

GENDER EQUITY POLICY

QUALITY AREAS 1-7 | Ness Reserve Pre-School version 1.0



PURPOSE

Ness Reserve Pre-School recognises that gender equity is a human right, and that gender inequality has the potential to limit and impact negatively on the safety, education, employment, family lives and opportunities of children, families and staff in the immediate and long term.

The purpose of this policy is to:

- increase knowledge and understanding about gender equity within our environment by being fair and promoting equitable and holistic experiences for everyone.
- acknowledges that female and male, boys and girls traditionally have different access to resources, power, responsibilities and life experiences.
- create the foundations for a learning environment that is respectful, equitable and that promotes positive gender reforms without the limitations of gender stereotypes through a non-gendered environment.



POLICY STATEMENT

VALUES

Ness Reserve Pre-School is committed to:

- recognises that gender equity is a human right and that inequality is both structural and individual; this means it is not only the result of individual attitudes and actions, but also of biases in structures, systems, policies and process throughout our community.
- recognises that our centre is a vital space in our community to promote gender equality. Every policy, practice and activity have the potential to reinforce or challenge gender stereotypes and gendered inequity.
- developing the full potential of all children irrespective of gender. It affirms that gender equality prevents violence against women, delivers social and health benefits along with economic benefits through a non-gendered environment that promotes diversity and respects differing abilities, personalities and behaviour. It affirms the right of all children.
- to achieving gender equity through a fair and equitable service that provides access, opportunity, and resources to enable equal outcomes for all people.

PRINCIPLES

Through adherence to the following principles, we will work towards our vision where Nillumbik is gender equitable, safe and inclusive for all people.

- Where attitudes and behaviours will support non-gendered equity.
- Where we facilitate improved participation, leadership and access for all.
- Strengthen positive, equal and respectful relationships – Challenging the condoning of family violence.

Ness Reserve Pre-School will model and promote gender equity best practice within our service and our community through partnerships with agencies, organisations, and the wider community to collectively work towards preventing family violence.

SCOPE

This policy applies to Ness Reserve Pre-School, persons within management or control, nominated supervisor, educational leader, persons in day-to-day charge, educators, staff, students on placement, volunteers, parents/guardians, children and others attending the programs and activities of Ness Reserve Pre-School.

IMPLEMENTATION

This service will:

Use gender inclusive language in all aspects of our work with children and families and the community.

- Sexist language will be challenged
- The use of gendered language will be minimised
- Respect for gender identity will include using the preferred names and pronouns of staff, family members and children.

Deliver an educational program for children that is inclusive of all genders.

This will be achieved by:

- Taking an anti-bias approach, actively challenging gender stereotypes and bias and promoting gender equity and respect for gender diversity
- Using professional conversations, documentation of children's learning and program plans, journals and meeting notes to reflect regularly on the play environment, curriculum, and interactions through a gender lens
- Providing inclusive education and care that considers how gender intersects with age, ability, culture, religion geographic location, socio-economic background and other factors
- Ensuring that resources available to children promote gender equity, and portray females and males in positive diverse situations, and in roles which are not stereotypical
- Encouraging all children to participate in a range of diverse learning experiences with opportunities to be involved in initiating, nurturing, leading, supporting and caring for others
- Supporting all children to participate in a range of activities, both indoors and outdoors
- Encouraging all children to express emotion and display affection
- Supporting children to develop respect for each other's rights and responsibilities and teaching positive ways to communicate and problem solve
- Ensuring girls and boys get equal opportunities to access all play spaces, equipment and resources.

Ensure governance and management structures provide leadership in promoting gender equity and in the prevention of violence against women.

This will be achieved by:

- Encouraging the recruitment of both female and male volunteers and staff to governance and management positions
- Ensuring that everyone in governance and management roles has an equal voice in decision-making and have opportunities to participate in executive and other roles regardless of gender
- Including gender equity as a standing item on staff and management meeting agendas at least quarterly
- Allocating financial and other resources to support the implementation of this policy and consider gender equity in the development of budgets

- Encouraging the employment of female and male staff and taking a non-gendered approach to assigning duties
- Involving all staff in gender equity professional learning opportunities at least once per year – this may include readings, action research projects, participating in community networks or online or face-to-face training
- Recognising that staff may live in rainbow families and may be same-sex attracted, intersex, non-binary or gender diverse and maintaining a culture that is respectful of all staff and the ways their families are formed and structured
- Considering ways to advance gender equity issues when reviewing staffing policies and employment terms and conditions
- Including gender equity and identifying and responding to family violence in induction processes with new staff
- Making information about family violence and support services available to all staff, volunteers and families
- Ensuring staff know about and are supported to access employment conditions such as family violence leave, parental leave and the right to request flexible working arrangements
- Ensuring that staff are equipped to identify and respond to family violence concerns
- Ensuring that clear processes are in place to enact the requirements of the Child Information Sharing Scheme, the Family Violence Information Sharing Scheme and the Family Violence Multi-Agency Risk Assessment and Management Framework (MARAM).

Engage with families and communities in ways that promote gender equity and support the prevention of violence against women.

This will be achieved by:

- Encouraging mothers, fathers and other significant adults in the lives of children to be equally active contributors to all aspects of their family's experience at the service
- Recognising that some children live in rainbow families and have same-sex attracted, intersex, non-binary or gender diverse parents or carers and maintaining a culture that is respectful of the different ways families are formed and structured
- Informing families about the services' commitment to gender equity and achievements in this area, at enrolment and throughout the year
- Providing families with information and opportunities to learn more about gender equity in the early years and about ways to prevent and respond to family violence
- Participating in networking opportunities with relevant community groups and family violence support organisations
- Participating in Nillumbik Shire Council gender equity events and campaigns.

Put in place a process of review and continuous improvement in the area of gender equity.

This will be achieved by:

- Allocating responsibility for ongoing implementation of this policy to a lead person/s. This could be the service manager, educational leader or staff or committee member who is specifically appointed as a gender advocate
- Using gender audit tools and action plans, the service Quality Improvement Plan and self-assessment processes or other mechanisms to identify and work towards service specific goals in this area

- Sharing progress with gender equity service goals with Nillumbik Shire Council
- Updating service policies to align with this policy and include relevant gender equity strategies, during the usual cycle of policy review and development
- Including gender equity in reporting processes to management, members and families.

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
Ensuring that all policies of Ness Reserve Pre-School including Gender Equity, <i>Inclusion and Equity</i> , and <i>Code of Conduct</i> , are adhered to at all times	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Ensuring that the service provides a safe, inclusive and empowering environment which celebrates gender equity through positive, respectful and appropriate behaviour when working with children and families	✓	✓	✓		✓
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	✓	✓	✓		✓
Providing families with information about the importance of a gender equity approach in achieving positive outcomes for all children.	✓	✓	✓		
Providing information about the service's gender equity work in relevant community languages as required	✓	✓			
Considering barriers to participation in service programs and activities, and developing strategies to overcome these	✓	✓	✓		
Ensuring that staff have access to appropriate and accredited professional development activities that promote understanding of gender equity, and develop skills to assist them in implementing this policy	✓	✓			
Providing support and guidance to educators and staff	✓	✓			
Ensuring that educators and all staff are aware of the service's expectations regarding positive, respectful and appropriate behaviour when working with children and families	✓	✓			
Ensuring that any behaviour or circumstances that may constitute discrimination or prejudice are dealt with in an appropriate manner	✓	✓			

Being aware of the service's expectations regarding positive, respectful and appropriate behaviour when working with children and families	✓	✓	✓		✓
Developing and delivering an educational program that is reflective of the service's values, beliefs and philosophy and embraces the principles of fairness, equity, diversity and inclusion		✓	✓		
Ensuring that the program provides opportunities for all children to participate and interact with one another, irrespective of gender	✓	✓	✓		✓
Undertaking appropriate professional development on issues about gender equity	✓	✓	✓		
Understanding respecting and working with how different cultural child-rearing and social practices may view gender	✓	✓	✓		✓
Using family-centered practice and working collaboratively with staff, parents/carers, specialist services and other professionals to implement a gender equity approach at the service	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Providing opportunities for families to contribute to the gender equity program	✓	✓	✓		
Notifying management or appropriate staff of any behaviours or circumstances that may constitute discrimination or prejudice	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Critically reflecting on practice to ensure that interactions and programs embrace a gender equitable approach in which children and families feel valued and respected and that their contributions are welcomed.	✓	✓	✓		
Incorporating a gender lens across their reflective practice and observations	✓	✓	✓		✓

BACKGROUND AND LEGISLATION



BACKGROUND

Children are exposed to many factors which influence their attitudes, behaviours and aspirations. One of these factors is gender. By the age of four children have already formed an understanding of what it means to be a woman or a man in today's society.

Stereotypical ideas about gender provide a limiting and narrow definition of what girls and boys can and should be doing. This policy has been developed because of Ness Reserve Preschools awareness of the important role we can play in challenging the constraints and inequities that gender stereotypes place on all children.

Ultimately Ness Reserve Pre-School aims for non-gendered actions to become part of everyday practices. Using specific gender lens tools or resources will be useful in supporting this process. Applying a gender lens when analysing, planning and making decisions means carefully and deliberately examining all the implications of our work in terms of gender.

Working with a gender lens can inform actions to address inequalities arising from the different roles of women and men (girls and boys), the unequal power relationships between them, and the consequences of these inequalities on their lives, health and wellbeing. A gender lens is designed to identify:

- Hidden assumptions and values which may sustain inequality and contribute to discrimination.
- The possible consequences and impacts of initiatives
- Service gaps and research in area which require further work

A program or service that has used a gender lens is one that considers the different needs and circumstances of people of all genders. (Victorian Government; Women's Health In the North).

LEGISLATION AND STANDARDS

Relevant legislation and standards include but are not limited to:

- Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006 (Vic)
- Children, Youth and Families Act 2005 (Vic)
- Child Information Sharing Scheme and the Family Violence Information Sharing Scheme
- Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005 (Vic)
- Child Safe Standards (Vic)
- Children's Services Regulations 2020 (Vic)
- 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)
- National Quality Standards Quality Areas 1-7
- Nillumbik Shire Council Early Years Service Level Standards
- Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004
- Sex Discrimination Act 1984 (Cth)
- Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006
- United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989)

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



DEFINITIONS

The terms defined in this section relate specifically to this policy. For regularly used terms e.g. Approved provider, Nominated supervisor, Notifiable complaints, Serious incidents, Duty of care, etc. refer to the *Definitions* file of the PolicyWorks catalogue.



SOURCES AND RELATED POLICIES

SOURCES

- Darebin City Council, *Creating Gender Equity in the Early Years: A resource for local government* darebin.vic.gov.au/geey, accessed November 2020
- Women's Health East, 2017 *No Limitations - Breaking down gender stereotypes in the early years. A resource guide for early years educators*, whe.org.au/what-we-do/gender-equity-for-health-outcomes/no-limitations-gender-stereotypes-early-years, accessed November 2020
- Council of Australian Governments, 2001, The National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children 2010-2022: <https://www.dss.gov.au/women/publications-articles/reducing-violence-against-women-and-their-children>

- Early Childhood Australia, The Early Years Learning Framework Professional Learning Program, Think About Practice: working with the early years learning framework: https://lifeofaneducator.files.wordpress.com/2014/04/eylf_thinking_about_practice_.pdf
- Faragher, J., MacNaughton, G. 1990. Working with young children. Guidelines for good practice. Collingwood: Tafe Publications
- Lisen C. Roberts and Heather T. Hill, Children's Books that Break Gender Role Stereotypes: http://www.whenigrowupproject.com/teaching_tips/Books4Children.pdf
- MacNaughton, G. 2000. Rethinking gender in early childhood education. Sydney: Allen & Unwin.
- Our Watch, Australia's National Research Organisation for Women's Safety (ANROWS) AND VicHealth 2015, Change the story: a shared framework for the primary prevention of violence against women and their children in Australia, Our Watch, Melbourne, Australia.
- Rainbow Families Council, How children play: challenging myths and stereotypes: https://www.rainbowfamilies.com.au/for_families
- Commission for Children and Young People, 2018 *A Guide for Creating a Child Safe Organisation* ccyp.vic.gov.au/assets/resources/CSSGuideFinalV4-Web-New.pdf, accessed November 2020
- Fair Work Ombudsman, *Employer Guide to Domestic and Family Violence* fairwork.gov.au/leave/family-and-domestic-violence-leave, accessed November 2020
- Guide to the Education and Care Services National Law 2010 and the Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011 (ACECQA): <http://acecqa.gov.au/>

RELATED POLICIES

- Child Safe Environment
- Complaints and Grievances
- Curriculum Development
- Enrolment and Orientation
- Excursions and Service Events
- Fees
- Interactions with Children
- Occupational Health and Safety
- Nutrition and Active Play
- Privacy and Confidentiality
- Staffing

COMMUNICATIONS



Ness Reserve Pre-School is committed to open communication between all relevant parties, staff, parents/carers and children about our gender equity work. In order to reach all parents this documentation will be translated into relevant community languages as needed. Ness Reserve will endeavour to ensure any changes and updates relating to our gender equity work are widely communicated. This will be achieved through multiple platforms including:

- Standing agenda item for staff meetings
- Articles on Story Park
- Emails to staff and parents/carers

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
- 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 Ness Reserve Pre-School 14 days before making any significant changes to this policy or its procedures, unless a lesser period is necessary due to risk.



ATTACHMENTS

- Attachment 1: Gender Equity Action Plan



AUTHORISATION

This policy was adopted by the approved provider of Ness Reserve Pre-School in July 2022

REVIEW DATE: Every 3 years

ATTACHMENT 1: GENDER EQUITY ACTION PLAN

Service Name:

Date:

Review:

Gender equity policy area	What outcome or goal do we seek?	How will we get this outcome? Who is responsible?	Success measure	By when?	Progress notes
Inclusive language	<i>Example: Ensure our communications to families and community uses gender inclusive language and reflects diversity of family types</i>	<i>Review family handbook and website using gender lens. Coordinator to lead</i>	<i>Revised family handbook reflects centre's gender equity in early years policy</i>		
Educational programs	<i>Example; For all staff to increase their awareness of how books, toys, posters and equipment used in the service promote or discourage respectful and gender equitable relationships</i>	- Ed leader to adapt gender audit tools available to this service. - Teachers / room leaders to use in each room. - Professional conversations at staff meetings to discuss findings	<i>Gender audit undertaken in each room, results and reflections on process and any proposed changes documented</i>		
		•			
		•			
Families and communities	<i>Example: For all families and staff to know where to go to access family violence information and support</i>	- Manager to add contact info into family and staff handbook and source pamphlets to add to community info display	<i>Every family and staff member to receive current referral information on commencement at service and contact information easily accessible across the year.</i>		

Gender equity policy area	What outcome or goal do we seek?	How will we get this outcome? Who is responsible?	Success measure	By when?	Progress notes
Gender equity policy area	What outcome or goal do we seek?	How will we get this outcome? Who is responsible?	Success measure	By when?	Progress notes
Governance and management	<i>Example: New staff understand the service's commitment to improving gender equity in the early years and how they can contribute to this</i>	<i>Update induction checklist to include gender equity policy discussion in first month of employment and participation in gender equity professional learning activity within 3 months</i>	<i>All staff are able to articulate how they are putting the gender equity policy into practice and why this is important.</i>		
Continuous improvement	<i>Example: Identify a gender equity champion or lead person</i>	<i>Committee of management to consult with staff and decide on best person/ role at service to undertake this work</i>	<i>Gender equity lead person appointed and mechanism for them to report progress documented</i>		

ATTACHMENT 2: GENDER EQUITY INFORMATION AND RESOURCES

To keep up to date with what is happening locally in the area of gender equity and the prevention of violence against women visit the Nillumbik Shire Council website.

nillumbik.vic.gov.au/Gender-equity

Many of the events and resources here will be useful to share with families and an opportunity for staff professional learning.

For more information, please contact familyservices@nillumbik.vic.gov.au

Creating Gender Equity in the Early Years: A resource for Local Government

darebin.vic.gov.au/geey

Developed by City of Darebin this comprehensive resource contains tools and resources for local government and the early years sector. They include gender audit tools and links to supporting videos with gender equity experts and early years professionals.

No limitations – Breaking down stereotypes in the early years

whe.org.au/what-we-do/gender-equity-for-health-outcomes/no-limitations-gender-stereotypes-early-years/

Developed by Women's Health East, the No Limitations Guide is about promoting gender equality in early childhood settings, and provides practical tools, tips and resources for early educators for both an organisational focus and working with families.

Our Watch #Because Why

becausewhy.org.au

A website that explores how gender stereotypes can limit children's and family's lives. Includes a very practical question and answers section that will help educators and families tackle some common tricky situations around gender stereotyping in the early years.

Books and Video clips

Here are just some of the many books and video clips available that can be used as a tool for self-reflection and professional conversations with the staff

Fair's Fair: How to Tackle Bias in Education and Care Services by Red Ruby Scarlet & Lisa Bryant

This is a practical guide to putting anti-bias and inclusive practices into everyday curriculum.

The ugly truth about children's books

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Redraw the balance

youtube.com/watch?v=qv8VZVP5csA

Bear Finds a Voice

abc.net.au/news/2018-08-22/bear-finds-a-voice-kids-book-analysis/10002538

Girls toys vs boy toys experiment BBC

youtube.com/watch?v=nWu44AgFOil

BBC series- No more boys and girls- Can our classrooms be gender free?

youtube.com/watch?v=wN5R2LWhTrY&t=1044s

ATTACHMENT 3: GENDER EQUITY STAFF INDUCTION TEMPLATE

Welcome to <insert service name>

This service has a commitment to advancing gender equity and supporting the prevention of violence against women. A copy of our <insert name of gender equity policy> is attached.

The Gender Equity advocate/ lead at our service is <insert name and role >.

Their role is to support the implementation of our policy and resource the team in this area.

Staff at this service participate in at least one gender equity professional learning opportunity per year – this may include readings, action research projects, participating in community networks or online or face to face training. <Insert name of gender equity advocate/lead> will let you know what is planned in this area or will help you find something individually.

All staff have access to family and domestic violence leave. At this service the provisions are contained in:

< Insert either >

The Fair Work Commission's National Employment Standards which provides for 5 unpaid family and domestic violence leave days per year.

fairwork.gov.au/leave/family-and-domestic-violence-leave

or

< Relevant family violence provisions from the services Award or Enterprise Bargain Agreement>

Family Violence Support

The Orange Door orangedoor.vic.gov.au 1800 319 355

A free service for adults, children and young people who are experiencing or have experienced family violence:

1800 RESPECT www.1800respect.org.au 1800 737 732

24 hour support for people impacted by sexual assault, domestic or family violence and abuse.