

STUDENT EQUITY AND SOCIAL INCLUSION POLICY

Policy Summary

Glenroy Neighbourhood Learning Centre (GNLC) is committed to the promotion of equity and social justice for students by:

- Recognising the spirit and principles of equal opportunity legislation and practice, based on international human rights conventions;
- Initiating social inclusion activities in partnership with the community;
- Provide educational and community programs for disadvantaged groups;
- Responding appropriately to issues of unlawful discrimination and harassment.

Scope

This Policy applies to all students and GNLC Centre Users.

Definitions

Diversity: Diversity involves recognising the value of individual differences in the educational setting and in the workplace. Diversity in this context includes, age, cultural background, disability, ethnicity, family responsibilities, gender, language, religious belief and sexual orientation. Diversity also refers to the other ways in which people are different, such as educational level, life experience, work experience, socio-economic background, personality and marital status.

Equity: Equity relates to fair treatment. Our equity objective is to ensure that people from all groups in society have the opportunity to participate successfully in post-secondary education. This includes (but is not limited to) Aboriginal people, people with disabilities, people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds and people from lower socio-economic backgrounds.

Equal opportunity: Equal opportunity is about ensuring that everyone has equal access to, and opportunity to take part in, areas of public life, such as education, employment, accommodation and access to goods and services. Equal opportunity law sets standards for the way we treat each other in these areas and provides remedies for people who have been treated unfairly.

Human rights: Human rights are the basic entitlements that belong to all of us just because we are human beings. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, adopted in 1948, forms the basis of these entitlements. The Victorian Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities 2006 is a formal recognition of Human Rights and aims to protect people from injustice and to allow everyone to participate in and contribute to society. Our human rights entitlements include:

- a. Civil and political rights such as the right to life, liberty, freedom of opinion, expression and religion and freedom from torture and slavery;
- b. Economic and social rights such the right to health care, education, work, food and a reasonable standard of living; and
- c. Environmental and cultural rights including the right to live in a clean environment protected from destruction and the right to cultural, political and economic development.

Social inclusion: Social inclusion refers to a program of measures to overcome social exclusion and promote social justice. GNLC social inclusion strategies work in partnership with the community and contribute towards reducing disadvantage, increasing the ability of people to participate in the life and work of the community and to have their voices heard.

Social justice: the attainment of a more equitable society, to which GNLC contributes through providing empowering education.

Discrimination: Discrimination means treating someone unfairly or less favourably because of a characteristic such as their sex or race or age. Discrimination can also be setting a requirement that people with a particular characteristic (protected attribute) cannot meet and which is not reasonable.

Direct discrimination on the part of an educator, employer, provider of goods and services and in the areas of sport or clubs, involves treating a person less favourably than another person, because of a protected attribute, in comparable circumstances. It is recognised that some forms of harassment may amount to unlawful discrimination.

The term **indirect discrimination** refers to a requirement, condition or practice which appears to be neutral but which results in a particular person or group being adversely affected. Indirect discrimination is usually unintended. In order to constitute indirect discrimination, the particular policy or practice must be unreasonable in the circumstances.

Harassment: refers to discriminatory behaviour in relation to a protected attribute which is reasonably likely in all the circumstances, to humiliate, offend, intimidate or distress the person(s) concerned.

Guiding Principles

Our local community Glenroy, Hadfield, Oak Park; other areas in Moreland Local Government Area; Broadmeadows and other areas in Hume Local Government Area, has very diverse characteristics and a high level of disadvantage.

In these communities approximately 35% to 45% speak a language other than English. Moreland also has a relatively high level of residents aged 65 and over. Hume Moreland are also settlement areas for new arrivals.

The GNLC has a commitment to promotion of equity and social justice for all students. The principles of equal opportunity, equity and social justice are promoted through the Centre.

The GNLC is an accessible and equitable Centre for education and training that promotes social justice through the programs and activities.

Policy statement

Equity, Diversity & Social Justice

GNLC is committed to being fair, equitable and sensitive to the diverse needs of all its students in all its policies and practices. The following principles of equity and social justice will be integrated into all the GNLC structures, policies and procedures:

- a. fairness in the provision of GNLC services and programs to students;
- b. fair access to educational opportunities for all students;
- c. opportunities for genuine participation in decision-making for students;
- d. promotion of a learning and work environment which is socially inclusive, values diversity and allows students to realise their full potential, where students are able to study and work effectively without fear of discrimination or harassment; and
- e. protection of the human rights of students.

Any student who feels they have not been treated fairly in accordance with this Policy should be referred to the Student Complaints and Resolution Policy and Procedure.

Social Inclusion

The GNLC will work in partnership with the community to achieve social inclusion by encouraging participation in all levels of education, especially by people from previously excluded groups.

Equal Opportunity

In order to meet its obligations under this Policy, GNLC undertakes to promote equal opportunity in all aspects of GNLC activities through strategic initiatives and by eliminating unlawful direct and indirect discrimination and harassment on the grounds of:

- a. race, colour, national or ethnic origin, descent, nationality;
- b. sex, gender identity, lawful sexual activity, sexual orientation, marital status, pregnancy or potential pregnancy, breastfeeding, family responsibilities, status as a parent or carer;
- c. religious or political belief or activity, industrial activity, irrelevant criminal record;
- d. age, physical features, disability (past, present or imputed), medical record; and
- e. personal association with a person who is identified by reference to any of the above listed attributes.

GNLC's policy should be interpreted to include all attributes protected by Federal and State anti-discrimination legislation.

GNLC Commitments

GNLC will provide a broad range of affordable education and training opportunities to meet the needs of the diverse and evolving communities in our local area.

To promote equity and equal opportunity, GNLC will:

- a. provide a teaching, learning and working environment that values cultural and linguistic diversity, fosters mutual respect and cultural competence and responds to diverse needs;
- b. ensure that its structures, policies and practices are free from direct and indirect discrimination;
- c. use non-discriminatory, inclusive language and practices; and
- d. provide effective mechanisms to resolve equal opportunity-related complaints.

ACCOUNTABILITIES

Responsibility

All students, staff and Committee members are responsible for understanding and applying the principles of equal opportunity, equity and social justice. All teaching staff, managers and Committee members are responsible for ensuring that the teaching, learning and working environment is safe, inclusive and free from discrimination and harassment.

Implementation

Actions required to implement this Policy include:

- a. Development and implementation of social inclusion strategies in partnership with the community;
- b. Ensuring that all GNLC policies, procedures and plans are consistent with equal opportunity principles and practices;
- c. On-going review and implementation of disability, equity and diversity plans to meet legislative and government requirements;
- d. Ensuring procedures to resolve equal-opportunity related complaints are regularly updated and provide prompt, fair and effective outcomes for students;

To ensure the effectiveness of this Policy, GNLC will:

- a. ensure that staff and students are trained in equal opportunity, equity, diversity and social justice matters;
- b. monitor and review progress in the implementation of equal opportunity, equity, diversity and social inclusion;
- c. provide support to all students and staff affected by this Policy.

Promotion

This Policy is publically available on the GNLC website. It is discussed in class with students at enrolment, during orientation and throughout their course(s).

Relevant Procedures and Policies

- Discrimination and Harassment Prevention and Management Policy
- Discrimination, Harassment and Bullying Prevention and Management Procedure
- Student Complaints and Resolution Policy
- Student Complaints and Resolution Procedure
- Student Complaints and Resolution Process

Relevant Legislations

- Standards for Registered Training Organisations (RTOs) 2015
- This Policy accords with Australian / New Zealand Standard: Guidelines for complaints management in organizations ISO 10002:2014.
- Equal Opportunity Act (Vic) 2010
- Racial and Religious Tolerance Act 2001
- Disability Act 2006
- Racial Discrimination Act 1975
- Sex Discrimination Act 1992
- Disability Discrimination Act 1992



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