



Equity and Diversity

Guidelines for Upholding Equity and Respecting Diversity of Children

Upholding equity and respecting the diversity of Children are essential to creating a Church community where every Child feels safe, valued and supported. Equity, diversity, inclusion, and cultural safety all play vital roles in shaping a welcoming and accessible Church environment.

- **Equity** means treating people with fairness and compassion. It means removing barriers so that everyone, regardless of background or circumstance, can belong and contribute. Equity creates an environment where thoughtful approaches and supports are provided so that Children feel safe, valued, respected, and empowered to participate in activities, programs and ministries.
- **Diversity** means recognising that each person is unique and brings different cultures, languages, abilities, identities, and experiences. It recognises the vastness of God's creation and the different perspectives people bring. It also recognises that we are shaped by our environment and that much of the diversity seen in children results from their background, family of origin and what they have been taught.
- **Inclusion** means the practice of creating safe environments where all people feel welcome, respected and heard. It creates a culture of belonging by supporting people to fully participate in Church life. We acknowledge that people often need to feel that they belong before they can believe.
- **Cultural Safety** means an environment where Children from other cultures (including those from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander backgrounds) as well as their families feel safe, valued, respected, included, and able to participate in activities, programs and ministries. We recognise that doing these things, does not mean we agree or accept all that a culture might believe, practice or bring with it.

Creating welcoming, accessible and culturally safe environments helps all Children feel respected, supported and able to participate fully in Church life. These Guidelines seek to support Leaders, Staff and Volunteers at our Church to uphold equity and respect the diversity of children in all aspects of Church life by giving practical examples of actions we might take to achieve this.

Understanding and Responding to Diverse Needs

Understanding and responding to diverse needs helps ensure all Children feel safe, respected and supported to participate fully in Church life. Some examples of how we might seek to do this include:

- Review Church policies, programs and activities regularly to identify and remove barriers that may prevent participation by Children from diverse backgrounds.
- Where relevant, seek input from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families, CALD communities, refugees, families with Children with a disability or additional needs, and those who are unable to live at home when designing or reviewing programs.

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- Provide communication, signage and materials in plain English and relevant community languages where needed.
- Create physical, social and online environments that promote belonging and wellbeing for all Children, including those with disability, sensory needs or additional support requirements.
- Use language, imagery and practices that are gender-inclusive, culturally appropriate and respectful of identity, culture and diversity, while remaining faithful to our beliefs and practices as grounded in Scripture.

Building Capacity through Training and Reflection

Building capacity through training and reflection helps ensure Staff and Volunteers are equipped to support diverse Children and create inclusive, culturally safe Church environments. Some examples of how we might seek to do this include:

- Provide training on cultural safety, disability awareness, principles of inclusion, anti-racism, and trauma-informed practice that equips people to establish meaningful relationships and minister the gospel to all people.
- Discuss unconscious bias, privilege and equity in leadership and team meetings in light of our theology and calling.
- Offer opportunities for reflection on inclusion, belonging and equitable participation in ministry programs and how we can treat all children and families with respect, fairness and without discrimination.
- Facilitate discussions that help Staff and Volunteers recognise and address unintentional exclusion, discrimination or bias.
- Ensure programs support the holistic wellbeing (social, emotional, physical and spiritual) of all Children.
- Where appropriate, invite guest speakers or use case studies to help Staff and Volunteers understand lived experience and a range of diverse perspectives.

Embedding Equity in Policies, Recruitment and Partnerships

Embedding equity in policies, recruitment and partnerships helps ensure inclusion, representation and belonging are reflected across Church leadership, governance and community engagement. Some examples of how we might seek to do this include:

- Review recruitment practices so that lived experience, community knowledge and cultural understanding are valued in leadership and ministry roles.
- Review policies to ensure they address the needs of children from diverse backgrounds.
- Maintain a Cultural Safety and Equity Policy that embeds equitable practice across governance, policies and programs.
- Apply equity and diversity principles in Church leadership and decision-making.
- Where relevant, partner with community organisations such as First Nations groups, multicultural associations, disability networks and inclusion agencies to strengthen belonging and participation across all communities.
- Ensure Church communication, imagery and language reflect the diversity of the congregation and wider community.
- Review progress annually and report on equity and diversity initiatives through Safe Spaces reviews.