



1.06 Social Justice, Inclusion and Diversity

Written By

Narelle Myers

Introduction

Bermagui Preschool provides programs and services based on children's rights and social justice principles. All children, families, staff and educators 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 Bermagui Preschool and the community. Additionally, educators work towards creating equity by challenging biases and shifting the imbalance of power through curriculum and teaching frameworks.

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

A basic tenet of inclusive practice states that bias is learned. From their earliest days of life, children receive messages about their own identity and the identities of others. These messages are often subtle and learned unconsciously—from family, friends, school and the media—but they can have a lasting impact on people's self-image and worldview. When diversity (differences based on race, religion, gender identity, sexual orientation, language, culture, learning style, socioeconomic class, body type and ability) is not valued or respected, harmful behaviours like name-calling, bullying and social exclusion can emerge. The aim of this policy is for all children, families, staff and members of the broader community to be treated equally regardless of their personal/ family composition, ideals, customs and beliefs.

Inclusive Practice Policy

The philosophy of Bermagui Preschool, The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, The Early Childhood Australia Code of Ethics, and Federal and NSW Equal Opportunity legislation, principles of social justice and equity provide a framework for this policy. Bermagui Preschool supports the inclusion of all children eligible to attend Preschool to access, fully participate and learn in our Preschool program. Diversity is valued at Bermagui Preschool and strengthens our Preschool community. Children learn to accept, include and appreciate differences where access and participation are the norm. Inclusive environments foster natural support networks. There is an emphasis on collaborative and cooperative learning and ways of connecting children in natural ongoing and supportive relationships. Children flourish and grow in loving families. We believe it is in the best interest of children to know that their parent relationships are equal in the eyes of the community, including children and families from traditional, single, foster, blended, LGBTIQ and other structures

Aims

Bermagui Preschool 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 preschool but in promoting respect for all people within the wider community.

The preschool 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 discrimination is a barrier to education and we are committed to ensuring children develop the skills to challenge bias and discrimination. We work to ensure that our preschool 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.

Bermagui Preschool 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 preschool.

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

Strategies

The Code of Ethics

The Code of Ethics, developed by Early Childhood Australia, underpins the core values, beliefs and practices with the preschool. 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 predominantly displayed on the family noticeboard and in the staff room.

At pedagogy meetings, educators discuss their own attitudes, values and beliefs and how power, position and decision-making within the preschool 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.

Interactions and Programs

Children

When working with children, educators:

- respect the rights and dignity of each child
- ensure all children have a right to access all learning experiences, to equally participate in the program and to succeed as a learner
- view all children as competent with many strengths and abilities and as initiators and active social constructors of their own learning
- support children to interact with the environment and equipment in ways that children can identify
- help children build connections with others and with their community
- provide experiences that are complementary to children's home and community experiences
- build children's positive sense of self through identifying and responding to each child's strengths, learning style/s and interests
- respect and acknowledge all children within the preschool and help make them visible to other children and adults
- develop respectful and trusting relationships with children, so they can feel empowered and more open and respectful of others
- provide many opportunities for children of all ages to work and play together throughout the day
- provides a supportive and positive environment in which staff work with families and other professionals to meet the needs of all children
- provide access to specialised equipment and resources and access to appropriate support services, as required
- use role play and scenarios to highlight unfair behaviours and work with children's ideas of how problems can be solved
- support children to identify and take action against unfairness or other biased behaviours
- expand children's understandings by asking them to express their ideas then offer another view or perspective
- assess and document children's learning and development using observations, photographs, individual learning plans and learning folders that recognise and celebrate their achievements
- provide all children with the opportunity to develop greater independence
- support life skills as children learn to get along with others, show respect and caring for others and be comfortable with differences between people and see beyond differences to similarities
- foster the development of resilience where children are encouraged to proactively respond to set-backs
- support inclusion and promote equity of all children and families including those from traditional, single, foster, blended, LGBTIQ and other structures

All children are also supported by:

- Assessment and intervention by available Speech Pathology and/or Psychology services.
- The Department of Education and Children's Services (DECS) Preschool Support Program
- A Preschool Support Educator works collaboratively with the staff and family to support the child's teaching, learning and participation in the kindergarten program.

- Bilingual support for children with English as a second language who require support to fully access our kindergarten program.
- Inclusion and promotion of equity for all children and families including those from traditional, single, foster, blended, LGBTIQ and other structures.

Families

When working with families, educators:

- show sensitivity to and respect for the range of family structures including same sex parents, social values and child rearing practices evident within preschool families and in the wider community
- acknowledge that families best know their child and use this information in the care of their child
- incorporate information about families' background, especially the families' social practices in meaningful ways into the program
- ensure families feel welcome by providing programs that are in accord with theirs and their child's home and community experiences
- share and exchange information with family members relevant to the child including extended family members and kinship family members
- respect the families' home language and communication styles and use a range of verbal and written methods of communicating with them
- 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
- work through a family-centred practice approach in partnership with families
- 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
- create a professional relationship with families so that their understandings of their child and educators understandings of the child/ren are shared in order to ensure respectful relationships and better outcomes for the child.

Other factors

- Management supports the employment of educators from a range of social and cultural backgrounds, including bilingual and bicultural staff and educators.
- Professional development is provided for educators 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 educator knowledge on social justice issues as well as combating discrimination that may exist amongst staff.
- Educators establish and maintain links with organisations that promote social justice and inclusion and/or provide specialised support or resources.
- Educators ensure compliance with relevant state and commonwealth legislation to provide an inclusive and discrimination free environment

Inclusion and Diversity

General

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

- displaying positive behaviours and by making the preschool environment welcoming to all children and families so that they feel a sense of belonging and trust
- 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 preschool
- building on existing program strengths and accessing specialised advice and appropriate training and additional resources where required
- planning for successful transition between areas of the preschool to support the child's wellbeing and continuity in the learning environment
- ensuring that inclusive behaviours and practices occur in social contexts throughout each moment of the day
- supporting children to work together to communicate respectfully, to generate ideas and solve problems
- supporting children in constructing their knowledge of diversity by being positive role models
- being sensitive to and genuinely encouraging families to share their values, beliefs and attitudes in contributing to policies and preschool practices
- discussing identity or difference as a positive aspect of who we are, rather than one type of identity or difference being superior to another
- providing equipment and resources that reflect positive images of difference, disability and inclusion
- developing meaningful and sustainable relationships through implementing current theories of belonging and participation.

Children with a disability, delay or impairment or gifted children

Educators 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, educators ensure that they:

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

At Bermagui Preschool we embrace a collaborative approach in which we;

- Support the learning and wellbeing of children and families, embracing individual and cultural diversity
- Recognise that all children have the right to have their culture acknowledged and respected
- Actively support the inclusion of all children including those with additional needs.
- Provide an environment which is free from bias and prejudice in which children learn the principles of fairness and respect.
- Build networks and collaborate with the community to promote an understanding and appreciation of diversity.
- Actively encourage families to share their individual skills, life experiences and culture.
- Access and provide referral to inclusion support services to support children's well-being and full inclusion into our preschool program.
- Provide an educational program which aims to reflect principles of inclusion, equity and diversity in action.
- Support inclusion and promote equity of all children and families including those from traditional, single, foster, blended, LGBTIQ and other structures.

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.

Educators demonstrate respect for and valuing diversity by:

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

Language programs within the preschool

Management, staff and families work together to consider the types of language programs that can be implemented within the preschool. 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 is enhanced social, linguistic and intellectual capabilities
- Children's identity and self-esteem is strengthened
- Family connections are supported
- There is increased respect for and understanding of second language learning
- All children can learn a second language.

Educators can support bilingual or home language support programs by:

- using the child's home language within all aspects of the program and in both spoken and written forms

- working with families to learn and use key words and statements in the child's home language
- staff who share the child's home language, using it throughout the day and assisting children to make connections with English
- a focus language is chosen to be spoken in the preschool that reflects the children and staff who speak that language
- children are spoken to in both languages in part or throughout the day, including learning experiences
- staff who speak another language use this language with all children in contexts agreed to with families

Aboriginal Perspectives

Bermagui Preschool 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, educators:

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

Gender Inclusive Practices

Educators 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, educators:

- model behaviours and values of gender equity
- ensure resources, materials, equipment and experience do not reflect gender stereotypes or sexist images or behaviours, particularly during celebrations e.g. Mother's Day, Father's Day, Christmas etc.
- highlight gender stereotypes within the community and media and discuss the implication for fairness and equity
- expand children's play options and experiences in a wide range of learning experiences
- provide opportunities for girls and boys to show cleverness, strength and nurturance
- observe children's choices of play and materials and promote non-stereotypical play

- use non-sexist language and praise children's attempts and achievements rather than their appearance

LGBTIQ+

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 marginalises 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)

Educators respect family diversity and work together to:

- ensure all families, including gay and lesbian families, have a positive and visible presence within the preschool and take the lead from families by using open communication and questions
- help children to discuss ideas, questions and enquiries about family diversity and address stereotypical attitudes towards family types and structures
- respect all family types and challenge discriminatory and homophobic attitudes
- actively affirm the identity of gay and lesbian families throughout the program
- support children's emerging gender and sexual identity that is non-discriminatory and non-stereotypic
- invite and use preferred pronouns, gender neutral language and LGBTIQ+ terms as appropriate

Curriculum Approaches

Educators 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, educators:

- encourage the different perspectives of children and families and demonstrate that these perspectives are encouraged and valued
- 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 preschool
- genuinely incorporate these perspectives in the preschool philosophy, broad goals and policies
- identify and act on to combat stereotypes and any discriminatory behaviours including racism, sexism, ageism, homophobia and classism
- 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
- actively intervene to assist children to resolve issues and challenge bias, prejudice or stereotypes
- respond to children's play to help them recognise unfair behaviours
- role-model behaviour and language that describe emotions and feelings, equity and fairness
- maintain current knowledge about contemporary research and practice theory by participating in training and connecting with specialist services
- develop inclusive forms and privacy protocols.

The Nominated Supervisor will;

- Wherever possible recruit educators/staff from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds to reflect individual cultural diversity of the community.
- Ensure all educators/staff are fully oriented to Early Childhood Australia's Code of Ethics.

- Actively seek information from children, families and the community, about their cultural traditions, customs and beliefs, and use this information to enrich the curriculum at Bermagui Preschool.
- Work in partnership with families to provide an educational program that meets the child's needs and is consistent with the family's culture, beliefs and child care practices. Specific requests will be honoured where practical to demonstrate respect and ensure continuity of care.
- Obtain and use resources that educate and reflect the diversity of children, families and the community and increase awareness and appreciation of Australia's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and our multicultural heritage.
- Be sensitive and attentive to all children, respect their backgrounds, unique qualities and abilities, ensure that the preschool environment reflects the lives of the children and families and the individual and cultural diversity of the broader community, and ensure children's individual needs are accommodated at the preschool.
- Advocate for appropriate support services for children with additional needs.
- Provide and access support for children with additional needs in collaboration with the child's family
- Adapting the environment, routines and/or educator/staffing arrangements in order to facilitate inclusion.
- Regularly reflect and review policy and practice and plan for continuous improvement.

Teachers and Educators will;

- Plan and implement teaching strategies and learning experiences that support a sense of belonging, connectedness with the world, dispel prejudices and stereotyping and promote harmonious relationships
- Promote respectful, empathetic and supportive interactions amongst all the children and non-judgmental relationships amongst families
- Discuss and resolve incidents of bias or prejudice in children's play or relationships with each other, to help children to understand and find strategies to counteract these behaviours
- Consult with parents/guardians in the development of holistic programs that are responsive to children's lives, interests and learning styles and reflect children's family, culture and community
- Create opportunities for children to learn about and celebrate the diversity that exists in the preschool and in the broader community.
- Encourage all families, children and other educators/staff to share their experiences, skills, cultures and beliefs
- Actively seek knowledge about our local community, invite community members to Bermagui Preschool to share their life stories, creativity, experiences, skills and culture
- Access and use a range of non-tokenistic multi-cultural and multilingual and multi-ability resources that reflect honour and celebrate the diversity of children and families in Bermagui Preschool and the broader community
- Attend ongoing professional development which embraces reflective practice and increases cultural competence and challenges bias and prejudice
- Engage in the design and continual improvement of learning environments which are relevant, accessible, and inclusive
- Talk to parents/guardians about any additional needs and/or concerns and support links to other support services within the community such as Inclusion Support Agencies; Community Health Services

- Work with families, inclusion support agencies and other specialists to develop individual support plans for children with additional needs.
- Support inclusion and promote equity of all children and families including those from traditional, single, foster, blended, LGBTIQ and other structures.

The education and care setting will:

- Ensure the safe and documented arrival and departure of children at the education and care setting
- Support children in settling into the service each day and experience quality education and care through continuity of educators, positive interactions within the community of the service

Relevant Acronyms and Legislation

LGBTIQ+: Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex and Queer/ Questioning and other

Children (Education and Care Services National Law Application) Act 2010. Section 3
Education and Care Services National Regulations: 73, 74, 75, 76, 155, 168(2)(j)

Federal and NSW Equal Opportunity Legislation

United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child

National Quality Standard for Early Childhood Education and Care and School Age Care - Element 1.1.1; Element 1.1.2; Element 1.2.3; Element 4.2; Element 5.1; Element 5.2 Element 6.1; Element 6.2; Element 6.2.3

Early Years Learning Framework for Australia - Principles: High Expectations and Equity; Respect for Diversity - Practice: Holistic approaches; Responsiveness to children; Cultural competence; Learning environments - Outcomes: 1, 2, 3 If a child has not been collected by 6.15pm the Police and Early Childhood Directorate will be informed.

Children's Services Regulation 2004 (Part 6 Div1 Clauses 64-66)

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

Resources & References

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

**Relevant
Documentation**

1.07 Students, Volunteers, Visitors and Work Experience Policy
2.06 Confidentiality Policy
2.10 Staff Code of Conduct Policy
3.01 Enrolment and Orientation Procedure
5.11 Interactions with Children Policy
1.09 Complaints and Feedback Policy

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