



CULTURAL DIVERSITY POLICY

PURPOSE

Our school values diversity, and sees the benefits that are provided to our students by a varied and diverse work force.

The Victorian Equal Opportunity Act (1995) makes it unlawful to discriminate against a person on the basis of the following attributes: - age, disability, industrial activity, lawful sexual activity, sexual orientation, gender identity, marital, parental or carer status, physical features, political beliefs or activity, pregnancy, race, religious belief or activity, sex, personal association (with a person who is identified by reference to any of the above attributes) or breastfeeding.

Further more, the Act prohibits direct and indirect discrimination, makes it unlawful to sexually harass a person at the institution (includes students), promotes equality of opportunity between persons of different sex, age, marital status, race and other specified attributes, and provides redress for those who have been subject to discrimination

Discrimination refers to any behaviour or practice based upon an assumption that one group is superior to another, any behaviour that disadvantages people on the basis of the real or perceived membership of a particular group, and includes behaviour such as less favourable treatment, unfair exclusion, and asking discriminatory questions. Discrimination in any form is unacceptable. As educators, we have a responsibility to provide teaching and learning environments that are free from discrimination in all forms, including those based on race, ethnicity, gender, ability, disability, sexuality and religion.

POLICY

MANAGING DIVERSITY

Aims:

- Maintaining a highly skilled, motivated and energetic workforce who are better able to meet the needs of a diverse school community
- Attracting highly skilled staff due to effective people management practices making the school a preferred employer
- Increasing the range of knowledge, skills and experiences available in the workforce
- Enhancing the capacity for effective decision making due to the greater diversity of perspectives and inputs
- Creating more effective work teams due to increased participation levels and an increased capacity to solve problems.

Implementation:

- We value and actively seek out diversity
- In time, all of our staff members will be Merit trained.
- This policy should be read in conjunction with the Equal Opportunity policy..
- The school will develop and implement a strategic plan for managing diversity. The plan will include:
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 - Recruitment and selection based on merit.
 - A workforce plan that enhances diversity, allows for flexible work arrangements and includes strategies for disadvantaged groups.
 - Personal professional development plans which address personal needs of all staff.

- Provision of a workplace that is free of discrimination and harassment.
 - Development of a performance culture that rewards diversity practices.
 - Utilisation of and development of the talents of diversity in school teams and enhance diversity in school leadership.
 - Creation of a school culture which values diversity, and promote diversity within the wider community.
 - Creation of a supportive work environment to retain diverse staff.
 - Removal of barriers that inhibit diversity and EEO.

EQUAL OPPORTUNITY

Aims:

- To provide a working environment that does not tolerate unlawful discrimination and provides equal opportunity for all.

Implementation:

- Our school values diversity and provides equal opportunity for all.
- A staff member will be appointed as the Equal Opportunity representative at our school, and will be provided with professional development appropriate to the role.
- Over time, all staff will be Merit trained.
- This policy is to be read in conjunction with the Managing Diversity and Sexual Harassment policies of the school.
- The school's position as an Equal Opportunity employer and workplace will be communicated to the wider community via the newsletter.
- The school's policies and practices will be regularly reviewed to ensure consistency with the Victorian Equal Opportunity Act (1995).
- All staff members will be provided with a copy of this policy, and will be reminded of their rights and responsibilities in relation to the Victorian Equal Opportunity Act (1995).
- The Racial and Religious Tolerance Act 2001 prohibits amongst other things, practices such as racist graffiti, speeches or posters in public places, engaging in racist or religious vilification in public places, or making offensive racist comments in publications including the internet or email.
- Any complaints can be lodged with the Equal Opportunity representative, Principal, Regional Director, Merit Protection Boards, or Equal Opportunity Commission.
- All complaints will be investigated promptly, confidentially, and with impartiality. All complaints will be managed in a manner consistent with DE&T's 'Local Complaints Resolution Procedures' handbook.
- The School Council president will be informed of all Equal Opportunity concerns, on a confidential basis.

ANIT-DISCRIMINATION

Aims:

- To provide a fair and supportive environment free from all forms of discrimination, discriminatory practice and beliefs, that promotes personal respect, values diversity, and provides physical and emotional safety.

Implementation:

- All staff will be made aware of the legislative requirements relating to discrimination.
- All staff will complete DE&T online Workplace Discrimination & Sexual Harassment training.

- Professional development relating to discrimination will be provided for all staff, who in turn will model and practice appropriate non-discriminatory behaviour.
- Staff, students and members of the school community will be familiar with the school's approach to anti-discrimination and will be provided with information relating to their rights and responsibilities.
- Our school will ensure that all groups who are affected by decision-making outcomes are consulted, their input will be treated fairly, and decision-making processes and outcomes will be meritorious and free from discrimination.
- All decision-making processes will be open to scrutiny, with processes for appealing decisions and for regularly reviewing processes to be adopted.
- Equal Opportunity posters to be prominently displayed and a available pamphlets readily accessible.
- All claims of discrimination will be treated confidentially, documented, and promptly and constructively addressed.
- Unresolved school-level issues may be referred by the principal, or either party involved, to the appropriate authorities.
- The rights and sensitivities of all individuals will be protected.
- School Council will communicate in plain language, avoiding unnecessary jargon, and also use other means of reaching parents with literacy difficulties such as open meetings, assemblies etc.
- Curriculum content will be free of discriminatory content, but will analyse the effects of discrimination and assist students to develop attitudes and skills that discourage, challenge and report discriminatory practices.

LEGISLATION

Victorian multicultural policy is underpinned by the *Multicultural Victoria Act 2011*, *Racial and Religious Tolerance Act 2001* and the *Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006*. This legislation is in addition to Commonwealth and State anti discrimination law. For further information, see HRWeb: [Equal Opportunity, Discrimination and Harassment](#).

Multicultural Victoria Act 2011

The principles of multiculturalism are enshrined in the *Multicultural Victoria Act 2011* including:

All Victorians are entitled to mutual respect and understanding regardless of their cultural, religious, racial and linguistic backgrounds.

All individuals and institutions in Victoria should promote and preserve diversity and cultural heritage within the context of shared laws, values, aspirations and responsibilities.

All individuals in Victoria (regardless of background) should work together to build a positive and progressive future and this co-operation is to be encouraged so as to enhance Victoria as a great place in which to live, work, invest and raise a family;

- All individuals in Victoria are equally entitled to access opportunities and participate in and contribute to the social, cultural, economic and political life of this State;
- All Victorians have a responsibility to abide by the State's laws and respect the democratic processes under which those laws are made.

The Department, managers, Principals, school councils, employees and students are required to act in accordance with the principles of the *Multicultural Victoria Act 2011* including the amendments made in 2008.

The Act also specifies reporting requirements for all departments in relation to Multicultural Affairs.

Racial and Religious Tolerance Act 2001

The *Racial and Religious Tolerance Act 2001* promotes equal participation in an open and multicultural democracy and prohibits the vilification of persons on the ground of race or religious belief or activity. The Act provides a means of redress for the victims of racial or religious vilification and gives powers to the Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission to help people resolve complaints.

The Act covers people's actions and behaviours not their beliefs. The Act describes 'vilification' as conduct that incites hatred against, serious contempt for, or revulsion or severe ridicule of, a person's racial or religious background. The Act also deals with 'serious vilification' which includes threatening, or inciting others to threaten or physically harm people or their property.

The Act recognises the consequences of vilification on the individual and the community including diminishing an individual's sense of self-worth, dignity and belonging to the community. Racial and religious vilification can also reduce an individual's ability to contribute to and participate in the social, political, economic and cultural life of our society. This has the effect of reducing the benefit that diversity brings to the community.

The Act covers public behaviour (including use of the internet and email) which has the effect of inciting hatred, serious contempt for, or severe ridicule of people's racial or religious backgrounds and practices. For instance, the Act makes it illegal to:

- write racist graffiti in public places
- make racist speeches at a public rally
- display racist posters or stickers in a public place
- engage in racist or religious vilifying abuse in a public place
- make offensive racist comments in a publication including internet and email.

The legislation has been drafted to maintain freedom of speech while protecting the rights of all people in our society to participate as equals. The Act includes exceptions for conduct or discussion which is engaged in reasonably and in good faith in relation to:

- an artistic work or performance
- a statement, publication, discussion or debate in any genuine academic, artistic, religious or scientific purpose or which may be considered in the public interest
- a fair or accurate report on a matter of public interest
- private conduct.

- An important aspect of the Act is the responsibility of all employers to maintain workplaces free of racial and religious vilification. Vicarious liability provisions apply (Section 17 and 18).

The Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities

- The *Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006* identifies 20 human rights that reflect four basic principles of freedom, respect, equality and dignity. All departmental staff must respect and promote the rights set out in the Charter by making decisions and providing advice consistent with human rights.

REVIEW CYCLE

This policy was last updated on March, 2018 and is scheduled for review in March, 2019

*Ratified by School Council
June, 2018*