

POLICY AIM

- To ensure all Sweetpeas children, families, educators, staff and visitors feel welcome and included within our service wherever possible.
- To develop inclusive practices that encourage an understanding that all who use our service have the right to be treated equally and without bias.
- To provide a program that includes all children through critical reflection on our experiences, actions and resources.
- To ensure the program fosters independence and maximises different ability levels.

RATIONALE

Sweetpeas Kindergarten has high expectations that all educators should strive to have secure, respectful and reciprocal relationships with the children in our care. Educators are expected to develop partnerships with families and must ensure that all who use the service are treated equally regardless of age, gender, sexuality, religion, culture, ability, economic status or any other factor. Anti-bias practices are not an addition to our curriculum, they are the foundation for it.

“Unless children are in an education and care service as free of bias as possible, some will not feel safe enough to learn. Bias affects children’s education and educators’ capacity to do their jobs” (Scarlet & Bryant, 2017).

SCOPE - WHO IS AFFECTED BY THIS POLICY?

- Children
- Families
- Community
- Educators/Staff
- Students
- Visitors

NATIONAL QUALITY STANDARD

QUALITY AREA 1 - EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM AND PRACTICE

- Element 1.1.1 (Approved learning framework) - *Curriculum decision making contributes to each child’s learning and development outcomes in relation to their identity, connection with community, wellbeing, confidence as learners and effectiveness as communicators.*
- Element 1.1.2 (Child-centred) - *Each child’s current knowledge, strengths, ideas, culture, abilities and interests are the foundation of the program.*

QUALITY AREA 3 - PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

- Element 3.1.1 (Fit for purpose) - *Outdoor and indoor spaces, buildings, fixtures and fittings are suitable for their purpose, including supporting the access of every child.*

QUALITY AREA 4 - STAFFING ARRANGEMENTS

- Element 4.2.2 (Professional standards) - *Professional standards guide practice, interactions and relationships.*

QUALITY AREA 5 - RELATIONSHIPS WITH CHILDREN

- Standard 5.1 (Relationships between educators and children) - *Respectful and equitable relationships are maintained with each child.*
- Standard 5.2 (Relationships between children) - *Each child is supported to build and maintain sensitive and responsive relationships.*

AREA 6 (COLLABORATIVE PARTNERSHIPS WITH FAMILIES AND COMMUNITIES)

- Element 6.1.2 (Parents views are respected) - *The expertise, culture, values and beliefs of families are respected and families share in decision-making about their child's learning and wellbeing.*

AREA 7 (GOVERNANCE AND LEADERSHIP)

- Standard 7.1 (Governance) - *Governance supports the operation of a quality service.*

RELATED POLICIES & LEGISLATION

RELATED SWEETPEAS POLICIES:

- Additional Needs Policy
- Development and Education Policy
- Ethical Code of Conduct Policy
- Interactions and Relationships with Children Policy

RELATED EDUCATION AND CARE SERVICES NATIONAL LAW AND REGULATIONS:

- Regulation 155 - Interactions with children
- Regulation 156 - Relationships in groups
- Regulation 157 - Access for parents
- Regulation 170 - Policies and procedures are to be followed

TERMINOLOGY

- **Anti-Bias** - an active approach to challenging prejudice, stereotyping and bias.
- **Anti-Bias Goals** - goals specifically designed to help guide those working to eliminate bias in early education and care services (as laid out in *Fair's Fair: How to Tackle Bias in Education and Care Services*)
- **Bias** - any attitude, belief or feeling that results in or helps to justify unfair treatment because of gender, culture, race, sexuality, family, age or ability.
- **Ethnicity** - state of belonging to a social group that has a common national or cultural tradition.
- **Feminism** - the advocacy of women's rights on the ground of equality of the sexes.
- **Homophobia** - a fear or hatred of people who are gay, lesbian or bisexual (by individuals or systems)
- **LGBT+** - an acronym used to represent those who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transsexual, asexual, intersex, pansexual, queer and other sexual and gender minorities.
- **Misogyny** - socially and culturally permitted or ingrained dislike or hatred of women.
- **Patriarchy** - the social system we live in that values masculinity over femininity.
- **Queer** - an umbrella term for sexual and gender minorities.
- **Stereotype** - a widely held but fixed and oversimplified image or idea of a particular type of person or thing.

(Scarlet & Bryant, 2017)

ANTI-BIAS GOALS

The following goals were written for children but are also applicable to educators:

1. Each child will demonstrate self-awareness, confidence, family pride, and positive social identities.
2. Each child will express comfort and joy with human diversity; accurate language for human differences; and deep, caring human connections.
3. Each child will increasingly recognise unfairness, have language to describe unfairness, and understand that unfairness hurts.
4. Each child will demonstrate empowerment and the skills to act, with others or alone, against prejudice and/or discriminatory actions.

(Scarlet & Bryant, 2017)

IMPLEMENTATION AND STRATEGIES

IN ORDER TO ACHIEVE THIS BROADLY, EDUCATORS WILL:

- Aim to develop in the children, the ability to recognise bias and the confidence to challenge or address bias towards themselves and others. This will also be supported by developing positive attitudes (appreciation) and respect for themselves and others regardless of similarities or differences.
- Encourage appreciation of differences by using resources to help children explore and understand these differences and similarities. This will include planned and spontaneous experiences. Resources may include materials, books, posters in the environment, toys and natural materials.
- Aim to embed different cultural perspectives in the service program, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives.
- Access resources and information to support delivery of anti-bias concepts in the program, as well as attend training as required.
- Review and reflect on practices and attitudes to ensure they match with philosophy, goals and aims.
- Work with families to help share these attitudes and values and seek their contribution into policies and practices in the centre.
- Respect the background of each individual in relation to gender, sexuality, ethnicity, family, culture or religion.

MANAGEMENT WILL:

- Ensure that any casual staff member is aware of these practices and reflects these values.
- Provide resources to assist in the development of children's awareness and to aid educators in embedding anti-bias perspectives in their programming.
- Provide training opportunities for educators and staff.
- Discipline staff who continue to display bias or discrimination without reflection as per the Sweetpeas *Ethical Code of Conduct Policy*.

PRACTICE

CELEBRATIONS

There is much debate that questions the relevance and value of celebrations in an early childhood context (Scarlet, 2016; Staines & Scarlet, 2018). In an Australian context, celebrations such as Australia Day, Christmas, Fathers' Day and Mothers' Day need careful consideration and deliberation (if you are unsure as to why, very simply: Australia Day is a colonial celebration that tends to marginalise First Australians; Christmas is a Christian celebration imported from the Middle East with a modern materialistic slant; and Mothers' and Fathers' Days have the potential to marginalise those with family structures differing from the 'nuclear family').

When planning celebrations in our service, Sweetpeas educators should consider the following questions:

- How do we decide which celebrations are relevant and meaningful?
- Which children and families may be marginalised by certain celebrations?
- Which children are excluded by the celebrations?
- Which celebrations are included and excluded and why? How do we decide?
- How well do you understand the meaning of the significant dates and celebrations planned for?
- How do we decide which celebrations are of greater importance or value for the children?

Educators should work alongside our families and children to ensure that all celebrations are as respectful, meaningful and inclusive as possible. Before planning a celebration educators should first research different perspectives of the significant day to ensure the inclusion and respect of all our Sweetpeas families.

FIRST AUSTRALIANS

Including Aboriginal perspectives in early childhood curriculum is essential for cultural preservation and respect of the world's oldest living Indigenous culture. For non-Aboriginal children it's about breaking the cycle of bias and for Aboriginal children it's about thriving (Staines & Scarlet, 2018).

The following points are taken from *The Aboriginal Early Childhood Practice Guide* in relation to anti-bias approaches in embedding Aboriginal perspectives in practice:

- Acknowledging that Aboriginal people are First Nations People in Australia.
- When educators plan using the anti-bias goals, they are acknowledging that bias exists, and it needs addressing and eliminating.
- Thinking about the anti-bias goals as a guide for planning opens up the space to talk about racial bias.
- Embedding Aboriginal perspectives requires us to tackle our racial biases whether conscious or unconscious.
- Tackling our racial biases enables us to recognise the true history of Australia.
- Tackling our racial biases enables us to build better inter-racial relationships.
- Tackling our racial biases empowers us to engage in reconciliation processes and practices.
- Tackling our racial biases moves us beyond inclusion toward anti-racist practices that can create change.
- Tackling our racial biases makes early childhood a better place.

RACIAL BIAS

Racial bias is having an unconscious preference for one race over other races or having a dislike of a particular race or races. It is usually (but not always) an unconscious bias. Few people want to be thought of as being racist.

Educators should reflect on ways racial bias may present in our service. For example:

- Environment and resources - e.g. skin colours that are seen or not seen; only displaying English; only using books are relevant to white Anglo culture.
- Planning - e.g. choices of celebrations (and how they're celebrated); exploring 'themes' that are only relevant to living in white Anglo culture; only exploring cultures from the outside (possibly with stereotypes)
- Educators views - e.g. racism (blatant or subtle) or prejudice, especially that which goes unchallenged
- Children's views - e.g. who they choose to play with or avoid
- Relationships with families - e.g. understandings of difference; having lower expectations of families from non-Anglo cultures
- Communication - e.g. assumed understandings

Racial bias hurts both children and adults and is unfair. We need to eliminate it from our service. It matters because we all matter.

Sweetpeas educators must strive to:

- Be culturally competent (be aware of your own view of the world; develop positive attitudes towards cultural differences; gain knowledge of different cultural practices and world views; develop skills for communication and interaction across cultures);
- Be interested in cultures other than your own;
- Foster relationships with children that:
 - Are unbiased and free of racism;
 - Are committed to developing culturally competent children;
 - Foster children's understanding of bias, racism and cultural diversity and unfairness;
 - Support children to stand up for themselves and others in the face of injustice.
- Foster relationships with families that:
 - Are welcoming, inclusive and culturally competent;
 - Reflect that you are open to learning about differing ways of raising children and everyday cultural practices.

GENDER BIAS

Gender Bias is either having a preference for or against a particular gender, or a bias for or against people doing those things that are seen as belonging to a particular gender. E.g. a boy wearing a dress or girls being called strong. Gender bias is also about sexism and misogyny, generally unconscious beliefs that boys and men are better than girls and women.

All of us were defined as a gender at birth, which can determine everything from clothes we wear, toys we played with, and subjects we excelled in at school. Gender bias is about believing that some roles or actions are better performed by a particular gender. It is about believing that some ways of thinking are feminine and other ways are masculine and these ways belong to either girls or boys. In education and care it is about having these beliefs and acting on them, consciously or not, and giving children messages about their gender and other's genders and the value of these.

Educators should reflect on ways gender bias may present in our service. For example:

- Environment and resources - e.g. how gender roles are portrayed; play spaces that are specifically designed for girls or boys; books that have limited storylines about what girls and boys can do;
- Planning - e.g. choices of materials and experiences, categorising girls and boys for routines and transitions;
- Educators' views - e.g. sexism (blatant or subtle); use of outdated/sexist phrases such as "ladies first" and "boys don't cry"; thinking feminism isn't relevant to work with children; being less affectionate with boys than girls; commenting on boys' strength and girls' looks; allowing children to exclude others based on gender;
- Children's views - e.g. who they choose to play with, what they choose to play with;
- Relationships with families - e.g. which parents is considered primary caregiver;
- Communication - e.g. use of sexist language;
- The gendered workforce - e.g. how people perceive our female dominated profession.

Gender bias hurts both genders, but especially hurts girls and women. It matters because of children are brought up to believe that each gender has set roles, they are limited in what they think they can do.

Sweetpeas educators must strive to:

- Be gender aware and free of sexism;
- Understand the negative effects of sexism on girls and women;
- Promote anti-violence and anti-bullying practices;
- Actively use language that enabled both boys and girls to feel equally strong and sensitive
- Express the understanding that resources are not gendered (i.e. pink is not a girls' colour, home corner is not a girls' play experience);
- Acknowledge gender as part of diversity and difference;
- Be inclusive of mothers and fathers in all families as equally responsible parents/guardians;
- Acknowledge that there are many ways to be a girl or a boy or another kind of gender (e.g. gender fluid/gender neutral/transgender)
- Help boys and girls to grow up less defined by sexism and gender bias.

DISABILITY BIAS

Disability bias is about discrimination towards people with disabilities or differing abilities and about not making reasonable adjustments to enable people with disabilities to participate in life. Disability bias exists in early childhood education when children and families with disabilities cannot participate to reach their full potential.

Educators should reflect on ways disability bias may present in our service. For example:

- Environment and resources - e.g. lack of physical access; lack of visibility of people with disability in resources such as books, toys and displays;
- Planning - e.g. choices of materials and experiences which include or exclude some children; does not take into account environmental triggers for some children such as noise, lights, textures; does not allow for children's differing communication abilities and aids;
- Educators' views - e.g. discrimination (blatant or subtle); thinking that inclusion and anti-discrimination are only relevant to your work when children with disabilities are enrolled in the service; are embarrassed when dealing with children or parents who have obvious disabilities; pity, look down on or give sympathy to children with disabilities; children's abilities are dismissed;
- Children's views - e.g. who they choose to play with, what they choose to play with;
- Relationships with families - e.g. are family members with disabilities able to be involved in the service?; families are pitied for having a child with a disability; families are made to feel like their concerns for their child with a disability are unnecessary or overprotective; people's complex feelings about having a child who has, or who develops, a disability are not acknowledged or allowed to be discussed;

- Communication - e.g. use of language that excludes or offends people with disabilities (such as using terms like “the disabled” rather than “people with disabilities”); families of a child with a disability are made to feel like they are a problem to the service and its educators.

Bias about ability is believing that some people are better than others because of their abilities or lack thereof, whether it be physical or intellectual disabilities or conditions that impact on people’s movements, senses or experiences. Disability bias hurts children who have obvious disabilities and those who don’t. It matters because if children are brought up to believe children with disabilities are not normal, this reproduces traditional disability stereotypes. It matters because it constrains what children with disabilities can do in our service.

Sweetpeas educators must strive to:

- Be unbiased and inclusive;
- Appreciate each other’s differing abilities and contributions to the service;
- Promote inclusive and anti-biased behaviour in children;
- Actively use inclusive language that enables children to describe and express their individual and diverse abilities;
- Enable open minded understanding that we all have differing abilities;
- Promote children communicating in different ways;
- Be inclusive of families of varying abilities;
- Ensure that inclusion is promoted in the program and that bias is targeted;
- Set the environment for freedom of movement;
- Be open to learning about caring for children with specific physical care needs;
- Help families understand inclusion;
- Be welcoming and inclusive of all abilities.

SEXUALITY BIAS

Bias around sexuality is having an unconscious or conscious preference for one sexuality or having a dislike of people who are homosexual or bisexual. This bias in education and care is about having these beliefs and acting on them, whether you are aware of them or not. It’s about giving children messages about their sexuality, and other people’s sexualities, and the value of these as part of their identity. All of us identify as being a particular sexuality - heterosexuality is a sexuality too!

Educators should reflect on ways sexuality bias may present in our service. For example:

- Environment and resources - e.g. only heterosexual families are visible; resources such as books don’t feature characters with diverse sexualities; children’s varying family structures are not accounted for;
- Planning - e.g. choices of celebrations and how they’re celebrated, such as Mothers and Fathers Days; fails to recognise that sexualities other than heterosexuality exist; only makes heterosexuality visible;
- Educators’ views - e.g. referring to children’s friendships with the opposite sex as having ‘boyfriends’ or ‘girlfriends’ rather than just friends; discriminating against family members who are not heterosexual; thinking that sexuality is only relevant when children with diverse family structures are enrolled; being embarrassed when dealing with children or families who are LGBT+; all children are treated as if they are from heterosexual couples; children who are not heterosexual or who have family members who are not heterosexual are pitied, looked down on or given sympathy;
- Children’s views - e.g. who they choose not to play with and why;
- Relationships with families - e.g. understandings of difference; family members who are not heterosexual are treated like they are; diverse families are treated badly or disrespectfully; families who are not heterosexual are forced to hide their family structure to fit in;
- Communication and language - e.g. assumed heterosexuality; addressing correspondence to “mum and dad”.

Bias around sexuality is about being unfair to children, their families and/or educators based on their sexuality. It is about being homophobic whether this is deliberate or accidental. It matters because homophobia hurts children and adults. It excludes, it discounts, and it dismisses. People cannot feel safe in an environment where they are excluded or where they are made to feel less important, even when it is not done deliberately.

Sweetpeas educators must strive to:

- Acknowledge that sexuality is an identity and acknowledge the many diverse sexualities that people are;
- Acknowledge that sexuality is influenced by biological and social factors;
- Take into account the families of enrolled children;
- Allow hard questions to be asked by children and families;
- Allow children to feel comfortable in expressing their difference;
- All children's natural curiosity about difference to be addressed;
- Be anti-homophobic;
- Be unbiased and free of assumed beliefs about children's sexuality;
- Be welcoming.

FURTHER READING FOR EDUCATORS AND FAMILIES

IN RELATION TO CELEBRATIONS:

- Scarlet, R. R. (2016). The Anti-Bias Approach in Early Childhood (3rd Edition).
- Staines, J. & Scarlet, R. R. (2018). The Aboriginal Early Childhood Practice Guide.
- Celebrations, Holidays and Special Occasions - <https://www.ecrh.edu.au/docs/default-source/resources/ipsp/celebrations-holidays-and-special-occasions.pdf?sfvrsn=4>
- Exploring Celebrations in Children's Services - <https://www.ecrh.edu.au/docs/default-source/resources/ipsp/exploring-celebrations-in-children's-services.pdf?sfvrsn=4>

IN RELATION TO FIRST AUSTRALIANS AND RACIAL BIAS:

- Staines, J. & Scarlet, R. R. (2018). The Aboriginal Early Childhood Practice Guide.
- Giugni, M., & Mundine, K. (Eds.). (2010). Talkin' up and speakin' out: Aboriginal and multicultural voices in early childhood.
- Scarlet, R. R. (2016). The Anti-Bias Approach in Early Childhood (3rd Edition).
- Scarlet, R.R. & Bryant, L. (2017). Fair's Fair: How to Tackle Bias in Education and Care Services.
- Cultural Competencies - <https://www.ecrh.edu.au/aboriginal-and-torres-strait-islander-focus/cultural-competencies> or tinyurl.com/culturalcc
- 'Additional needs': looking beyond disability - <https://www.ecrh.edu.au/docs/default-source/resources/nqs-plp-e-newsletters/nqs-plp-e-newsletter-no-41-2012-additional-needs---looking-beyond-disability.pdf?sfvrsn=6> or tinyurl.com/disabilitycc

IN RELATION TO GENDER:

- Scarlet, R.R. & Bryant, L. (2017). Fair's Fair: How to Tackle Bias in Education and Care Services.
- Scarlet, R. R. (2016). The Anti-Bias Approach in Early Childhood (3rd Edition).
- Gender Questioning - <https://www.glhv.org.au/sites/default/files/GQ-July-2011.pdf>
- The Paper Bag Princess by Robert Munsch

IN RELATION TO DISABILITY:

- Scarlet, R. R. (2016). The Anti-Bias Approach in Early Childhood (3rd Edition).
- Scarlet, R.R. & Bryant, L. (2017). Fair's Fair: How to Tackle Bias in Education and Care Services.
- Don't Call Me Special by Pat Thomas
- Position statement on the inclusion of children with a disability in early childhood education and care (Early Childhood Australia and Early Childhood Intervention Australia)- <http://bit.ly/2Jq2lyM>

IN RELATION TO SEXUALITY:

- Scarlet, R. R. (2016). The Anti-Bias Approach in Early Childhood (3rd Edition).
- Scarlet, R.R. & Bryant, L. (2017). Fair's Fair: How to Tackle Bias in Education and Care Services.
- Learn to Include Kit (incl. teacher's manual)
- Princess Max by Laurie Stiller
- www.rainbowfamilies.com.au
- "Who is in your family?" - <https://www.glhv.org.au/fact-sheet/%E2%80%9Cwho-your-family%E2%80%9D-resource-kit-rainbow-families-council> or <http://bit.ly/2Jrh1Db>

REFERENCES

- Anti-Discrimination Act 1977
- Early Childhood Australia's Code of Ethics - <http://www.earlychildhoodaustralia.org.au/>
- Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010
- Education and Care Services National Regulations
- Guide to the National Quality Standard
- KU Children's Services Inclusion Support - <https://www.ku.com.au/childcare/about/inclusion>
- Scarlet, R. R. (2016). The Anti-Bias Approach in Early Childhood (3rd Edition).
- Scarlet, R.R. & Bryant, L. (2017). Fair's Fair: How to Tackle Bias in Education and Care Services.
- Staines, J. & Scarlet, R. R. (2018). The Aboriginal Early Childhood Practice Guide.
- The Early Years Learning Framework
- UN Convention on the Rights of the Child

REVIEW AND AMENDMENTS

This policy will be updated regularly to ensure compliance with all relevant legal requirements. Appropriate consultation of all stakeholders (including staff and families) will be conducted on a timely basis. In accordance with *Regulation 172* of the National Regulations, families of children enrolled will be notified at least 14 days and their input considered prior to any amendment of policies and procedures that have any impact on their children or family.

Version	Amendment(s)	Review Date	Updated By
1.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policy rewritten and implemented 	March 2019	Cassandra Way (Early Childhood Teacher), Janine Evans (Nominated Supervisor)
1.1.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policy was reviewed, no changes necessary • Reissued to new educators • Educators shown where resource material is located 	June 2020	Janine Evans (Nominated Supervisor)
1.2.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No changes required 	July 2021	Janine Evans (Nominated Supervisor)
1.3.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cosmetic changes to reflect new policy template 	August 2022	Cassandra Way (Assistant Manager), Janine Evans (Managing Director)