stop the negative consequences of inequality and discrimination. Educators working with children need to observe the implication of gender in children's choice of friends, activities, language, interactions, group dynamics and behaviour. These observations can lead to valuable insight into children's understandings about gender and assist educators to promote challenges to gender stereotypes and embrace diversity.

The *Anti-Bias Approach in Early Childhood* suggests the following principles as a basis to challenge sexism and promote anti-bias behaviour:

- be prepared to challenge sexist attitudes and behaviours
- ensure that you protect the child or adult who has been treated unfairly
- explain what you think is unfair about their attitudes and behaviours and if appropriate, model anti-sexist attitudes and behaviours
- correct any incorrect and sexist assumptions a child has about gender
- plan a strategy for how to deal with a similar situation in the future.

Red Ruby Scarlet (Ed.). 2018

Management and the Nominated Supervisor will:

- provide families with information about the importance of a gender equity approach in achieving positive outcomes for all children
- provide information about the Service's gender equity work
- ensure all staff have access to professional development activities
- engage staff in reflective practice about their own biases about gender
- foster an inclusive and gender equitable environment
- promote a positive understanding of gender equity
- ensure educators and staff are aware of the service's expectations regarding positive, respectful and appropriate behaviour when working with children and families
- ensure that any behaviour or circumstances that may constitute discrimination or prejudice are dealt with in an appropriate manner

Nominated Supervisor, Responsible Persons and Educators will:

- be mindful and respectful of how activities and experiences provided may impact on the expectations, interests, and behaviours of all genders
- provide a stimulating learning environment in which boys and girls are equally encouraged to explore a full range of experiences and emotions
- encourage children to express emotions and display affection and empathy
- act as advocates of children in dealing with other adults who act in a bias manner against a child due to their gender
- discourage the identification of particular skills, behaviours, and/or feelings as 'boys' and 'girls'.
- encourage children to look upon both sexes as equal
- support the gender equity policy review by focusing on how children construct gender, and the effects of gender in curriculum, teaching and learning
- be responsive and ensure their actions are relevant to the specific and changing gender dynamics that emerge from the different ways in which different children interpret gender
- monitor language, attitudes, and assumptions with regard to gender and anti-bias of themselves, other educators, and children.
- give positive messages about gender equity through their actions and words and avoid giving messages that promote traditional gender roles and gender bias
- critically reflect on their practices and environment and model a positive attitude towards gender equality
- encourage and support all children to participate in the full range of experiences and activities
- regularly review resources, equipment, materials, and images used with children to make sure they include gender diversity, non-stereotypical images, and non-traditional family lifestyles such as single or same sex parents
- encourage children to explore their own gender identities and the impact of gender relations in their play
- regularly review the book collection to ensure a range of different stories and experiences are depicted beyond stereotypical narratives

Definitions

sourced from Our Watch (2015) in *Creating Gender Equity in the Early Years: A Resource for Local Government*

Gender refers to the socially learnt roles, behaviours, activities and attributes that any given society considers appropriate for men and women. Gender defines masculinity and femininity. Gender equity is the process of being fair to women and men.

Gender equity acknowledges that women and men have different access to resources, power, responsibilities and life experiences and different strategies are often necessary to address disadvantages and achieve equal outcomes of women and men, boys and girls.

Gender equality is the outcome reached through gender equity. It is the equal valuing by the society of the similarities and differences between women and men, and the varying roles that they play.

Gender inequality is the unequal distribution of power, resources, opportunity, and value afforded to men and women in society due to prevailing gendered norms and structures. Gender roles are the functions and responsibilities expected to be fulfilled by women and men, girls and boys in a given society.

Gendered norms consist of a set of dominant beliefs and rules of conduct, which are determined by a society or social group in relation to the types of roles, interests, behaviours and contributions expected from boys and girls, men and women.

Sex refers to biological and physiological differences between females and males.

Stereotype refers to a widely held but fixed and oversimplified image or idea of a particular type of person or thing.

Sexism refers to gender discrimination. It is prejudice or discrimination based on a person's sex or gender.

Violence against women is defined as 'any act of gender based violence that causes or could cause physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of harm or coercion, in public or in private life' (Council of Australian Governments, 2011; United Nations General Assembly, 1993).

Links to other policies

Anti-Bias and Inclusion Policy

Additional Needs Policy

Code of Conduct Policy

Educational Program Policy

Interaction with Children, Family and Staff Policy Orientation of New Families Policy

Privacy and Confidentiality Policy

Respect for Children Policy

Sourced from

Australian Human Rights Commission (2015) *Supporting young children's rights* Statement of Intent (2105-2018) Australian Human Rights Commission and Early Childhood Australia (ECA)

Australian Government Department of Education, Skills and Employment. (2009) *Belonging, Being and Becoming: The Early Years Learning Framework for Australia*.

Darebin City Council *Creating Gender Equity in the Early Years: A resource for Local Government* Early Childhood Australia Code of Ethics. (2016).

Guide to the Education and Care Services National Law and the Education and Care Services National Regulations. (2017).

Guide to the National Quality Standard (2020)

Red Ruby Scarlet (Ed). (2001). *The anti-bias approach in early childhood* (3rd Ed.). Australia

Revised National Quality Standard. (2018).

Women's Health East (2017). *No Limitations. Breaking down gender stereotypes in the early years. A resource guide for early years educators.* http://whe.org.au/wp-content/uploads/sites/3/2017/11/No-limitations-guide_FINAL.pdf

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