

INCLUSION AND EQUITY POLICY

Policy Statement

This Policy outlines how the needs of all children who attend the Service are met equitably and inclusively, and how all children are supported to fully participate in the program.

Strategies and Practices

- The *Inclusion and Equity Policy* is available to families upon enrolment and staff upon induction.
- The Service's philosophy is based on a commitment to equity and inclusivity for all children, particularly their right to fully participate in every aspect of the program.
- The Service's Enrolment Record requires parents to provide information about any additional needs their children may have, to update this information throughout the year and to pass on information from any professional support services accessed outside of the Service. Educators use this information to support the education and care needs of the child.
- The Service's physical environment and facilities are designed and, when necessary, adapted to ensure access and participation for every child in the service.
- The décor of the Service aims to reflect the diversity of the children, parents, staff and educators in the Service. Where applicable, signs and resources are displayed and made available in languages other than English.
- Educators aim to use equipment and resources that reflect the lives of the children in the Service, their families and the cultural diversity of the broader community. Learning materials (e.g. books, puzzles, games, posters) support positive inclusion by providing children with accurate and appropriate information about their own and other cultures. They also depict people with additional needs as active and contributing members of communities.
- The Service works with families, external professionals and agencies (e.g. paediatricians, child welfare workers, early childhood intervention services, psychologists) to ensure that the learning environments are the optimum for each child with additional needs. Copies of any goals for the children, specific support plans or instructions provided by these external professionals and agencies are kept at the Service and are incorporated into the program.
- The Service provides parents with information about support and resources available in the community. Where appropriate, parents are assisted in making contact with the relevant professionals and agencies.
- The service is able to access support through the Inclusion Support Programme (ISP). The Programme supports 'Early Childhood Education and Care services to build their capacity and capability to include children with additional needs in mainstream services; providing them with an opportunity to learn and develop alongside their typically developing peers.' (ISP User Guide)
- By accessing inclusion support through this program our service is making a commitment to building educators capacity and capability to ensure inclusion practices are part of their everyday service delivery. This commitment includes:
 - Developing a Strategic Inclusion Plan (SIP) and undertaking a review of the SIP at least once in a 12 month period, to demonstrate a commitment to continuously improve the service's inclusive capacity
 - Demonstrating, through our policies, a commitment to an inclusive philosophy and to staff development to support the goals of the SIP; and
 - Active community outreach and engagement to encourage families of children with additional needs to access mainstream early childhood education and care services.

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- The service can access the support of an Inclusion Professional (IP) in order to implement the ISP effectively.
- In collaboration with the IP, the service will identify if funding is required in order to overcome any barriers to inclusion. The service must submit a funding application to the Inclusion Development Fund Manager (IDFM) for approval. This funding is used by the service to increase the educator to child ratio to support the inclusion of children with ongoing high support needs in care environments with typically developing peers.
- Our service meets the requirements to display an 'Our Service Values Inclusion' sticker. This sticker shows our community that our service advocates for and values diversity and recognises inclusion as a right for all children. Each year that our service's Strategic Inclusion Plan (SIP) remains active, our Inclusion Professional provides us with a star to add to our original sticker which shows that our service continues to be a service that values inclusion. This is displayed in the foyer of the service.
- The Service's rosters ensure continuity of care so that the children are with educators who know them well and are interested in what they think, feel and do. Further, the educators promote the children's wellbeing, self-esteem and sense of security by being responsive, warm, trusting and respectful.
- Educators implement consistent practices for children. Educators share strategies for individual children so that all educators can implement them. Our shared outdoor space and indoor/outdoor routine requires this whole service approach.
- All educators receive training on inclusive practices and how to meet the additional needs of any child in their care. When educators attend professional development, they are required to come back and share what they have learnt with the rest of the team.
- Educators consistently model equitable and inclusive practices in their everyday interactions with other adults and children, and intentionally teach children to do the same.
- Educators view children as competent and capable, and support the development of their autonomy, independence, competency, confidence and pride.
- Educators facilitate children's relationships with one another and support them to work collaboratively. They intentionally teach children that it is not acceptable to speak or act unkindly to others, and to stand up for those who are being treated that way.
- The Service aims to celebrate cultural traditions from around the world, especially those cultures represented by the children, staff and educators. Parents and community members are encouraged to share particular aspects of their cultures and traditions (e.g. songs, dances, recipes, creative arts) and to bring into the Service items from their culture.
- The Service shares information with relevant local schools to help all children with the transition process from early childhood to primary school. Educators seek permission from families before sharing information and are available to attend transition visits with the child if the family and school agree.
- Support is given to children and families whose first language is not English.

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References

- *Education and Care Services National Law*
- *Education and Care Services National Regulations*
- *Guide to the National Quality Framework*
- *Early Childhood Australia Code of Ethics*
- *UN Convention on the Rights of the Child*
- Australian Government Department of Education and Training – *Inclusion Support Programme User Guide*
- Dr Brenda Abbey (Childcare by Design)

Policy Review

The Service encourages staff and parents to be actively involved in the review of each of its policies and procedures. In addition, the Service will accommodate any new legislative changes as they occur and any issues identified as part of the Service's commitment to quality improvement. The Service consults with relevant recognised authorities, where necessary, as part of the review to ensure the policy contents are consistent with current research and contemporary views on best practice.