

**POLICY**

STATEMENT

**10**

**MULTICULTURALISM**

## FOREWORD

Australia is a dynamic multicultural and multilingual nation, and multiculturalism is for all members of the Australian community. The cultures and languages of Australia's indigenous people have been complemented by a range of cultures and languages and together these now make up the fabric of Australian society.

Australia is unique because it values cultural diversity as a national goal. Our nation's diverse range of cultures has played and will continue to play an increasingly important role in shaping our identity and future.

This policy gives a framework for providing services which acknowledge and promote our culturally and linguistically diverse society and seek to ensure equitable and enriched learning and care outcomes for all children and students irrespective of their social, cultural or linguistic backgrounds. Strategies to implement this policy are contained in supporting documents.

The formation of the Department for Education and Children's Services (DECS) in December 1993 has made it necessary to revise existing policies relating to schooling and children's services to ensure consistency in policy and practice across all areas of the department. This policy applies to services provided in centre-based child care, family day care, preschools, child parent centres, outside school hours care programs, toy libraries, primary, junior primary, secondary and adult re-entry schools and associated specialist support services.

While only DECS employees and services are bound by this policy, it is recommended to other education and care providers who may wish to adopt it for their own use.

I have pleasure in endorsing this policy as it has a vital role to fulfil in providing for the education and care of children and students from all cultural backgrounds in South Australia.

Denis Ralph  
Chief Executive

## RATIONALE

At the heart of our nation are Australia's indigenous people who have lived on this continent for at least 40,000 years. Understanding and valuing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and their cultures are priorities in Australia today.

While the earliest European settlement was predominantly Anglo-Celtic, today people from well over 100 cultural and linguistic backgrounds live in Australia, making it one of the most culturally diverse nations in the world.

This policy seeks to ensure that curriculum, programs, resource management, organisation and staffing procedures at all levels reflect and respond to the cultural and linguistic diversity of Australian society. In achieving this, education and care will foster the rich cultural and linguistic heritage of the Australian community, promote harmonious community relations and contribute to the development of Australia's cultural and intellectual resources.

### Multiculturalism and cultural pluralism

Multiculturalism is vital for all Australians because it sets social goals for the cohesion of our society and promotes the development of new talents, ideas and economic wealth for building international relationships and a rich future. It embraces fundamental concepts such as achieving unity in diversity and the existence of shared democratic values for all Australians. These shared values form an overarching framework in which diversity can flourish, leading to greater creativity and resilience of society as a whole.

Although Australia has always been culturally diverse, it is only recently that it has been emerging as a culturally plural nation. Cultural pluralism acknowledges that cultural diversity exists and also values and expresses a commitment to cultural diversity for the benefit of all individuals and society.

### Principles of multiculturalism in education and care

This policy seeks to promote the following three major principles outlined in the national document *National agenda for a multicultural Australia (1989)*:

- cultural identity: the right of all children, students, families and employees to maintain, develop and renew, and not merely preserve, their cultural and linguistic heritage
- access and equity: the right of all children, students, families and employees to equality of opportunity, ready and appropriate access to care and education services and equitable outcomes
- maximising potential: the right of all children and students to quality education and care that provides knowledge, skills and understanding that will enable them to participate effectively in culturally and linguistically diverse societies on a national and international level.

## Other relevant documents

This policy builds on existing State and Commonwealth legislation, policy documents and reports.

In South Australia, these include the Children's Services Act (1985), the Equal Opportunity Act (1984), the South Australian Multicultural and Ethnic Affairs Commission Act (1980), as well as the Education for a Cultural Democracy Report (1984) and the Languages (1985) and Antiracism (1990) policies of the former Education Department of SA.

On the national level, the National agenda for a multicultural Australia (1989), the National goals for schooling in Australia (1989), the Community relations strategy (1991), International education in Australia through the 1990s statement (1992) and the Australian language and literacy policy (1991) delineate some key priorities for multiculturalism in education and care, namely the promotion of languages, cultural understandings and social cohesion for the benefit of the whole society.

## POLICY STATEMENT

Children and students will be supported to develop the knowledge, cultural understanding and skills required for personal growth and effective participation in multicultural Australia.

DECS is committed to education and care programs and services which value:

- cultural diversity  
Development of cultural knowledge and understandings is an essential element of education and care in a multicultural society. Cultural diversity will be accepted and appreciated as enriching the lives of all children, students, employees and the wider community. Culturally inclusive curriculum\* will develop the necessary knowledge, skills and experiences that will prepare children and students to participate in and contribute to life in Australia and on an international level.
- linguistic diversity and literacy  
All children and students will be supported to be literate and articulate in a social environment where linguistic diversity is integral to Australian life.  
  
Literacy in English is fundamental for successful education and employment in Australia, and for full and effective participation in many aspects of Australian society.

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\* Culturally inclusive refers to the planning and delivery of education and care programs which ensure that cultural perspectives are reflected in all aspects of teaching, learning and care across the curriculum.

- Access and equitable outcomes  
Through access and equity strategies, DECS is intent upon making our education and care systems work better for all. Children, students, and employees, irrespective of their culture or language, will benefit equitably from the resources managed by DECS.  
  
All members of children's services and school communities will have equality of opportunity to participate in decision-making regarding education and care.
- Economic development  
The development of the cultural and linguistic skills, knowledge and understanding of our people will contribute to the economic growth of Australia on a national and international level.

## **POLICY OUTCOMES**

The Department for Education and Children's Services is committed to the following outcomes for the benefit of all children and students.

- Education and care practices which:
  - meet the cultural and linguistic needs of diverse children's services and school communities
  - establish, maintain and value culturally and linguistically inclusive learning environments
  - meet the settlement needs of newly-arrived families, children and students of cultural and linguistic backgrounds other than English
  - include inter-cultural and cross-cultural education perspectives.
- Curriculum and programs which support and enable children and students to:
  - participate in a range of experiences reflecting our culturally and linguistically diverse society
  - develop the knowledge, skills and conceptual understanding they need in order to value and participate effectively in our culturally diverse society
  - develop to their full potential, recognising their individuality in terms of culture, language, abilities and learning styles
  - experience languages other than English in their preschool years
  - acquire proficiency in languages other than English in order to build upon the experience, prior knowledge and skills that all students bring to their learning environment, including their first language

- develop proficiency in standard English, recognising the literacy needs of children and students of Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander and non-English speaking backgrounds
- develop attitudes and behaviours that are free from racist, cultural or religious prejudice, discrimination and harassment.
- Parental and community partnerships which value all cultural and linguistic backgrounds, through participation in decision-making structures and in planning and evaluating programs and services.
- Training and development opportunities for employees which:
  - develop knowledge of multicultural policies, cross-cultural communication skills, cultural awareness and the fostering of harmonious community relationships
  - provide skills, knowledge and understanding for culturally inclusive curriculum and programs.
- Recognition of complementary providers of language and cultural programs, such as ethnic schools, in order that:
  - mainstream schools acknowledge students' attendance and achievements these programs - all students have access to a diverse range of languages.
- Administrative and personnel practices which:
  - promote greater understanding, acceptance and positive interactions between personnel from all cultural and linguistic backgrounds at all levels of education and care systems
  - ensure equal employment opportunities through the recruitment, retention, training and promotion of employees from diverse cultural backgrounds.
  - value bicultural and bilingual skills in areas of staff management and promotion
  - ensure that role statements for leadership positions include bicultural and bilingual skills, where appropriate.

## **POLICY RESPONSIBILITIES**

### **Responsibilities of all employees**

The principles and outcomes of this policy apply to all DECS employees.

Their responsibilities include:

- applying the policy to their area of work
- participating in training and development opportunities which provide knowledge and skills necessary for supporting education and care in and for a multicultural society

- providing accessible and equitable services for children, students and families of all cultural and linguistic backgrounds
- supporting cross-cultural practices and services that increase participation by children, students, parents and the local community.

### **Responsibilities of managers (including principals, preschool directors, district superintendents, regional coordinators and principal curriculum officers)**

In addition to the responsibilities of all employees, managers are responsible for ensuring that:

- children's services and school policies, organisational procedures and programs are responsive to the cultural and linguistic backgrounds of their communities
- curriculum content and practices in all areas of learning and care reflect the lives, values and experiences of all children and students from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds
- schools and children's services provide for the learning needs of all children and students in languages other than English
- the learning needs of children and students from non-English speaking backgrounds, in particular the learning of English as a second language, are addressed
- culturally inclusive environments are developed, free from racism and harassment
- personnel practices value the diversity of cultural and linguistic knowledge, skills, and expertise that employees bring to the workplace.

### **Responsibilities of teaching staff**

In addition to the responsibilities of all employees, teaching staff are responsible for providing:

- culturally inclusive curriculum in all areas of learning
- supportive and culturally inclusive learning and care environments for all children and students.