



## PHILOSOPHICAL BASIS

Panton Hill Primary School is committed to a safe, productive and discrimination free school and workplace, where diversity is valued, equality of opportunity provided, and all staff are able to work to their capacities. The concept of equal opportunity is based on respect, tolerance and a belief in the value of all individuals. We have a responsibility for ensuring that a safe and discrimination free workplace is maintained so that the process of learning and teaching, and all related work place roles can proceed uninterrupted.

Schools have a particular responsibility for providing positive conditions of learning which requires that they systematically address harassment and bullying behaviour within whole school functioning through the active building of an environment that encourages cooperative and inclusive behaviour and positive, mutually respectful relationships amongst all members of the school community. All employees have an important role and are encouraged to contribute to the achievement of a professional and productive workplace culture by carefully considering their own behaviour and its possible effects on others.

Under legislation governing public sector staff members and Department of Education policy, Department workplaces and schools are required to implement the following four merit and equity goals:

- managing diversity
- equal employment opportunity
- anti-discrimination policies ~anti-bullying and anti-harassment policies, anti-sexual harassment
- grievance review

## DEFINITIONS:

Equal opportunity promotes recognition and acceptance of everyone's rights to equality of opportunity. There are two types of discrimination:

1. Direct Discrimination is treating someone with a recognised attribute less favourably than a person without that attribute.
2. Indirect discrimination is when a person imposes or proposes to impose a requirement, condition or practice that a higher proportion of people without a particular attribute can or could comply with. E.g. a dress code that discriminates against particular cultural groups.

Harassment is any verbal, physical or sexual conduct (including gestures) which is uninvited, unwelcome or offensive to a person. It is usually directed at a person because of their gender, race, creed or abilities. It can be subtle or explicit.

Bullying is repeated oppression, physical or psychological, of a less powerful person by a more powerful person or group.

Workplace Bullying is repeated, unreasonable behaviour directed towards an employee, or group of employees, that creates a risk to that employee's health and safety. It include behaviour that intimidates, offends, degrades or



humiliates an employee, possibly in front of others and can involve Principal Class personnel, employees, contractors and visitors to the school or students.

Racial Vilification is a term used to describe statements that express racial intolerance. A statement that offends or intimidates may also be made without words, such as displaying an offensive symbol or making an offensive gesture, offensive material on clothing.

## **GUIDELINES:**

1. Our Equal Opportunity Policy has been developed in line with current State and Federal anti-discrimination legislation: the Victorian Equal Opportunity Act 1995, the Racial and Religious Tolerance Act 2001 and the Public Sector Management and Employment Act 1998 plus the Commonwealth Sex Discrimination Act 1984, the Racial Discrimination Act 1975, the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Act 1986, The Disability Discrimination Act 1992 plus the Gender Equity: A Framework for Australian Schools and Framework for Student Support Services in Victorian Government Schools and the Victorian Occupational Health and Safety Act 1985, the Education Department's Health, Safety and Well-Being Policy (2003) and Complaints Resolution Policy and procedures.

2. Panton Hill Primary School has a legal responsibility to provide an educational service that DETs not sexually harass or discriminate, directly or indirectly against any person because of their:

- age
- impairment/disability
- industrial activity
- pregnancy
- sex
- religious belief or activity
- lawful sexual activity
- sexual orientation
- gender identity
- marital, parental or carer status
- physical features
- political belief or activity
- race
- personal association (with a person who is identified by reference to any of the above attributes) or breastfeeding.

(All schools are affected by the Acts because we educate children, employ people, provide goods and services and organize sporting teams.)

3. The school will appoint a staff member as Equal Opportunity Coordinator to provide support and advice to the school community on equal opportunity principles and practices implemented within the school and work alongside the leadership team.

4. The Equal Opportunity Coordinator will liaise with the nominated EO Contact Person and Principal



**5.** Processes should be clearly and regularly communicated to all school employees, the school council, parents and students detailing:

- the aspects of their lives protected by equal opportunity laws
- what unlawful discrimination, harassment and bullying is
- that any unlawful discrimination or harassment will not be tolerated and
- action that will be taken where this occurs. The school community should be encouraged to practise the principles of equal opportunity as outlined in this document.

**6.** Attitudes, behaviour and language, which contribute to the abolition of racial vilification, harassment and bullying, will be encouraged.

**7.** The EO Coordinator will investigate the promotion of EO focused activities eg. Harmony Day and link into the Whole School Plan.

**8.** Inclusive learning strategies and language should be used in all classes.

**9.** Inclusive resources should be used in all classes. This will be one of the criteria for new purchases. Every effort will be made to replace unsuitable material.

**10.** All students should have equal access to physical resources, (including equipment, space and materials,) teachers' time and all areas of learning.

**11.** Our school should actively build an environment that encourages cooperative and inclusive behaviour and positive, mutually respectful relationships amongst all members of the school community. It will promote positive student behaviour, prevent anti-social behaviour, encourage care, courtesy and respect for the rights of others.

**12.** The school should provide a cultural, social and educational environment, which will encourage equal participation by all members of the school community.

**13.** This program should ensure that gender plays no part in determining a child's access to educational opportunities.

**14.** This program should ensure that all school policies will demonstrate the principles of equal opportunity. Any imbalances of opportunity should be addressed by affirmative action.

**15.** It is the responsibility of principals and managers to provide staff and school councils with access to appropriate and up to date DET Policies and Guidelines related to Equal Opportunity and to encourage staff to participate in diversity and equal opportunity professional development and training. Management will incorporate any new guidelines into school and workplace human resource management processes. (Both teachers and students are liable for their actions. Schools are liable for the actions of their employees, unless they can show that they took reasonable precautions to prevent their employee from contravening the Act.)

**16.** All employees are expected to:

- comply with the State and Commonwealth anti-discrimination legislation and the Department's Managing Diversity and Equal Opportunity Policy and Guideline or its successor



- model appropriate behaviour or treat information in relation to discrimination allegations with appropriate confidentiality
- not victimize a person for making, or being involved in, a complaint of discrimination
- participate in any anti-discrimination training provided by the Department

**17.** Principals, managers and school councils are also expected to:

- comply with the Department's Managing Diversity and Equal Opportunity: Policy and Guidelines
- promote this policy at the workplace
- treat seriously complaints and behaviour that may constitute discrimination and take immediate action to rectify the situation
- not victimize a person for making, or being involved in, a complaint of discrimination
- refer to this policy within the school charter.

The school, in its direct capacity as an employer and through its responsibility for the professional development of the Department of Education employed staff, apply the principles of equal employment opportunity in its procedures for recruitment, promotion, staff development and treatment of all personnel.

**18.** Defined Complaints Resolution Procedures will be developed for all grievances and the process communicated to the whole school community as per the Complaints Resolution Policy.

**19** The use of appropriate graded sanctions and consequences for students, which are consistent with DET guidelines will be developed, will be known by students and will be fairly and consistently applied. An information flyer will be printed to inform all of the school community of our approach.

**20.** The school's policies and practices will be regularly reviewed to ensure consistency with the Victorian Equal Opportunity Act (1995) and associated state and commonwealth acts and departmental policies.

**21.** All staff members will be provided with a copy of this policy and will be reminded of their rights and responsibilities in relation to the Victorian Equal Opportunity Act (1995) and associated state and commonwealth acts.

**22.** A contacts and resources list will be provided for staff information and professional development