

INCLUSION AND EQUITY

QUALITY AREA 1 | ELAA version 1.0



Working in partnership with Cancer Council Victoria, ELAA has aligned this policy to the key policies and guidelines of the Healthy Early Childhood Services Achievement Program



PURPOSE

This policy will provide guidelines to:

- ensure all adults and children at Waterfall Gully Pre School are treated equitably and with respect, regardless of their background, ethnicity, culture, language, beliefs, gender, age, socioeconomic status, level of ability, additional needs, family structure or lifestyle
- promote inclusive practices and ensure the successful participation of all children at Waterfall Gully Pre School
- create a positive mental health and wellbeing environment for children, educators, staff and families at Waterfall Gully Pre School.



POLICY STATEMENT

VALUES

Waterfall Gully Pre School is committed to:

- acknowledging and respecting the rights of all children to be provided with and participate in a quality early childhood education and care program
- creating an environment that supports, reflects and promotes equitable and inclusive behaviours and practices
- creating a sense of belonging for all children, families and staff, where diverse identities, backgrounds, experiences, abilities and interests are respected, valued and given opportunities to be expressed and developed
- ensuring that programs are reflective of, and responsive to, the values and cultural beliefs of families using the service, and of those within the local community and broader society
- working to ensure children are not discriminated against on the basis of background, ethnicity, culture, language, beliefs, gender, age, socioeconomic status, health status, level of ability or additional needs, family structure or lifestyle.
- considering the mental health and wellbeing needs of all children, families and staff.

SCOPE

This policy applies to the approved provider, persons with management or control, nominated supervisor, persons in day-to-day charge, early childhood teachers, educators, staff, students, volunteers, parents/guardians, children, and others attending the programs and activities of Waterfall Gully Pre School, including during offsite excursions and activities.

RESPONSIBILITIES	Approved provider and persons with management or control	Nominated supervisor and persons in day-to-day charge	Early childhood teacher, educators and all other staff	Parents/guardians	Contractors, volunteers and students
R indicates legislation requirement, and should not be deleted					
Ensuring that all policies of Waterfall Gully Pre School, including <i>Inclusion and Equity, Code of Conduct and Privacy and Confidentiality Policy</i> , are adhered to at all times	R	R			
Ensuring that the service provides a safe, inclusive and empowering environment which celebrates diversity through positive, respectful and appropriate behaviour when working with children and families	R	R	√		√
Promoting cultural awareness in all children, including greater understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ways of knowing and being	R	√	√		√
Actively supporting and facilitating participation and inclusion at Waterfall Gully Pre School by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, young people and their families	R	√	√		√
Creating a culturally safe environment for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people	R	√	√		√
Ensuring that facilities are designed or adapted to support access by every child, family, educator and staff member, including adaptive equipment to support the inclusion of all children	R	R	√		√
Encouraging collaborative, family-centred practice at the service which facilitates the inclusion and active participation of both the child and the family at the service	R	√	√		√
Using family-centred practice and working collaboratively with staff, parents/guardians, specialist services and other professionals to implement the program at the service and provide individualised support for children	R	R	√		√
Providing families with information about the support options available for children attending Waterfall Gully Pre School	R	√	√		
Ensuring that service programs are available and accessible to families from a variety of backgrounds	R	R	√		√
Ensuring that educational programs are delivered in accordance with an approved learning framework, are based on the developmental needs, and experiences of each child, and take into account the individual differences of each child	R	R	√		√
Providing an educational program that is reflective of the service's values, beliefs and philosophy, and embraces the principles of fairness, equity, diversity and inclusion.	R	R	√		√

Ensuring that the program provides opportunities for all children to participate and interact with one another	√	√	√		√
Ensuring there are quiet and reflective spaces for children, educators and families	R	√			
Embedding social and emotional learning in the service program and practice, and teaching children to care for their own mental health	√	√	√		√
Ensuring the diversity and interests of the children, families, educators and staff are reflected in the physical environment	√	√	√		√
Actively supporting and encouraging children's ability to express their culture and enjoy their cultural rights	R	√	√		√
Recognising multilingualism as an asset and support children to maintain their first language, learn English as an additional language, and learn languages other than English	√	√	√		√
Critically reflecting on practice to ensure that interactions and programs embrace an approach in which children and families feel valued and respected, and that their contributions are welcomed	R	R	√		√
Providing opportunities for families to contribute to the program as key partners	R	R	√		√
Identifying and supporting children with additional needs and ensuring that service programs are inclusive of all children with additional needs	R	√	√		√
Ensuring that service programs are inclusive of all children with medical conditions	R	√	√		√
Ensuring that parents/guardians are consulted, kept informed and provide written consent, where individualised programs, action, support or intervention are planned and provided for their child	R	√	√	√	
Ensuring that individualised programs incorporate opportunities for regular review and evaluation, in consultation with all people involved in the child's education and care	√	√	√	√	√
Responding to the needs and concerns of parents/guardians, and providing support and guidance, where appropriate	√	√	√		√
Responding to requests from educators for written permission to arrange for an assessment, collect reports on their child and to speak to service providers about their child				√	
Being involved in, keeping fully informed about, and providing written consent for any individualised intervention or support proposed/provided for their child				√	
Reviewing and evaluating individualised support programs in consultation with all people involved in the child's education and care	√	√	√		√
Implementing appropriate programs and practices to support vulnerable children and families, including working co-operatively with relevant services and/or professionals, where required	√	√	√		√

Ensuring that cultural values and expectations about health and wellbeing are respected	R	√	√		√
Considering any issues regarding fees that may be a barrier to families enrolling at Waterfall Gully Pre School, and removing these barriers wherever possible (<i>refer to Fees Policy</i>)	R	√			
Ensuring that all eligible families are supported to access the Kindergarten Fee Subsidy (<i>refer to Fees Policy</i>), including families with concession cards, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families, and refugee and asylum seeker families	R	R			
Ensuring that all eligible three-year-old Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, children from a refugee or asylum seeker background and children known to Child Protection are supported to access the Early Start Kindergarten program	R	R			
Ensuring that the enrolment process is fair and equitable, and facilitates access for all children	R	√	√		
Tailoring the orientation process to meet the individual needs of children and families	R	√	√		
Identifying the barriers to participation in service programs and activities, and developing strategies to overcome these barriers	√	√	√		
Understanding children's diverse circumstances, and providing support and responding to those who are vulnerable	R	R	√		√
Attending to any adjustments to provide equal protection for all children	R	R	R		R
Ensuring that staff have access to appropriate and accredited professional development activities that promote a positive understanding of diversity, inclusion and equity, and mental health and wellbeing, and provide skills to assist in implementing this policy	√	√			
Ensuring that the nominated supervisor and all staff are aware of the service's expectations regarding positive, respectful and appropriate behaviour when working with children and families	R				
Encouraging and supporting other educators, staff and families as role models to demonstrate positive and respectful relationships, and positive mental health and wellbeing	R	√			
Providing information to families about local parenting and family services, mental health and wellbeing and other resources that are available to support the health and wellbeing of children and families	√	√	√		
Providing service information in various community languages wherever possible	√	√			
Using language services to assist with communication where required and considering the employment of a multilingual worker/s to meet the needs of culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) families	√	√			
Working with the nominated supervisor and educators to ensure appropriate program planning and resourcing for children with additional needs	√	√			

Where practicable, accessing resources, support and professional development to facilitate inclusion of children with additional needs who are ineligible for specific support packages	√	√			
Organising appropriate resources and accredited professional development for educators to enable all children to be included at the service, and to understand when and how to refer children to additional support	√	√			
Developing partnerships with other education and care settings and schools to enable children to move successfully from one setting to another	√	√	√		
Ensuring collaborative relationships with specialised services and professionals to provide support and services for families and children with a disability, complex medical needs and/or developmental delay	√	√	√		
Ensuring racism within the organisation is identified, confronted and not tolerated.	R	R	√		√
Ensuring that no employee, prospective employee, parent/guardian, child, volunteer or student at the service is discriminated against	R	R			
Ensuring that any behaviour or circumstances that may constitute discrimination or prejudice are dealt with in an appropriate manner	R	R			
Notifying the approved provider of any behaviour or circumstances that may constitute discrimination, bullying, harassment or prejudice		√	√	√	√
Ensuring there are clear referral options and pathways for children, staff, educators and families to access support services for mental health and wellbeing	R	R			
Developing links with other services and/or professionals to support mental health and wellbeing, children with additional needs and have referral pathways in place	√	√	√		
Ensuring that educators and staff are supported to learn about and care for their own mental health and wellbeing	R	R			
Ensuring that mental health and wellbeing information and policy requirements are included in educator and staff orientation/induction	R	R			
Ensuring that leadership practices and on-the-ground support enable a work environment that minimises stress and promotes mental health and wellbeing for educators and staff	R	R			



BACKGROUND AND LEGISLATION

BACKGROUND

The National Quality Framework (NQF) recognises all children's capacity and right to succeed regardless of diverse circumstances, cultural background and abilities. Education and care services must hold high expectations for the learning and development of all children, and at the same time recognise that every child follows an individual learning path and will progress in different and equally meaningful ways. Inclusion involves taking into account children's social, cultural and linguistic diversity (including learning styles,

abilities, disabilities, gender, family circumstances and geographic location) in curriculum decision-making processes. Early childhood education and care services must implement responsive, equitable, individualised opportunities and additional support whenever barriers are identified.

The NQF is underpinned by a commitment to 'Closing the Gap' and acknowledges Australia is a nation of great diversity, and an ancient land that has been cared for by Indigenous Australians for many thousands of years. Education and care services have a shared responsibility to support children, families, colleagues and the local community to understand, respect and value diversity.

State and Commonwealth laws prohibit discrimination based on personal characteristics, including race, age, gender, religious belief, disability or illness and parental status.

Under the Child Safe Standards, services are expected to provide environments and activities that encourage all children to participate in and celebrate their identity. The standards are underpinned by three overarching principles which require services to take into consideration the increased vulnerability of Aboriginal children, children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds and children with disabilities.

The Victorian Government requires funded organisations to ensure that their policies and procedures promote equality of opportunity for all children to enable their full participation in kindergarten. A service's philosophy should reflect the values of inclusion and equity which are supported by developing and implementing an inclusion and equity policy. Developing professional knowledge and skills and using family-centred practice to work in partnership with children, families, communities, and other services and agencies, will assist services to identify, include and support children with additional needs and their families.

LEGISLATION AND STANDARDS

Relevant legislation and standards include but are not limited to:

- Age Discrimination Act 2004
- Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006 (Vic)
- Charter for Children in Out-of-home Care (Vic)
- Children, Youth and Families Act 2005 (Vic)
- Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005 (Vic)
- Child Safe Standards (Vic)
- Dardee Boorai: the Victorian Charter of Safety and Wellbeing for Aboriginal Children and Young People (Vic)
- Disability Act 2006 (Vic)
- Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (Cth)
- Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010
- Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011
- Equal Opportunity Act 2010 (Vic)
- Fair Work Act 2009 (Cth)
- Health Records Act 2001 (Vic)
- Privacy and Data Protection Act 2014 (Vic)
- National Quality Standards Quality Areas 1-7
- Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004
- Privacy Act 1988 (Cth)
- Racial and Religious Tolerance Act 2001 (Vic)
- Racial Discrimination Act 1975 (Cth)
- Sex Discrimination Act 1984 (Cth)

The most current amendments to listed legislation can be found at:

- Victorian Legislation – Victorian Law Today: www.legislation.vic.gov.au
- Commonwealth Legislation – Federal Register of Legislation: www.legislation.gov.au



SOURCES AND RELATED POLICIES

SOURCES

- Be You: www.beyou.edu.au
- Commission for Children and Young People, Child Safe Standards: www.ccp.vic.gov.au
- Early Childhood Agreement for Children in Out-of-Home Care (January 2019). Endorsed by the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, the Department of Human Services, Municipal Association of Victoria, Early Learning Association Australia, Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency, Victorian Aboriginal Children and Young People's Alliance, Centre for Excellence in Child and Family Welfare, Community Child Care Association, Vic Tas Primary Health Network Alliance, Victorian Healthcare Association and Victorian Aboriginal Education Association Incorporated: www.education.vic.gov.au
- Early Childhood Australia (ECA) and Early Childhood Intervention Australia's (ECIA) Position Statement on the Inclusion of Children with a Disability in Early Childhood Education and Care – available at: Search 'statement on inclusion of children with disability' at: <https://www.earlychildhoodaustralia.org.au/our-work/inclusion-resources/>
- fka Children's Services: www.fka.org.au
- Guide to the National Quality Framework: www.acecqa.gov.au
- Guide to the National Quality Standard: www.acecqa.gov.au
- The Kindergarten Funding Guide (DET): www.education.vic.gov.au
- Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework Principal Practice Guide: Equity and Diversity: www.education.vic.gov.au

RELATED POLICIES

- Anaphylaxis and Allergic Reactions
- Asthma
- Child Safe Environment and Wellbeing
- Code of Conduct
- Compliments and Complaints
- Curriculum Development
- Dealing with Infectious Diseases
- Dealing with Medical Conditions
- Diabetes
- Enrolment and Orientation
- Epilepsy
- Excursions and Service Events
- Fees
- Interactions with Children
- Nutrition, Oral Health and Active Play
- Occupational Health and Safety
- Privacy and Confidentiality
- Staffing

EVALUATION

In order to assess whether the values and purposes of the policy have been achieved, the approved provider will:

- regularly seek feedback from everyone affected by the policy regarding its effectiveness
- monitor the implementation, compliance, complaints and incidents in relation to this policy
- keep the policy up to date with current legislation, research, policy and best practice
- revise the policy and procedures as part of the service's policy review cycle, or as required



- notifying all stakeholders affected by this policy at least 14 days before making any significant changes to this policy or its procedures, unless a lesser period is necessary due to risk ([Regulation 172 \(2\)](#)).



AUTHORISATION

This policy was adopted by the approved provider of Waterfall Gully Pre School on 23rd April 2024.

REVIEW DATE: April 2025