

Equity and Inclusion Statement

Summary

The Burdekin Association is committed to creating an inclusive, welcoming and culturally safe environment for all its clients.

The Burdekin Association believes that all persons are entitled to fair and equal treatment, regardless of their culture, religion, spirituality, gender, sexuality, disability, socio-economic background or personal experiences, and that diversity of experience enriches our organisational environment. All persons eligible for services will be able to participate meaningfully in The Burdekin Association's programs.

The Burdekin Association recognises that all persons, families and groups are unique, and services may adapt to accommodate and support these differences. The Burdekin Association is committed to providing safe and appropriate services and environments so that all people and groups feel supported when accessing and receiving its services.

The Burdekin Association commits to:

- ensuring all children, young people and their families are treated equitably and with respect, regardless of their background, ethnicity, culture, language, beliefs, sexuality, gender, age, socioeconomic status, ability, additional needs, family structure or lifestyle
- creating a sense of belonging and connection to culture and identity for all children and young people, where diverse identities, experiences, skills and interests are respected, valued and given opportunity to be expressed
- complying with all relevant anti-discrimination legislation
- ensuring children and young people are free from any forms of discrimination or harassment and are aware of the organisation's procedures and forums in which to be supportively heard.
- ensuring families feel supported, can access services without discrimination, and receive appropriate services for their needs.

Legislation

- *Racial Discrimination Act 1975* (Cth)
- *Sex Discrimination Act 1984* (Cth)
- *Australian Human Rights Commission Act 1986* (Cth)
- *Disability Discrimination Act 1992* (Cth)
- *Age Discrimination Act 2004* (Cth)
- *Anti-Discrimination Act 1977* (NSW)
- *Disability Inclusion Act 2014* (NSW)

Definitions

Additional needs: a broad term which includes families and children experiencing disability, a medical condition, a developmental concern, an emotional need, family displacement, domestic violence and family separation.

Culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD): refers to individuals and groups who are from diverse racial, religious, linguistic and/or ethnic backgrounds.

Disability: in relation to a person, includes a long-term physical, psychiatric, intellectual or sensory impairment that, in interaction with various barriers, may hinder the person's full and effective participation in the community on an equal basis with others.

LGBTQIAA+: a broad term to inclusively refer to all people who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex, asexual and ally; as well as to represent other members of the communities who use different terms to describe their diverse sexuality and/or gender.

Unconscious bias: implicit assumptions and beliefs about particular groups of people that affect the way individuals in that group are perceived and judged, often in a negative way. It is difficult to change, because people are not often aware of bias, which is why unconscious bias training is valuable to help individuals learn how to decrease the impact of unconscious bias on their decision-making.

Commitments

Care of children and young people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds

Australia is a culturally diverse community made up of many nationalities, cultural backgrounds, languages and religious groups. The Burdekin Association is committed to promoting the cultural safety of children and young people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds by:

- providing training and development to staff and volunteers on cultural sensitivity and competency
- being respectful, inclusive and welcoming of families from a range of backgrounds
- asking children and families about their culture and cultural support needs
- identifying occasions which are important to different cultures and dietary requirements
- ensuring the physical environment is welcoming and reflects a positive and welcoming approach to diverse cultures, through decoration, systems, resources and communication.
- employing staff who are representative of the diversity of the local community
- Engage consultants who are representative of the diversity of the local population for guidance and support organisation processes and engagement with client
- asking families about their preferred format for the provision of information including translation or interpreting into community languages
- ensuring the complaints management process is understood and provided in culturally sensitive ways

See Cultural Competency Policy and Procedure for further detail on how The Burdekin Association implements and upholds the rights of children and young people from CALD backgrounds.

Care of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people

It is the right of all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people to be immersed in, and maintain links with, their culture. The right to culture includes the right to kin, community, cultural practices and identity. For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, cultural safety and security requires the creation of:

- environments of cultural resilience within Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities
- cultural competency by those who engage with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities

The Burdekin Association is committed to promoting the cultural safety of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people by:

- consulting and forming relationships with local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community groups and individuals, to create opportunity for Aboriginal voice in planning, policies and activities
- acknowledging the Traditional custodian groups in our area
- recognising the impact of the past, through acknowledgement of the harm caused by past Government policies and practices, and acknowledging that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are the First Peoples who have had an ongoing connection to this country for more than 40,000 years
- observing key events for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander individuals and groups.
- respecting and embracing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture through the physical environment, which includes displaying culturally appropriate symbols, images and objects, selected in consultation with families of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people involved in our organisation.

See Cultural Competency Policy and Procedure for further detail on how The Burdekin Association implements and upholds the rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people.

Care of children and young people with disability

Children and young people with disability will have particular needs for their care, development and protection to ensure they are safe and live a fulfilling. Children and young people with disability may be more vulnerable to social isolation, may have a lower capacity to raise concerns, communication difficulties, and signs of their abuse could potentially be misattributed to their disability.

The Burdekin Association is committed to enshrining the rights and upholding the safety and wellbeing of children and young people with disability by¹:

¹ These objectives have been developed with reference to the *Disability Inclusion Act 2014 (NSW)* and *Anti-Discrimination Act 1977 (NSW)* and informed by the work we do.

- Ensuring children and young people with disability have the same human rights as other children and young people,
- promoting the independence and social and economic inclusion of people with disability to the full extent of their capacity to do so via advocacy and case management,
- ensuring children and young people with disability are supported to make decisions that affect their life,
- anticipating unsafe situations in our risk assessment processes,
- implementing sound recruitment processes for staff and volunteers,
- using safeguards in relation to the delivery of supports and services for children and young people with disability (such as behaviour support plans, provision of educative material to children and young people with disability, their carers and staff, referral to external supports or interventions where appropriate, and procedural guidance on restrictive practices)
- ensuring relevant staff and volunteer training outlines the boundaries about staff and volunteer interaction with children and young people with a disability, including personal care assistance,
- empowering children and young people with a disability by assisting them to build their self-esteem and confidence,
- sharing educative resources with children and young people about their bodies, safety, sex and relationships,
- making reasonable adjustments to the physical environment, where necessary,
- being inclusive and collaborative with families,
- ensuring children and young people with disability have the same access to make a complaint as other children and young people of the service; making sure children and young people with a disability know whom to approach if they feel unsafe or have a concern
- implementing organisational procedures which ensure vigilance in identifying indicators or warning signs, for children and young people with communication difficulties,
- referring children and young people to safe and appropriate external support services, where need is identified,
- Enabling children and young people with disability to exercise choice and control in the pursuit of their goals and the planning and delivery of their supports and services,

Care of LGBTQIAA+ children and young people

LGBTQIAA+ children and young people can face issues which stem from social and cultural beliefs and assumptions about gender and sexuality, including systemic discrimination at an individual, social and political level. These issues may include social exclusion, violence, abuse and discrimination, a lack of family support, and barriers to accessing support services.

The Burdekin Association is committed to combatting these issues, by promoting the safety, inclusion and support for LGBTQIAA+ children and young people in the following ways:

- Ensuring LGBTQIAA+ children and young people have the same human rights and access to services as other children and young people
- educating children and young people, and staff and volunteers within the organisation about diversity
- community awareness strategies which address discrimination and harassment towards LGBTQIAA+ children and young people and which promote respect

- respecting privacy and confidentiality in relation to all children and young people
- giving proper consideration to the impact of any requirement to participate in an activity according to gender identity (e.g. sports activities, camps)
- referring LGBTQIAA+ children and young people to safe and appropriate external support services, where need is identified.

Equity and inclusion for all

The organisation will apply the principles of equity and inclusion to all child and young person related work and treat all children and young people fairly and equitably with regard to individual circumstances or attributes including:

- race
- ethno-religious background
- nationality, ethnic or national origin
- gender
- disability (physical, intellectual, psychiatric)
- political or religious conviction
- age
- sexual preference
- transgender status
- experience of domestic or family violence

These principles will be applied to situations including, but not limited to, the following:

- admission and selection
- education, training or caretaking
- assessment and discipline
- access to opportunities
- access to services, programs and workshops

Accountability

Staff training and awareness

All non-executive staff will participate in training on applying the principles of this Statement to relevant organisational processes. Training will address matters including, but not limited to; anti-discrimination, cultural sensitivity, identifying signs of harm, and unconscious bias.

Staff must ensure that the services offered by the organisation are free of any form of direct or indirect discrimination related to any of the individual circumstances or attributes listed above. This includes the following:

- Harassment: any form of behaviour that is not wanted, not asked for, and that humiliates someone, offends them or intimidates them.
- Vilification: any public act that is likely to incite hatred, serious contempt or severe ridicule for a person or a group of people.
- Victimisation: treating someone unfairly because they have made a complaint about discrimination, or helped someone else make one.

Staff and volunteers who believe that a client has been subject to any form of discrimination outlined above or who are aware of discriminatory behaviour should follow The Burdekin Association grievances procedure, located in the *Human Resources Procedures Manual*, or support a client to submit a complaint.

Staff and volunteers may also seek assistance from an external body such as Anti-Discrimination NSW (www.antidiscrimination.justice.nsw.gov.au)

Responsibility

Program Managers are responsible for reviewing research and relevant practice experience to identify, reduce and, where possible, eliminate cultural and physical barriers the demographic may face accessing The Burdekin Association's services.

Monitoring and Review

This Statement should be reviewed at least every three years or when significant changes to legislation, internal policy or procedures occurs affecting service delivery and access.

Related Documents

Cultural Competency Policy and Procedure
Charter of Rights and Responsibilities
Code of Conduct
Human Resources Procedures Manual
Complaints, Appeals and Conflict Resolution Procedure

The Burdekin Association thanks Breaking New Ground (BNG) for resources used to develop this statement.