

Client Diversity Policy

1.0 Purpose

The Women's Housing Company (WHC) recognises, respects and values the diversity of its staff, tenants, clients and the community in which it operates.

2.0 Scope

For the purpose of this policy all Board members, staff, tenants, clients, students and visitors of the WHC will endeavour to ensure diversity is recognised, valued and respected.

2.1 Definitions

Culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) refers to different linguistic, religious, racial and ethnic backgrounds. Cultural diversity embraces Indigenous Australian and multicultural perspectives.

Culturally secure ways of working respect the legitimate rights, values and expectations of people and acknowledge the diversity within and between communities living in remote, regional and metropolitan areas.

A **disability** may be defined as an intellectual, psychiatric, cognitive, neurological, sensory or physical impairment or a combination of those impairments.

Diversity refers to aspects of people such as beliefs, attitudes, languages, social circumstances, ability, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender history, health status and age.

Diverse sexualities include people identifying as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender or intersex (LGBTI).

Inclusive language is free of bias and discrimination and avoids stereotyping and mistaken assumptions about people on the basis of their sex, marital status, pregnancy or potential pregnancy, breast feeding, sexual orientation, gender history, health status, race, nationality, colour or ethnic origin, age, religious or political conviction, impairment or disability, family responsibility or family status.

3.0 Policy statement

Valuing diversity contributes to better outcomes for tenants and clients. Information about the WHC and its programs and services is accessible to individuals and groups with specific diversity attributes.

The WHC endeavours to provide individuals seeking its support with care that is free from stigma, discrimination and stereotyping.

The WHC is committed to providing sensitive and relevant services for clients with diverse needs.

Unlawful discrimination will not be tolerated by Board members, staff, tenants, clients, students, volunteers, contractors, and visitors of the WHC and its service partners.

3.1 Implementing the policy

The WHC Board of Directors endeavours to ensure decisions and actions relating to diversity are transparent and respectful. The WHC has a Code of Conduct that addresses diversity that the Board, staff, volunteers and students sign

All Board members, staff, volunteers and students are made aware of this policy during orientation.

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Board members and staff are provided with ongoing support and professional development to assist them to implement diversity policies and practices effectively.

The WHC endeavours to use diversity sensitive practices and seeks to provide all clients with a welcoming, inclusive environment. As far as is practicable, disclosures regarding personal diversity are determined by the tenant or client, and confidentiality is maintained.

Staff understand and endeavour to use diversity sensitive client communication strategies.

3.2 Legal responsibilities

The WHC aims to ensure its policies and practices are free from discrimination and comply with anti-discrimination legislation.

3.3 Client attributes

Board members, staff, volunteers and students strive to make themselves aware of specific issues related to, and respond effectively to, diversity aspects of tenants and clients, including but not limited to:

- Cultural and linguistic backgrounds
- Aboriginality
- Sexuality
- Gender / gender history
- Age
- Health
- Disability
- Religious and spiritual beliefs

In supporting tenants and clients with diverse needs, staff acknowledge personal, cultural and social issues beyond the initial issues that prompted referral to the WHC and facilitate integration of a case management approach into the client's support, ensuring referral to and liaison with appropriate services.

The WHC promotes and provides access to information about its services in a manner which is likely to reach potential clients with diverse needs.

3.4 Working with Aboriginal people

WHC staff strive to have an understanding of the specific cultural and historical patterns that have structured Aboriginal people's lives in the past and the ways in which these patterns continue to be expressed in contemporary Australia.

The WHC aims to use culturally secure ways of working with Aboriginal people, their families and communities, ensuring services:

- Incorporate an Aboriginal holistic concept of health and wellbeing
- Are grounded in an Aboriginal understanding of the historical factors, including traditional life, the impact of colonisation and the ongoing effects
- Aim to strengthen Aboriginal family systems of care, control and responsibility
- Work from empowerment principles
- Understand the need for developing rapport and trust with Aboriginal people to better provide care and services

3.5 Working with people from Culturally and Linguistically Diverse backgrounds

The WHC endeavours to consider issues of culture and diversity in the delivery of programs and services.

The WHC involves other services to support the needs of culturally diverse clients and is aware of potential issues when considering using an interpreter. Client concerns may include confidentiality, the interpreter coming from their own community or being known to them, and difficulty translating some languages accurately.

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3.6 Working with people with a disability

The WHC will not preclude client access to programs and services on the grounds of disability. Education, information and support are provided to staff and volunteers on service responsibilities and best practice when working with people with disabilities.

Working relationships with disability services are developed. Where appropriate, clients are linked to disability support networks as part of case management and support.

3.7 Employment practice

The WHC recognises and harnesses the diverse talents and life experiences of its staff, attracting and retaining people from equal employment opportunity target groups and other diversity areas.

Staff recruitment, selection, induction, training and development promotes a diverse workforce which reflects the diversity of the community sector and clients seeking support.

4.0 Related Policies and other documents

Code of Conduct

Equal Opportunity, Discrimination, Harassment and Bullying Policy

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