

# Gender Equity in Early Years Services

## Sample Policy



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## Acknowledgement of Country

Nillumbik Shire Council respectfully acknowledges the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people as the Traditional Owners of the Country on which Nillumbik is located, and we value the significance of the Wurundjeri people's history as essential to the unique character of the shire. We pay tribute to all First Nations People living in Nillumbik, give respect to Elders past, present and future, and extend that respect to all First Nations People.

We respect the enduring strength of the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung and acknowledge the ongoing impacts of past trauma and injustices from European invasion, massacres and genocide committed against First Nations People. We acknowledge that sovereignty was never ceded.

Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people hold a deep and ongoing connection to this place. We value the distinctive place of our First Nations People in both Nillumbik and Australia's identity; from their cultural heritage and care of the land and waterways, to their ongoing contributions in many fields including academia, agriculture, art, economics, law, sport and politics.

## Background

Nillumbik Shire Council would like to acknowledge the two key resources which informed this sample policy:

City of Darebin's Creating gender equity in the early years: A resource for local government

Women's Health East No limitations: Breaking down gender stereotypes in the early years. A resource guide for early years educators.

This policy has been developed by the Early Years team at Nillumbik Shire Council with input from a working group of local services. Thank you to the following services for their participation in this project:

- Diamond Hills Preschool
- Yarrambat Plenty Preschool
- Kangaroo Ground Preschool
- Eltham Woods Child Care Cooperative
- Eltham Child Care Cooperative
- Eltham and Panton Hill Playhouse
- Ferguson Park Preschool
- TRY Australia.

## How to use this document

This sample gender equity policy can be adopted, adapted or used by early years services to inspire their own service specific policies and work in promoting gender equity. For early years services operating out of Nillumbik Shire Council facilities, encouraging gender equity forms part of their Service Level Agreement with Council as stated:

### Standard 2 Governance

2.3. Policies and processes identified and developed by Council need to be implemented into service management and operation. Policies may include but are not limited to:

- Facility Management
- Gender diversity and equity
- Procurement

### Standard 5 Access and Inclusion

5.1. Demonstrate the encouragement of gender equity through policy and processes.



## Sample Policy

<Insert service name> recognises the important role that early years services play in promoting gender equity and preventing violence against women and children. As part of our Service Level Agreement with Nillumbik Shire Council (NSC), this service is committed to partnering with NSC by adopting a gender equity policy.

### Policy Statement

#### Values

We assert that:

- Gender equality is a human right
- Gender equality prevents violence against women and children
- Gender equality delivers social and health benefits to the whole community
- Gender equality provides economic benefit

We are committed to addressing all causes of gender inequity. We are aware of how gender intersects with the wider experiences of discrimination and disadvantage. To achieve gender equality, we will be fair and equitable by providing access, opportunity and resources to enable equal outcomes for all people.

#### Principles

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

Challenge gender stereotypes and roles - we will not tolerate attitudes and/or behaviours that support gender inequality.

Promote women's independence and decision making - we will facilitate improved participation, leadership and access for women and girls.

Strengthen positive, equal and respectful relationships - challenge condoning of violence against women.

We will model and promote gender equality best practice in the workplace - we will partner with agencies, organisations and the community to collectively work towards preventing violence against women and children.

#### Scope

This policy applies to staff, students, volunteers, management and families.

## 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.

## Sources

This sample policy draws on the work done by Darebin City Council and Women's Health East in this area:

Darebin City Council, *Creating Gender Equity in the Early Years: A resource for local government* [darebin.vic.gov.au/geey](http://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](http://whe.org.au/what-we-do/gender-equity-for-health-outcomes/no-limitations-gender-stereotypes-early-years), accessed November 2020

### Other sources:

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](http://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](http://fairwork.gov.au/leave/family-and-domestic-violence-leave), accessed November 2020

## Background legislation and standards

*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)*

*United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989)*



# 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
<b>Inclusive language</b>	<p>Example: Ensure our communications to families and community uses gender inclusive language and reflects diversity of family types</p>	<p>Review family handbook and website using gender lens. Coordinator to lead</p>	<p>Revised family handbook reflects centre's gender equity in early years policy</p>		
<b>Educational programs</b>	<p>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</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ed leader to adapt gender audit tools available this service.</li> <li>• Teachers / room leaders to use in each room.</li> <li>• Professional conversations at staff meetings to discuss findings</li> </ul>	<p>Gender audit undertaken in each room, results and reflections on process and any proposed changes documented</p>		
<b>Families and community</b>	<p>Example: For all families and staff to know where to go to access family violence information and support</p>	<p>Manager to add contact info into family and staff handbook and source pamphlets to add to community info display</p>	<p>Every family and staff member to receive current referral information on commencement at service and contact information easily accessible across the year</p>		

# 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
Governance and management	<p>Example: New staff understand the service's commitment to improving gender equity in the early years and how they can contribute to this</p>	<p>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</p>	<p>All staff are able to articulate how they are outing the gender equity policy into practice and why this is important</p>		
Continuous improvement	<p>Example: Identify a gender equity champion or lead person</p>	<p>Committee of management to consult with staff and decide on best person/role at service to undertake this work</p>	<p>Gender equity lead person appointed and mechanism for them to report progress documented</p>		

# Attachment 2

## Gender Equity information and resources

### Nillumbik Shire Council

[nillumbik.vic.gov.au/gender-equity](http://nillumbik.vic.gov.au/gender-equity)

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.

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](mailto:familyservices@nillumbik.vic.gov.au)

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

[darebin.vic.gov.au/geey](http://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.

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### No limitations – Breaking down stereotypes in the early years

[whe.org.au/what-we-do/gender-equityfor-health-outcomes/no-limitationsgender-stereotypes-early-years/](http://whe.org.au/what-we-do/gender-equityfor-health-outcomes/no-limitationsgender-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.

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### Our Watch #Because Why

[becausewhy.org.au](http://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***  
[youtube.com/watch?v=Z1Jbd4-fPOE](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z1Jbd4-fPOE)

***Redraw the balance***  
[youtube.com/watch?v=qv8VZVP5csA](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qv8VZVP5csA)

***Bear Finds a Voice***  
[abc.net.au/news/2018-08-22/bear-finds-a-voice-kids-book-analysis/10002538](http://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=nWu44AqF0il](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nWu44AqF0il)

***BBC series- No more boys and girls - Can our classrooms be gender free?***  
[youtube.com/watch?v=wN5R2LWhTrY&t=1044S](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wN5R2LWhTrY&t=1044S)





# Attachment 3

## Sample 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 service name>.

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](http://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](http://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](http://www.1800respect.org.au)

1800 737 732

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

## **Nilumbik Shire Council**

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