

TOOL: Cultural diversity in policy

An organisation's policies demonstrate its commitments and expectations. By designing and adjusting your approach to service delivery, you can create programs or services that people will be attracted to. Considering diversity in developing policy allows organisations to effectively meet client and staff needs.

Essential information

Your organisation already operates under the following laws, which makes discrimination unlawful:

- *Sex Discrimination Act 1984 (Cth)*
- *Racial Discrimination Act 1975 (Cth)*
- *Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (Cth)*
- *Age Discrimination Act 2004 (Cth)*
- *Australian Human Rights Commission Act 1986 (Cth)*
- *Anti-Discrimination Act 1977 (NSW)*
- various NSW industrial, civil and administrative legislation.

Considering cultural diversity when developing policy ensures you engage effectively with culturally diverse communities across all levels of your organisation, its policies, programs and services.

It also creates a strategic framework to build internal capabilities and a culture of inclusion. Policy development needs a whole-of-organisation approach, starting with the leadership and spreading through all levels, supported by systemic and individual commitment and capacity.



What you need to do

Ask the right questions¹

- does your organisation have specific policies that address cultural competency concerns (including culture, language, religion, dietary needs) of both clients and staff?
- does your organisation have a policy of outreach to diverse communities?
- does your organisation have an anti-discrimination policy that covers clients, carers and volunteers as well as internal staff?
- does the policy review process identify how well the policy reflects cultural competency principles?
- do your clients and their communities have input into your policy development processes?

Consider what assumptions your organisation makes about cultural diversity, what steps need to be taken and who needs to be involved

- compare current policies against your workforce and client demographics
- address key diversity issues when developing or modifying policies. This might include bilingual workers, interpreters, cultural competency, discrimination, and religious or spiritual considerations.
- develop ongoing monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to continually meet the changing needs of your clients and workforce. It is vital to examine how diversity issues are integrated across workplace planning and practices.

Recognising cultural diversity in your workforce and existing and potential clients gives a framework to achieve and assess the best possible outcomes for everyone. It helps with planning and can increase client and staff satisfaction and retention.

¹ Robertson HL, Katrivesis M, Travaglia J. (2015) *Building cultural competence in your organisation: An assessment tool for the disability services sector*. Georigraphy and Associates, Sydney Australia