

# COONARA EARLY LEARNING CENTRE POLICY NO: 60

## GENDER EQUITY POLICY

In order to create an environment that supports, reflects and promotes gender equitable and inclusive behaviours and practices, it is crucial for our Service and educators to examine our values and belief systems. We are committed to promoting confidence and self-esteem in all children, staff and visitors and acknowledge the uniqueness and potential of all people.

### NATIONAL QUALITY STANDARD (NQS)

QUALITY AREA 5: RELATIONSHIPS WITH CHILDREN		
5.1	Relationships between educators and children	Respectful and equitable relationships are maintained with each child.
5.1.1	Positive educator to child interactions	Responsive and meaningful interactions build trusting relationships which engage and support each child to feel secure, confident and included.
5.1.2	Dignity and rights of the child	The dignity and rights of every child are maintained.
5.2	Relationships between children	Each child is supported to build and maintain sensitive and responsive relationships.
5.2.1	Collaborative learning	Children are supported to collaborate, learn from and help each other.

EDUCATION AND CARE SERVICES NATIONAL LAW AND REGULATIONS	
155	Interactions with children
156	Relationships in groups
168	Education and care service must have policies and procedures
170	Policies and procedures are to be followed

LEGISLATION AND FRAMEWORKS
Australian Human Rights Commission (2013) Disability Discrimination Act 1992 Early Childhood Australia Code of Ethics 2006 Early Years Learning Framework V2.0 (2022) Equal Opportunity Act 2010

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Privacy Act 1988  
 Sex Discrimination Act 1984  
 United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989)

## RELATED POLICIES

Anti-Bias and Inclusion Policy Child Safe Environment Policy Code of Conduct Policy Educational Program Policy	Interaction with Children, Family and Staff Policy Orientation of Families Policy Privacy and Confidentiality Policy Respect for Children Policy
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## PURPOSE

To ensure children are treated with respect and equality, our Service affirms the right for all children to have access to and participation in, the same experiences and activities irrespective of gender. To ensure that positive attitudes towards gender equity are encouraged and supported within our Service and community. Children will be encouraged to develop a sense of pride and self-worth, as they develop respect for each other’s rights and responsibilities.

## SCOPE

This policy applies to children, families, educators, staff, management, approved provider, nominated supervisor, students, volunteers and visitors of the Service.

## IMPLEMENTATION

Early childhood educators are in a unique position to influence children’s development and create environments that encourage equal and respectful relationships. Gender plays a significant role in the lives of children as it defines masculinity and femininity. These are socially constructed roles, behaviours, activities and attributes that society considers ‘appropriate’ for a person based on their sex. Breaking down gender stereotypes from a young age, helps stop the negative consequences of inequality and discrimination. Educators working with children need to observe the implication of gender in children’s choice of friends, activities, language, interactions, group dynamics and behaviour. These observations can lead to valuable insight into children’s understandings about gender and assist educators to promote challenges to gender stereotypes and embrace diversity.

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The *Anti-Bias Approach in Early Childhood* suggests the following principles as a basis to challenge sexism and promote anti-bias behaviour:

- be prepared to challenge sexist attitudes and behaviours
- ensure that you protect the child or adult who has been treated unfairly
- explain what you think is unfair about their attitudes and behaviours and model anti-sexist attitudes and behaviours
- correct any incorrect and sexist assumptions a child has about gender
- plan a strategy for how to deal with a similar situation in the future.

Red Ruby Scarlet (Ed.). 2018

### THE APPROVED PROVIDER/MANAGEMENT AND THE NOMINATED SUPERVISOR WILL:

- ensure obligations under the *Education and Care Services National Law and National Regulations* are met
- ensure educators, staff, students, visitors and volunteers have knowledge of and adhere to this policy and associated procedure
- ensure all new employees are provided with a copy of this policy as part of their induction process
- provide families with information about the importance of a gender equity approach in achieving positive outcomes for all children
- provide a positive, inclusive, respectful and safe environment for LGBTIQ+ parented families
- ensure all staff have access to professional development activities- promote inclusivity and representing all families in the community including LGBTIQ+ families
- engage staff in reflective practice about their own biases about gender
- foster an inclusive and gender equitable environment that focuses on acceptance and celebrates diversity
- promote a positive understanding of gender equity
- ensure educators and staff are aware of the Service's expectations regarding positive, respectful and appropriate behaviour when working with children and families
- ensure that any behaviour or circumstances that may constitute discrimination or prejudice are dealt with in an appropriate manner

### TEACHERS/EDUCATORS WILL:

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- be mindful and respectful of how activities and experiences provided may impact on the expectations, interests, and behaviours of all genders
- be mindful of the language used when addressing children- be inclusive and respectful when referring to LGBTIQ+ families
- provide a stimulating learning environment in which boys and girls are equally encouraged to explore a full range of experiences and emotions that aren't constricted by gender
- encourage children to express emotions and display affection and empathy
- act as advocates of children in dealing with other adults who act in a bias manner against a child due to their gender
- discourage the identification of particular skills, behaviours, and/or feelings as 'boys' and 'girls'
- encourage children to look upon both sexes as equal
- support the gender equity policy review by focusing on how children construct gender, and the effects of gender in curriculum, teaching and learning
- be responsive and ensure their actions are relevant to the specific and changing gender dynamics that emerge from the different ways in which different children interpret gender
- monitor language, attitudes, and assumptions with regard to gender and anti-bias of themselves, other educators, and children.
- give positive messages about gender equity through their actions and words and avoid giving messages that promote traditional gender roles and gender bias
- critically reflect on their practices and environment and model a positive attitude towards gender equality
- encourage and support all children to participate in the full range of experiences and activities
- regularly review resources, equipment, materials, and images used with children to make sure they include gender diversity, non-stereotypical images, and non-traditional family lifestyles such as single or same sex parents
- encourage children to explore their own gender identities and the impact of gender relations in their play
- regularly review the book collection to ensure a range of different stories and experiences are depicted beyond stereotypical narratives

### DEFINITIONS

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**Gender** refers to the socially learnt roles, behaviours, activities and attributes that any given society considers appropriate for men and women. Gender defines masculinity and femininity. Gender equity is the process of being fair to women and men.

**Gender equity** acknowledges that women and men have different access to resources, power, responsibilities and life experiences and different strategies are often necessary to address disadvantages and achieve equal outcomes of women and men, boys and girls.

**Gender equality** is the outcome reached through gender equity. It is the equal valuing by the society of the similarities and differences between women and men, and the varying roles that they play.

**Gender inequality** is the unequal distribution of power, resources, opportunity, and value afforded to men and women in society due to prevailing gendered norms and structures. Gender roles are the functions and responsibilities expected to be fulfilled by women and men, girls and boys in a given society.

**Gendered norms** consist of a set of dominant beliefs and rules of conduct, which are determined by a society or social group in relation to the types of roles, interests, behaviours and contributions expected from boys and girls, men and women.

**Inclusion** involves taking into account all children and young people's social, cultural and linguistic diversity (including learning styles, capabilities, disabilities, gender, family circumstances and geographic location) in program decision-making processes. The intent is to ensure that all children and young people's experiences are recognised and valued. The intent is also to ensure that all children and young people have equitable access to resources and participation, and opportunities to demonstrate their learning and to value difference.

**Sex** refers to biological and physiological differences between females and males.

**Stereotype** refers to a widely held but fixed and oversimplified image or idea of a particular type of person or thing.

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**Sexism** refers to gender discrimination. It is prejudice or discrimination based on a person’s sex or gender.

**Violence against women** is defined as ‘any act of gender-based violence that causes or could cause physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of harm or coercion, in public or in private life’ (Council of Australian Governments, 2011; United Nations General Assembly, 1993).

*Sourced from Our Watch (2015) in Creating Gender Equity in the Early Years: A Resource for Local Government and EYLF (V2.02. 2022).*

## CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT/REFLECTION

The *Gender Equity Policy* will be reviewed on an annual basis in conjunction with children, families, educators, staff and management.

## SOURCES

Australian Children’s Education & Care Quality Authority. (2023). [Guide to the National Quality Framework](#).  
 Australian Human Rights Commission (2015) *Supporting young children’s rights* Statement of Intent (2105-2018)  
 Australian Human Rights Commission and Early Childhood Australia (ECA)  
 Australian Government Department of Education. (2022). [Belonging, Being and Becoming: The Early Years Learning Framework for Australia.V2.0](#).  
 Australian Government. Australian Institute of Families Studies. (2022). [LGBTIQ+ glossary of common terms](#).  
 Darebin City Council *Creating Gender Equity in the Early Years: A resource for Local Government*  
 Early Childhood Australia Code of Ethics. (2016).  
 Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010. (Amended 2023).  
[Education and Care Services National Regulations](#). (Amended 2023).  
 Red Ruby Scarlet (Ed). (2001). *The anti-bias approach in early childhood* (3<sup>rd</sup> Ed.). Australia  
 Women’s Health East (2017). *No Limitations. Breaking down gender stereotypes in the early years. A resource guide for early years educators.* <https://whe.org.au/what-we-do/gender-equity-for-health-outcomes/no-limitations-gender-stereotypes-early-years/>

## REVIEW

POLICY REVIEWED BY	Carol Czaplowski	Nominated Supervisor
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