

WODEN EARLY CHILDHOOD CENTRE

SOCIAL JUSTICE

INCLUSION, DIVERSITY AND ANTIBIAS POLICY

POLICY STATEMENT:

Woden Early Childhood Centre provides a program and services based on children's rights and social justice principles. All children, families and staff of all abilities, of various family structures and from religious, kinship, cultural or linguistically diverse backgrounds are treated equitably and are valued and included in all aspects of the Centre and the community. Additionally, staff work towards creating equity by challenging biases and shifting the imbalance of power through curriculum and teaching frameworks.

This policy supports inclusive practices at Woden Early Childhood Centre. Please refer to the Inclusion Policy

RATIONALE:

All children, families and staff have a right to be treated with fairness and equity, and have the same opportunities for participation, decision making and to be accepted as valued members of the community.

SCOPE: This policy applies to all families with children attending the Centre and all Staff including students and volunteers

RELEVANT LEGISLATION:

ACT Centre Based Children's Services Conditions for Approvals in Principle and Licences 2000 –

- *Anti-Discrimination Act 1977
- *Disability Discrimination Act 1992
- *Disability Discrimination Regulation 1996
- *Equal Employment Opportunity Act 1987
- *Sex Discrimination Act 1984
- *Racial Discrimination Act 1975
- *Racial Discrimination Regulation 1987

QUALITY ASSURANCE SYSTEM:

Quality Improvement & Accreditation System – *Quality Practices Guide*, 2005 (QA 1; P3.3; P4.3)

LOCATION OF INFORMATION

This information is provided to staff during induction and in the Staff Handbook. CD policies are available to families on request as well as being available to all staff on room lap tops and can be printed as needed.

LINKS TO OTHER POLICIES

- 1) Centre Philosophy
- 2) Curriculum Policy

3) Mission statement

4. Inclusion

5. Policy Development and Review

Source Documents -

- * Dau, E (Ed) (2001). *The Anti-Bias Approach in Early Childhood (2nd Ed)*. NSW Longman
- * Dept of Family, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs – *Child Care Service Handbook 2005-2006*
- * Diversity in Child Care Queensland www.sttar.org/ (Mar 2007)
- * Early Childhood Australia (2006) Code of Ethics www.earlychildhood.org.au (Mar 07)
- * Fleet, A; Patterson, C & Robertson, J (2006) *Insights: Behind early childhood pedagogical documentation*. NSW, Pademelon Press.
- *Marrickville Council (2006) *Social Justice and Inclusive Practices Procedure*. Marrickville Children and Family Services – Procedures and Practices Manual.

Other Resources:

- * Early Intervention Australia (NSW Branch) www.ecia-nsw.org.au (Feb 2007)

Dept of Community Services (2002) *NSW Curriculum Framework for Children's services: the Practice of Relationships*. Sydney. NSW DoCS Office of Childcare

POLICY REVIEW

This policy is reviewed on a biannual basis both by the centres staff and then by families. Once the Policy has been reviewed and changes are made it goes to the management committee for ratification. Please refer to the Policy development and review policy.

Date endorsed by Committee: 24.3.09

Date to be reviewed: 24.3.10

Introduction

Woden Early Childhood Centre provides an inclusive program and service based on children's rights and social justice principles. That is, the right to fair and equal treatment regardless of age, gender, class, ethnicity, sexuality, geographic location, languages spoken, cultural background, or current circumstances.

We recognise differences as well as similarities in people and respect this. Not just within our Centre but in promoting respect for all people within the wider community.

The Centre promotes positive attitudes towards diversity and values children and families:

- of Australia's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander heritage
- from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds
- who may be socially isolated or socially constructed as vulnerable
- of all abilities, including children with special rights (additional needs)
- from diverse family structures, including gay or lesbian parents
- from a range of socio-economic backgrounds.

We view children as valued and active citizens in their own right. We recognise that all discrimination is a barrier to education and we are committed to ensuring children develop the skills to challenge any bias and discrimination. We work to ensure that our Centre is free of all forms of discrimination through processes that provide all children with the same opportunities and experiences to develop meaningful social relationships and life long learning skills.

The Centre works to provide:

- equal and fair access to programs and services
- easy access to buildings and facilities
- relevant and responsive education and care for all children and their families at the Centre.

The Centre will always endeavour to provide easy access to buildings and facilities and to provide appropriate education and care for all children requesting enrolment. However enrolment may not always be possible due to the Centre's licence capacity and vacancies, Australian Government priority of access guidelines, or because of other factors such as the availability of additional or support staff when a child has high support needs that can't be met within existing staffing.

The Centre also participates in relevant activities and supports associations that advocate and act on behalf of social justice issues including children's rights.

Practices

1) Code of Ethics

The Code of Ethics, developed by Early Childhood Australia, underpins the core values, beliefs and practices within the Centre. The Code also outlines the ethical responsibilities of staff to identify and address bias, injustice and unethical practices.

The Code provides opportunities for critical reflection by staff and aspects of the Code are regularly discussed at staff meetings. A copy of the Code is prominently displayed on the family notice-board and in the programming room.

At staff meetings, staff discuss their own attitudes, values and beliefs and how power, position and decision-making within the Centre is held and shared. Opening ourselves up to critical reflection and many possibilities is a key factor in our ability to engage with and work together with the Code.

2) Interactions and Programs

2.1 Children

When working with children, staff:

- i) respect the rights and dignity of each child
- ii) ensure all children have a right to access all learning experiences, to equally participate in the program and to succeed as a learner
- iii) view all children as competent with many strengths and abilities and as initiators and active social constructors of their own learning
- iv) support children to interact with the environment and equipment in ways that children can identify
- v) help children build connections with others and with their community
- vi) provide experiences that are complementary to children's home and community experiences
- vii) build children's positive sense of self through identifying and responding to each child's strengths and learning style/s
- viii) respect and acknowledge all children within the Centre and help make them visible to other children and adults
- ix) develop respectful and trusting relationships with children, so they can feel empowered and more open and respectful of others
- x) provide many opportunities for children of all ages to work and play together throughout the day
- xi) provide a safe physical and emotional environment within the Centre
- xii) provide access to specialised equipment and resources and access to appropriate support services, as required
- xiii) use role play and scenarios to highlight unfair behaviours and work with children's ideas of how problems can be solved
- xiv) support children to identify and take action against unfairness or other biased behaviours
- xv) expand children's understandings by asking them to express their ideas then offer another view or perspective

2.2 Families

When working with families, staff:

- i) show sensitivity to and respect for the range of family structures including same sex parents, social values and child rearing practices evident within Centre families and in the wider community
- ii) acknowledge that families best know their child and use this information in the care of their child
- iii) incorporate information about the families' background, especially the families' social practices in meaningful ways into the program
- iv) ensure families feel welcome by providing programs that are in accord with their's and their child's home and community experiences
- v) share and exchange information with family members relevant to the child including extended family members and kinship family members
- vi) respect the families' home language and communication styles and use a range of verbal and written methods of communicating with them
- vii) value multiple perspectives (other than those values which lead to the discrimination of others) and empower families as decision-makers about their children's learning and wellbeing
- viii) work through a family-centered practice approach in partnership with families
- ix) provide a program/s that responds to the individual strengths and interests of all children and respect the priorities and concerns of the child's family
- x) create a professional relationship with families so that their understandings of their child and staff's understandings of the child/ren are shared in order to ensure respectful relationships and better outcomes for the child.

2.3 Other factors

- i) Management supports the employment of staff from a range of social and cultural backgrounds, including bilingual and bi-cultural staff
- ii) Professional development is provided for staff to extend their knowledge of social justice, inclusive and anti-bias practices through training opportunities, resources and publications and discussions at staff and other meetings. These opportunities enhance staff knowledge on social justice issues as well as combating discrimination that may exist amongst staff.
- iii) Staff establish and maintain links with organisations that promote social justice and inclusion and/or provide specialised support or resources
- iv) Staff ensure compliance with relevant state and Commonwealth legislation to provide an inclusive and discrimination free environment. Please refer to legislation noted on cover page.

3) Inclusion and Diversity

3.1 General

Staff provide programs where children and families of all abilities and identities feel a sense of belonging and can equally participate by -

- i) displaying positive behaviours and by making the Centre's environment welcoming to all children and families so that they feel a sense of belonging and trust

- ii) acknowledging that equal participation does not mean everyone participates in the same way. Participation may be in different forms and there is 'no one way' of being involved in the Centre.
- iii) building on existing program strengths and accessing specialised advice and appropriate training and additional resources where required.
- iv) planning for successful transition between areas of the Centre to support the child's wellbeing and continuity in the learning environment
- v) ensuring that inclusive behaviours and practices occur in social contexts throughout each moment of the day
- vi) supporting children to work together to communicate respectfully, to generate ideas and solve problems
- vii) supporting children in constructing their knowledge of diversity by being positive role models
- viii) being sensitive to and genuinely encouraging families to share their values, beliefs and attitudes in contributing to policies and Centre practices
- ix) discussing identity and difference as a positive aspect of who we are, rather than one type of identity or difference being superior to another
- x) providing equipment and resources that reflect positive images of difference, disability and inclusion
- xi) developing meaningful and sustainable relationships through implementing current theories of belonging and participation.

3.2 Children with a disability, delay or impairment or gifted children

Staff use an inclusive approach ensuring that all children, especially children with special rights, have the same opportunities to participate in all experiences and all aspects of the program.

To do this, staff ensure that they:

- i) all take responsibility for the care and learning of all children
- ii) seek specialised assistance/additional support to successfully include children with high support needs
- iii) work as a whole team, including any additional support staff, in meeting the interests and strengths of all children
- iv) maintain updated information about particular disabilities, delays or giftedness, relevant to children within the Centre
- v) plan an Individualised Family Service Plan in collaboration with families and other professionals/agencies, including Inclusion Support Agencies (ISA's)
- vi) plan based on the child's strengths, interests, talents, likes and dislikes and family priorities for their child
- vii) provide or seek support/funding to provide any building or environment modifications that may be required
- viii) provide or borrow equipment that may be required
- ix) work collaboratively with other groups, children's services or schools to support the child in the transition to the next learning environment

3.3 Children from a culturally and linguistically diverse background

Staff value the richness of human diversity and children and families from a wide range of culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds that make up Australian society.

Staff demonstrate respect for and valuing of diversity by -

- i) ensuring resources and equipment that respectfully reflect Australia's indigenous heritage and multi-cultural society, are used as part of daily practice
- ii) providing information in other relevant community languages, both those relevant to the Centre and/or within the wider community
- iii) seeking and utilising interpreters, as needed
- iv) ensuring the learning experiences provided and staff behaviours affirm children's identity and cultural heritage
- v) discussing with families how special occasions can be celebrated in meaningful and respectful ways within the Centre

3.4 Language programs within the Centre

Management, staff and families work together to consider the types of language programs that can be implemented within the Centre. These include bilingual and home language support programs.

Some of the benefits of such programs are:

- The second language (English) is learnt in addition to rather than as a replacement of the home language
- There are enhanced social, linguistic and intellectual capabilities;
- Children's identity and self esteem are strengthened
- Family connections are supported
- There is increased respect for and understanding of second language learning
- All children can learn a second language.

Staff can support bilingual or home language support programs by:

- i) using the child's home language within all aspects of the program and in both spoken and written forms
- ii) working with families to learn and use key words and statements in the child's home language
- iii) staff who share the child's home language, using it throughout the day and assisting children to make connections with English
- iv) a focus language is chosen to be spoken in the Centre that reflects the children and staff who speak that language
- v) children are spoken to in both languages in part or throughout the day, including learning experiences
- vi) staff who speak another language use this language with all children in contexts agreed to with families

3.5 Aboriginal Perspectives

Woden Early Childhood Centre supports the following position statement:

Community Child Care Co-operative (NSW) acknowledges the loss of family, cultural identity, land, language and community of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (people) through the policies and practices of Australian governments, organisations and people. We unreservedly apologise for the ongoing suffering and loss that these policies and practices have caused to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, parents, families and communities (CCCC NSW, 1998).

For Aboriginal perspectives to be an inclusive part of the program, staff:

- i) develop their knowledge and understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait culture and Aboriginal issues within the local and wider community
- ii) impart the importance of all Australians knowing and understanding the histories and current realities of Indigenous people
- iii) support children to take pride in their heritage and their cultural identity
- iv) reinforce and affirm Aboriginal cultural values and identity
- v) learn and use local Aboriginal words and appropriate terminology
- vi) learn and incorporate the learning styles of children, especially active learning and through close personal interaction
- vii) value the system of extended family kinship and welcome them in the Centre
- viii) respect local elders and seek ways to involve them in the children's programs and the use of appropriate resources
- ix) work with other community groups to redress poor educational and health outcomes for children
- x) support community activities aimed at reconciliation

3.6 Gender Inclusive Practices

Staff work with children to promote equity, confirming that a person's gender should not be an obstacle for being or doing.

Throughout all aspects of the program, staff:

- i) model behaviours and values of gender equity
- ii) ensure resources, materials, equipment and experience do not reflect gender stereotypes or sexist images or behaviours
- iii) highlight gender stereotypes within the community and media and discuss the implication for fairness and equity
- iv) expand children's play options and experiences in a wide range of learning experiences
- v) provide opportunities for girls and boys to show cleverness, strength and nurturance
- vi) observe children's choices of play and materials and promote non-stereotyped play
- vii) use non-sexist language and praise children's attempts and achievements rather than their appearance

3.7 Addressing heterosexism

Institutional and community valuing of heterosexuality as the superior and preferred sexuality can lead to the discrimination and marginalisation of non-heterosexual people, their families and children. Heterosexism marginalizes not only lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people, but also individuals who challenge normative ways of performing their gender#. (# Marrickville Council – Procedures and Practices Manual, pg 99)

Staff respect family diversity and work together to:

- i) ensure all families, including gay and lesbian families, have a positive and visible presence within the Centre
- ii) help children to discuss ideas, questions and enquiries about family diversity and address stereotypical attitudes towards family types and structures
- iii) respect all family types and challenge discriminatory and homophobic attitudes
- iv) actively affirm the identity of gay and lesbian families throughout the program
- v) support children's emerging gender and sexual identity that is non-discriminatory and non-stereotypic

4) Curriculum Approaches

Staff plan curriculum and programs that promote children's sense of self and valuing of differences and act to prevent or address bias and prejudice.

When planning and implementing learning experiences, staff:

- i) encourage the different perspectives of children and families and demonstrate that these perspectives are encouraged and valued
- ii) talk regularly about their own values, attitudes and beliefs and how these may be similar or different to each other's and the families using the Centre
- iii) genuinely incorporate these perspectives in the Centre's philosophy, broad goals and policies
- iv) identify and act to combat stereotypes and any discriminatory behaviours including racism, sexism, ageism, homophobia and classism
- v) model reflective listening and show empathy towards others ensuring resources and behaviours reflect positive perspectives relating to gender, sexuality and diversity of class, culture and language
- vi) actively intervene to assist children to resolve issues and challenge bias, prejudice or stereotypes
- vii) respond to children's play to help them recognise unfair behaviours
- viii) role-model behaviour and language that describes emotions and feelings, equity and fairness
- ix) maintain current knowledge about contemporary research and practice theory