



Gender Equality Policy

000 Policy Category	
000 Duty of Care	
School Policy and Advisory Guide Reference: http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/principals/spag/Pages/spag.aspx	Last updated December 2017
Last Ratified by School Council	December 2017
Line Manager	
Origin	WFGS Or School

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Introduction

Wodonga Federation of Government Schools and its member schools: Wodonga Primary School, Wodonga South Primary School, Wodonga West Primary School, Melrose Primary School, Baranduda Primary School, Wodonga Middle Years College, Wodonga Senior Secondary College, Belvoir Special School are committed to creating a school community where all staff and students are equally respected and valued and enjoy equity of both opportunity and outcomes.

Wodonga Federation of Government Schools and its member schools recognises that gender inequality has the potential to limit and impact negatively on the safety, education, employment, family lives and opportunities of staff and students, particularly women and girls, in the immediate and long term.

Under the *Victorian Equal Opportunity Act 2010* all organisations have a *positive duty* to take proactive steps to prevent discriminatory practices.ⁱ Wodonga Federation of Government Schools and its member schools recognises the prevalence and impact of gender-based discrimination and harassment, and is committed to building a school culture that challenges the stereotypes, power differences and social norms that foster gender inequality.

Wodonga Federation of Government Schools and its member schools **recognises that gender inequality is both structural and individual**; this means it is not only the result of individual attitudes and actions, but also of biases in structures, systems, policies and processes throughout our community.

Girls and boys, women and men are subject to gendered stereotypes and expectations about how they should behave, think and act. These gendered stereotypes and expectations contribute to gender inequality by assigning unequal value, status and power to women and men. These expectations are reinforced by structures, systems, norms and cultures that often privilege the knowledge, rights, perspectives and skills of males over females.

Gender inequality can be both a cause and a consequence of direct and indirect discrimination. This discrimination is sometimes the result of unconscious bias which is when our behaviours, choices and practices are shaped by underlying assumptions and attitudes without us realising. Gender inequality is evident throughout our society, and research suggests it is one of the key factors driving the prevalence of gender-based violence.ⁱⁱ

Wodonga Federation of Government Schools and its member schools recognises that schools are vital spaces in our community to promote gender equality and prevent violence against women. Every policy, practice and activity have the potential to reinforce or challenge gender stereotypes and gendered inequality.

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On behalf of the whole school community, the principals, the School Councils, Wodonga Federation of Government Schools and the Student Leadership Council support this policy.

Our commitments

Wodonga Federation of Government Schools and its member schools, as an education institution and an employer, is committed to promoting **gender equality** and to ensuring equality of opportunity and outcomes for all staff and students.

Gender equality involves equality of opportunity and equality of results. It includes the redistribution of resources and responsibilities between women and men and the transformation of the underlying causes and structures of gender inequality to achieve substantive equality. It is about recognising diversity and disadvantage to ensure equal outcomes for all and therefore often requires women-specific programs and policies to end existing inequalities.

Wodonga Federation of Government Schools and its member schools will ensure that all staff, students and school policies, procedures, systems and structures actively promote gender equality and seek to expose and redress gender inequities.

School culture and environment

All students and staff are responsible for promoting gender equality and modelling respectful relationships. All staff and students will be held accountable if they use language and/or demonstrate behaviour that:

- promotes unequal power relations between women and men
- perpetuates harmful gender stereotypes
- condones violence against women.

For example: Unacceptable behaviour includes accessing or sharing sexist or discriminatory materials at school, during school hours or using school property, using sexist, stereotyping or discriminatory language, dismissing acts of gender-based violence as trivial, making jokes that rely on gender stereotypes, and victim blaming when discussing gender-based violence.

Promoting gender equality and modelling respectful relationships is just as important for staff as it is for students.

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Wodonga Federation of Government Schools and its member schools will work to ensure all staff feel respected, safe and valued in the workplace, and will take proactive measures to prevent and eliminate gender discrimination and provide equal opportunities for all staff. This will include promoting gender equality in school leadership, ensuring processes and policies are free of bias, and supporting all staff to balance work and family commitments.

For example: Commitments include actively supporting and/or mentoring female staff, reviewing recruitment and professional processes to eliminate unconscious gender bias, facilitating flexible work arrangements and family leave in line with department guidelines, and providing private breastfeeding facilities.

Wodonga Federation of Government Schools and its member schools will support staff who experience domestic/family violence or sexual assault including by making reasonable efforts to grant appropriate leave, adjust work assignments or accommodate requests for flexible work hours.

Teaching and learning

Wodonga Federation of Government Schools and its member schools are committed to supporting all staff to explicitly promote gender equality in their teaching practices, the formal curriculum and their engagement with students outside the classroom.

Wodonga Federation of Government schools' member schools will ensure adequate support and professional development is provided to staff across key learning areas to select, review and deliver curriculum that:

- represents the range of experience, knowledge, skills and aspirations of girls and women, boys and men
- provides opportunities for students to understand, identify and challenge gender inequality, harassment, discrimination, gender stereotypes and violence against women.

For example: Commitments include implementing best practice curriculum which addresses the underlying causes of violence against women, ensuring gender is considered in curriculum review processes across all key learning areas, and professional learning for staff about gender stereotypes, gender equality or violence against women.

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Behaviour is affected by the culture and environment in which it occurs. To promote gender equality it is important to recognise the way that gender stereotypes can influence what is seen as acceptable behaviour for both girls and boys, and the impact this can have on both student behaviour and the ways behaviour is managed.

For example: Unacceptable behaviour includes male students displaying particular behaviours as a means of proving or asserting their masculinity, teachers dismissing problem behaviours as normal or natural for either gender, and using gendered insults as a means of motivating behaviour change such as 'Do you want gossip like a bunch of girls or just get this done?' or 'Just be a man, get it together and move on'.

Many subtle forms of gender-based discrimination, harassment or violence can be invisible, normalised or seen as acceptable.

The school's behaviour management framework:

- Clearly sets out and models expected behaviours for students and staff
- Recognises how gendered social dynamics and norms can influence student behaviour
- Gives staff tools to engage students in challenging gender stereotypes
- Gives staff tools to identify and respond to dominating or disruptive behaviours so they do not inhibit the learning of other students.

Responsibilities

The principal of each member school is accountable for implementation of this policy. The principal of the school may appoint a coordinator to support implementation of this policy.

This policy will be reviewed regularly by Wodonga Federation of Government Schools and its member schools and ratified by each member School Council.

All members of the school community have a responsibility to respect and promote the rights of others.

Wodonga Federation of Government Schools and its member schools encourages all members of the school community to take appropriate bystander action to intervene safely and respectfully when they see or hear about sexist language, sex discrimination, sexual harassment or a potentially violent situation in the school community.

Complaints procedures

Complaints procedures provide an avenue to address unacceptable behaviour. These

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procedures are outlined in the Wodonga Federation of Government Schools and its member's schools Equal Opportunity Policy.

Any member of the school community who raises an issue of gender inequality will not be victimised or otherwise unfairly treated or disadvantaged. All complaints of victimisation will be taken seriously, investigated and acted upon quickly as possible.

Relevant Policies and guidance

- Wodonga Federation of Government Schools' Equal Opportunity and Sexual Harassment Policy
- Wodonga Federation of Government Schools' Domestic Violence, Family Violence and Sexual Assault Policy
- Wodonga Federation of Government Schools' Student Engagement Policy
- Wodonga Federation of Government Schools Child Safe Code of Conduct

Victorian Department of Education and Training

- Sexual Harassment Policy
- Building Respectful and Safe Schools
- Managing Diversity and Inclusive Workplaces
- Flexible Work in Victorian Government Schools

Endorsed by _____ School Council and effective as of: _____
Member school name Insert date

ⁱ Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission (2011) *Positive duty: Know your responsibilities*, <http://www.humanrightscommission.vic.gov.au/index.php/our-resources-and-publications/know-your-responsibilities-brochures/item/133-positive-duty-know-your-responsibilities-aug-2011>.

ⁱⁱ Our Watch, ANROWS and VicHealth (2015) *Change the story: A shared framework for the primary prevention of violence against women and their children in Australia*, Our Watch, Melbourne.

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