Inclusion Policy

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Warning - Ensure you are using the latest version of this policy.			
DCC Network/All Organisation Information/Policies/Quality Area 5 – Relationships with Children			

1. Policy Statement

River Region Early Education (RREE) has a commitment to inclusion that ensures every child can access service, participate meaningfully and experience positive outcomes. Diversity, equity and inclusion contribute to the RREE commitment to being a child safe organisation as defined by the Child Safe Standards and aligns with the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. Inclusion involves considering each child's learning styles, first language, cultural identity, abilities, disabilities, gender, sexual identity, family circumstances, and geographic location. Inclusion happens when all children are seen as capable learners and valued contributors and the service environment, practice, language and relationships adapt so that all children can participate.

Feedback from RREE families is that their child feels included when they are greeted warmly by name and encouraged to engage with their friends, experiences and resources. They appreciate seeing their own and other people's culture, lifestyle and family circumstances reflected in the learning environment. Their child is helped to self-regulate emotions and actions when they are provided with calm spaces and moments and are supported to play collaboratively, name emotions, and given time to adjust to changes.

2. Rationale

There is a legal obligation under the National Quality Framework (NQF) for early childhood organisations to ensure inclusion. The NQF recognises all children as confident and capable learners with the capacity and right to succeed regardless of diverse circumstances, including strengths, cultural background and abilities. This aligns with the Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF) principles of respect for diversity and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives. The Disability Discrimination Act 1992 makes it unlawful to discriminate on the grounds of a person's disability. This policy provides guidance to employees about RREE inclusion strategies, including support to address barriers to inclusion and build capacity and capability of children with additional needs.

3. Scope

This policy applies to all employees, including students and trainees, and all volunteers, including Board members.

4. Responsibilities

It is the responsibility of the General Manager to:

- Demonstrate and support an organisational culture that is inclusive, respectful and does not allow discrimination,
- Ensure that any new premises or renovations comply with Disability Discrimination law and regulation,

- Support Nominated Supervisors to understand barriers to inclusion and provide professional development and learning opportunities for employees working with children to promote inclusion and eliminate discrimination,
- Consult with local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and other communities to help overcome barriers to inclusion for local children and families, and
- Maintain the respectful acknowledgment of the history, strengths and ongoing culture of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the First Peoples of Australia.

It is the responsibility of Nominated Supervisors to:

- Support the Educational Leader to develop an educational program that is child-centred, inclusive and promotes the participation of every child,
- Support educators to challenge their own biases and understand direct and indirect discrimination,
- Ensure resources for children reflect diverse cultures, abilities, disabilities and family types, gender equality and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives,
- Develop, submit, implement and review required service inclusion plans to address barriers to inclusion within their service,
- Demonstrate and support educators to use inclusive language,
- Support educators to communicate and collaborate with families to better understand each child's learning style, first language, cultural identity, abilities, disabilities, gender, sexual identity, family circumstances, and geographic location,
- Ensure indoor and outdoor spaces, buildings, fixtures and fittings support access for every child, including making reasonable adjustments,
- Support educators to demonstrate responsive and meaningful interactions with children that build trusting relationships to support each child to feel secure, confident and included,
- Support educators to maintain the dignity and rights of every child by supporting children to make choices and decisions, experience consequences, manage their emotions and behaviour, resolve conflicts, develop empathy and challenge discrimination,
- Support educators to recognise where a child may have inclusion support needs and to record observations and gather information required for individual planning and for inclusion support funding where available and relevant,
- Support educators to recognise challenging behaviours and to take a positive approach to guiding and empowering children to regulate their own behaviour while minimising the risk of harm to themselves and other children,
- Where a child has inclusion support needs, support the Educational Leader and Lead Educators to work with families and support professionals to develop strategies for inclusion including, where needed, an Individual Learning Plan and/or Individual Behaviour Support Plan,
- Support educators to undertake training and professional development that increases their skills, knowledge and quality of practice related to inclusion, individual planning and behaviour support,
- Where eligible, apply for inclusion support funding to increase the capacity of the service to provide support, and
- Seek assistance from inclusion support professionals where needed to ensure inclusion plans reflect best practice and effectively meet the needs of children.

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It is the responsibility of Educational Leaders to:

- Ensure an educational program is developed that is child-centred, inclusive and promotes the participation of every child,
- Support educators to plan, implement, modify or change play materials to encourage each child's participation and to allow them to experience success,
- Support educators to plan learning environments that include a range of materials and equipment with appropriate levels of challenge where all children are encouraged to explore, experiment and take appropriate risks in their learning according to their current capacities, strengths and interests, and
- Where a child has inclusion support needs, support Lead Educators and educators to work with families and support professionals to develop strategies for inclusion including, where needed, an Individual Learning Plan and/or Individual Behaviour Support Plan.

It is the responsibility of Lead Educators to:

- Develop an educational program that is child-centred, inclusive and promotes the participation of every child,
- Observe and gather information to support children's inclusion, and
- Where a child has inclusion support needs, support educators to work with families and support professionals to develop strategies for inclusion including, where needed, an Individual Learning Plan and/or Individual Behaviour Support Plan.

It is the responsibility of educators to:

- Ensure resources for children reflect diverse cultures, abilities, disabilities and family types, gender equality and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives,
- Communicate and collaborate with families to better understand each child's learning style, first language, cultural identity, abilities, disabilities, gender, sexual identity, family circumstances, and geographic location,
- Demonstrate responsive and meaningful interactions with children that build trusting relationships to support each child to feel secure, confident and included,
- Maintain the dignity and rights of every child by supporting children to make choices and decisions, experience consequences, manage their emotions and behaviour, develop empathy and challenge discrimination,
- Plan, implement, modify or change play materials to encourage each child's participation and to allow them to experience success,
- Plan learning environments that include a range of materials and equipment with appropriate levels of challenge where all children are encouraged to explore, experiment and take appropriate risks in their learning according to their current capacities, strengths and interests.
- Assess each child's progress toward learning goals, including any concerns related to reaching developmental milestones,
- Recognise where a child may have inclusion support needs and record observations and gather information required for individual planning and for inclusion support funding where available and relevant,
- Recognise where a child is demonstrating challenging behaviours and take a positive approach to guiding and empowering children to regulate their own behaviour while minimising the risk of harm to themselves and other children,

- Where a child has inclusion support needs, make observations, assist the Lead Educator to gather information, and work with families and support professionals to implement strategies for inclusion including, where needed, an Individual Learning Plan and/or Individual Behaviour Support Plan.

It is the responsibility of employees to:

- Challenge their own biases and understand direct and indirect discrimination,
- Demonstrate and use inclusive language, and
- Abide by the *RREE Code of Conduct* in all undertakings, which includes treating all people with dignity and respect, upholding their human rights, and ensuring no person experiences discrimination.

5. Defini ions

Inclusion — Defined in the EYLF 2.0 as taking into account all children's social, cultural and linguistic diversity (including learning styles, abilities, disabilities, gender, sexual identity, family circumstances and geographic location) in curriculum decision-making processes. The intent is to ensure that all children's experiences are recognised and valued. The intent is also to ensure that all children have equitable access to resources and participation, and opportunities to demonstrate their learning and to value difference.

Neurodiversity and neurodivergence – Raising Children Network defines neurodiversity as the idea that there's natural variation in how people's brains work and how people experience, understand and interact with the world. Most children's brains develop in ways that are seen as typical for their age and stage which can be described as neurotypical. About 1 in 5 or 6 children have variations in their brain development, including those seen in attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), autism and dyslexia. These children can be described as neurodivergent.

Gender identity – A person's internal sense of self and gender rather than gender assigned at birth or how the person expresses their gender. Gender identity may be the same (referred to as cisgender), or different (referred to as transgender) as the gender assigned at birth. Gender identity may be male, female, or gender non-binary and can also include culturally specific terms and identities such as sistergirl or brotherboy used within some Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

Heteronormative – Denoting or relating to a world view that promotes heterosexuality as the normal or preferred sexual orientation.

Reasonable adjustment – Defined in EYLF 2.0 as a measure or action taken by approved providers and educators to assist children with disability to participate in education and care on the same basis as children without disability. An adjustment is reasonable if it achieves this purpose while balancing the interests of all parties affected, including the child with disability, the approved provider, educators and other children.

Support professional — Professionals who provide health and wellbeing support to children and families, such as paediatricians and medical specialists (primary health), speech pathologists, occupational therapists, psychologists, and early intervention providers (allied health), and inclusion support facilitators, early childhood intervention professionals, social workers, and disability support coordinators and facilitators.

Human rights – Defined by the Australian Human Rights Commission as recognising the inherent value of each person, regardless of background, where they live, what they look like,

what they think or what they believe. Human rights are based on principles of dignity, equality and mutual respect, which are shared across cultures, religions and philosophies. They are about being treated fairly, treating others fairly and having the ability to make genuine choices in our daily lives.

6. Guidelines

River Region Early Education recognises the importance of understanding barriers to inclusion for children and families related to:

- Disability, developmental delay, neurodiversity and chronic medical conditions,
- Cultural background and first language, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture,
- Gender and sexual identity, and
- Family circumstances, including sole parents, same-sex parents, foster families, multigenerational families, low income, low literacy, geographical isolation, and experience of trauma.

RREE inclusion strategies include the following:

a) Inclusive language and resources

- RREE Code of Conduct, Philosophy, and Values include requirements related to treating people with dignity and respect and upholding their human rights.
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and culture acknowledged in the organisational Philosophy, on the RREE website, in email signatures, at official gatherings and at the start of every meeting, using *NQS5.38B RREE Acknowledgement of Country Guidelines.*
- Consultation with local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and other communities and organisations to help overcome barriers to inclusion for local children and families.
- Use of inclusive language in resources, documentation, and communication, including:
    - o Neutral language related to gender and sexuality, for example *parent* rather than assuming mother and/or father, not assuming families will be heteronormative or have a traditional structure, using gender-neutral pronouns such as *they* or *them* if unsure of a person's preferred pronoun, and asking for a person's gender identity rather than gender or gender at birth,
    - o Person-centred language that focuses on the individual rather than their demographic, for example *person with disability*, *person who has autism, accessible parking*, but also respects how each person chooses to identify, for example a person may prefer to be referred to as autistic rather than as a person with autism,
    - o Respectful language when referring to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples that reflects the preferences of local communities, for example recognising local languages and community before using broader terms, and not using abbreviations such as ATSI, and
    - o Culturally inclusive language that recognise differences in naming systems for example asking for *given name* and *family name* on forms.
- Ensuring that resources for children reflect:
    - o Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives relevant to local communities,
    - o A diversity of cultural backgrounds,

- o First languages that reflect the experiences of enrolled children,
- o Gender equality,
- o Varying abilities, disabilities, medical conditions and neurodivergence, and
- o A diversity of family structures such as solo parents, blended families, same-sex parents, multigenerational families, and foster families.

b) Inclusive educational program and learning environments

- Service inclusion plans that are reviewed regularly and identify specific barriers to inclusion that children may experience.
- An educational program that is child-centred, with each child's current knowledge, strengths, ideas, culture, abilities and interests as a foundation for the program,
- Child-directed learning where each child's agency is promoted, enabling them to make choices and decisions that influence events and their world.
- Indoor and outdoor spaces, buildings, fixtures and fittings that support access for every child, including making reasonable adjustments and supplying adaptive equipment to support inclusion and participation.
- Educators planning, implementing, modifying or changing play materials to encourage each child's participation and to allow them to experience success.
- Educators ensuring that education and early intervention happen in everyday environments, such as play-based learning in learning spaces alongside peers.
- Educators planning learning environments that include a range of materials and equipment with appropriate levels of challenge where all children are encouraged to explore, experiment and take appropriate risks in their learning according to their current capacities, strengths and interests.
- Educators demonstrating responsive and meaningful interactions to build trusting relationships that engage and support each child to feel secure, confident and included.
- The dignity and rights of every child maintained by supporting children to make choices and decisions, experience consequences, manage their emotions and behaviour, develop empathy and challenge discrimination.
- Services working in partnership with families and support professionals through transparent and open communication, supportive and respectful relationships, and an openness to different perspectives and ideas.

c) Identifying inclusion and support needs

- Gathering information at enrolment to identify cultural background, first language, gender identity, medical conditions, dietary requirements, disability or developmental delay, family circumstances including foster care, out of home care, parenting and court orders, low income, and other inclusion and support needs.
- Gathering information at enrolment or when needed using *NQS5.38A Inclusion and Support Form* to identify details of a child's inclusion needs, including agencies and support professionals, physical, sensory or self-soothing, mobility, behaviour, functional independence with daily routines, communication, supervision, and the child's strengths and interests.
- Annual completion of *NQS1.10 A1 Family Profile* and *NQS1.10 A2 Child Profile* to further identity children's strengths, interests, abilities, goals, any physical, emotional, behavioural, or learning challenges and any services or professionals supporting the child.
- Identification of children with emerging inclusion support needs through:
  - o Assessment to identify where a child is not reaching developmental milestones,

- o Support for educators to identify and positively manage challenging behaviours,
        - o Observation tools to identify frequency, patterns and examples of children's abilities and behaviours.
- The development of Individual Learning Plans in collaboration with children, their family and support professionals where a child is identified as having inclusion support needs.
- The development of a Behaviour Support Plan in collaboration with children, their family and support professionals where a child is identified as having additional behaviour support needs.
- Accessing relevant funding, professional expertise and support services to assist in the delivery of inclusive programs.
- Accessing professional development and learning for educators and leaders to better understand barriers to inclusion and improve inclusive practice and programs.

d) Individual Learning Plans and Individual Behaviour Support Plans

Where there is an indication that a child has inclusion support needs, identified either through the enrolment process, through assessment or observation of a child's progress or development, or by notification from a parent after the child has accessed a support professional:

- If during enrolment, the child's parent/guardian provides further information via the *NQS5.38A Inclusion and Support Form*, or
- If during attendance, more than one documented observation of a child within the learning environment identifies that individual planning will increase their inclusion,
- Where any changes to program, practice, environment or resources are required, an Individual Learning Plan, using *NQS5.38C Individual Learning Plan Template*, is developed in collaboration with the family and any support professionals, with progress tracked regularly,
- Where support for behaviour management is needed, an *Individual Behaviour Support Plan,* using *NQS5.38F Individual Behaviour Support Plan Template,* is developed in collaboration with the family and any support professionals if relevant,
- Families are supported with referral to support professionals, such as early intervention providers or allied health professionals, where this is needed,
- Reasonable adjustments are made to the learning environment to assist with participation,
- Support is sought from inclusion support agencies, such as KU Sector Capacity Building Support, and
- Where a child is transitioning from one education and care space to another, for example between rooms, services or to school, information is shared in accordance with NQS6.44 Transitions Policy.

Additional state or federal funding may be available to the service to provide inclusion support for eligible children, such as an additional educator in the child's room when they are in attendance. Additional educators do not necessarily provide dedicated one-on-one support for the child but increase the capacity of all educators to provide inclusion support.

e) Working collaboratively with families and support professionals

RREE understands that inclusion is achieved when children, families, education and care services and early childhood intervention and other professionals work as a team with the child. This includes other education professionals where a child is transitioning between education services or to school. As part of an inclusion team that works with and for the child, services and educators:

- Have shared conversations with the child, families and professionals and listen to and identify hopes, needs, problems, thinking, goals and ideas,
- Find common ground to focus on together to strengthen outcomes for the child,
- Agree on the path forward and assign responsibilities, and
- Keep connected and check in to identify changes in the child's needs or outcomes and to maintain connections.

Greater outcomes for children can be achieved when early intervention happens in children's everyday environments, such as within education and care learning spaces with their peers.

Where an early childhood intervention or other support professional will be working within a service with the child:

- Consent from families to share information with the professional or agencies will be collected using *NQS5.38B Permission to Share Information Form* or on a form provided by a specific inclusion agency, such as *KU Permission To Share Personal Information Form*,
- Where possible, support will occur within play-based settings, with the child's peers, and
- Where support will be ongoing (more than a single instance) the professional may be asked to complete *NQS5.38D Inclusion Support Statement* to provide a written understanding of responsibilities, expectations and confidentiality and child protection requirements.

7. Relevant Legislation, Regulations and Standards

Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (Cth)	
22	Education
Education and Care Services National Regulation	
74	Documenting of child assessments or evaluations for delivery of educational program
155	Interactions with children
156	Relationships in groups
160	Child enrolment records to be kept by approved provider – h) any special considerations for the child, for example cultural, religious or dietary requirements or additional needs
National Quality Standards	
1.3.1	Each child's learning and development is assessed or evaluated as part of an ongoing cycle of observation, analysing learning, documentation, planning, implementation and reflection.
5.1.1	Responsive and meaningful interactions build trusting relationships which engage and support each child to feel secure, confident and included.
5.1.2	The dignity and rights of every child are maintained.
5.2.1	Children are supported to collaborate, learn from and help each other.
5.2.2	Each child is supported to regulate their own behaviour, respond appropriately to the behaviour of others and communicate effectively to resolve conflicts.

6.1.1	Families are supported from enrolment to be involved in the service and contribute to service decisions.
6.1.2	The expertise, culture, values and beliefs of families are respected and families share in decision-making about their child's learning and wellbeing.
6.2.2	Effective partnerships support children's access, inclusion and participation in the program.
Child Safe Standards	
4	Equity is upheld and diverse needs are taken into account
Early Years Learning Framework Learning Outcomes	
1	Children have a strong sense of identity
2	Children are connected with and contribute to their world
3	Children have a strong sense of wellbeing
4	Children are confident and involved learners
5	Children are effective communicators
Early Years Learning Framework Principles	
	Secure, respectful, and reciprocal relationships
	Respect for diversity
	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives
	Equity, inclusion, and high expectations
Early Years Learning Framework Practices	
	Responsiveness to children
	Cultural responsiveness

8. Related Documents

Doc #	Attachments
NQS5.38A	Inclusion and Support Form
NQS5.38B	Permission to Share Information Form
NQS5.38C	Individual Learning Plan Template
NQS5.38D	Inclusion Support Statement
NQS5.38E	Acknowledgment of Country Guidelines
NQS5.38F	Individual Behaviour Support Plan Template

Doc #	Intersections with other key documents
NQS7.45	Code of Conduct Policy

NQS5.37	Interactions with Children Policy
NQS1.10	Educational Program and Practice Policy
	KU Guiding Children's Behaviour (book)
	KU SCBP Permission To Share Personal Information Form
	KU NSW/ACT Inclusion Agency Permission to Share Personal Information Form
	KU Social Emotional Resource Tool
	KU Analysing the Physical Environment
	KU Observation Summary for the IBSP
	KU The Thermometer
	KU ABC Chart
	KU Behaviour Slide Response Model
	KU Behaviour Frequency Chart
	Education NSW Observation Templates (various)

9. Document Control

Doc #	Doc Title	Version	Approved	Next Review
NQS5.38	Inclusion Policy	1	September 2018	September 2020
NQS5.38	Inclusion Policy	2	September 2021	September 2024
NQS5.38	Inclusion Policy (minor changes)	2a	January 2024	September 2024
NQS5.38	Inclusion Policy	3	April 2025	April 2028