



Access & Equity Policy

Background

Neighbourhood Houses are for everyone. Beaconsfield Neighbourhood Centre (BNC) is dedicated to conducting business in a manner which reflects our commitment to inclusion and social justice.

Every effort will be made to treat all people with dignity and respect. BNC ensures that diversity is not a barrier for people engaging with the Centre and accessing the services to which they are entitled. Access to planning, decision making, programs and services of the Centre are offered on a non-discriminatory basis.

Aims of the Policy

The aims of the policy are:

- To ensure that Beaconsfield Neighbourhood Centre is a place for everyone regardless of race, age, gender, culture or ability.
- To ensure all members are treated in a fair and reasonable manner.
- To ensure affirmative action is taken to support and include unrepresented groups.
- To support an inclusive community that respects the human rights of all its members, celebrates their diversity and promotes their participation in all aspects of community life.
- To meet the legislative requirements of State and Federal Acts

Policy Statements

BNC acknowledges that its legal and moral responsibilities cover the areas of access:

- In the provision of services offered
- In employment
- In the provision of information offered
- To any training and development offered
- To events hosted by BNC

Enrolment in programs at BNC will be open to any person unless an age or gender is specified in the Term Program or other advertising.

It is highly recommended that potential members disclose and discuss their particular needs with staff/tutors so that reasonable adjustments can be organised in advance. Members are offered the opportunity to speak confidentially and are welcome to bring someone with them for support if desired.

BNC integrates a set of service delivery principles based on the model of the Federal Government's Charter of Public Service in a Culturally Diverse Society as follows:

- Access – BNC will make services available to everyone who is entitled to them, free of any form of discrimination based on a person's age, gender, country of birth, language, level of education, income, ability, culture, race or religion.
- Equity – BNC will develop and deliver services on the basis of fair treatment of all those clients who are eligible to receive them.
- Communication – BNC will use all necessary strategies to inform eligible clients of the services available, their entitlements, and how they can obtain them. BNC shall also consult with members regularly about the adequacy, design and standard of services.

- Responsiveness – BNC will be sensitive to the needs and requirements of people from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds and be responsive as far as practicable to the particular circumstances of individuals.
- Effectiveness – BNC will be focused on meeting the needs of people from all backgrounds.
- Efficiency – BNC will optimise the use of available public resources through a user-responsive approach to service delivery that meets the needs of members.
- Accountability – BNC will have a reporting mechanism in place which ensures it is accountable for implementing access and equity objectives for its members.

The Committee of Management and staff will put strategies into place to ensure fair and equal opportunities exist for all participants to achieve their own goals including:

- Working in such a way to promote equity, access, participation and the rights of people within the community.
- Seeking to include those sections of the community that are under-represented at the Centre and are disadvantaged.
- Making a specific commitment to those people who are most disadvantaged.
- Developing an understanding of what disadvantage is, why people are disadvantaged and who is disadvantaged in the local community.
- Recognising and responding to specific issues of language and culture, gender, sexual preference, disability, financial disadvantage, social and geographic isolation.
- Planning and undertaking special measures to ensure the inclusion of disadvantaged groups within their community.

Special measures may include:

- Promotion of programs in relevant languages and styles and through relevant media
- Ensuring that targeted groups have a say in the development of programs and in management processes
- Seeking to assist disadvantaged groups to establish programs which they own and control if this is preferred
- Advocating on behalf of disadvantaged people with government
- Ensuring that the management committee represents a diversity of opinion and is accessible to all members through open and accountable practises

Roles and Responsibilities

Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Record breaches along with what action is decided. This record should be included in COM meeting minutes.
Centre Coordinator	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider ways in which service delivery can be inclusive to accommodate groups who have been identified as experiencing barriers to services. • Investigate possible breaches immediately and report to COM.
Staff, Tutors, Volunteers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider the specific service needs of participants. • Appropriate and respectful use of language and visuals that do not assume heterosexuality or binary gender identification. • Report all possible breaches to the Centre Coordinator.

Associated Documents

Code of Conduct

Member Code of Conduct

Federal Legislation:

Age Discrimination Act 2004 (Cth);

Australian Human Rights Commission Act 1986) (Cth);

Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (Cth);

Racial Discrimination Act 1975 (Cth);

Sex Discrimination Act 1984 (Cth);

Work Place Gender Equality Act 2012 (Cth);

Fair Work Act 2009 (Cth).

State Legislation:

Victoria Equal Opportunity Act 1995 (VIC)

Document History

Version	Title	Author	Authorised	Date	Changes to Previous
1	Access & Equity Policy	Unknown	No Record	Aug 2005	Original
2	Access & Equity Policy	Centre Coordinator	COM	Aug 2018	Yes
3	Access & Equity Policy	Centre Coordinator	COM	Nov 2022	Review and additions