

# Access and Equity Policy

## 1 Purpose

The purpose of this Policy is to provide a frame of reference in providing and maintaining training services that reflect fair and reasonable opportunity for all participants, regardless of their diversity; allowing everyone to freely participate in the learning environment free from discrimination, harassment, bullying and vilification.

## 2 Policy Statement

CEDAR Centre is committed to providing quality training and assessment products and services in compliance with the Standards for Registered Training Organisations (RTOs) 2015.

CEDAR Centre promotes, encourages and values equity and diversity with regard to participants. CEDAR Centre will ensure services offered are provided in a fair and equitable manner to all participants, free from bias.

CEDAR Centre is committed to providing flexible learning and assessment options, allowing participants alternatives which recognize the diversity of their individual needs and circumstances aiding them in their learning goals.

CEDAR Centre will ensure:

- a) all training and assessment policies and procedures incorporate access and equity principles;
- b) all participants have equitable access to the benefits of training and assessment irrespective of their gender, age, race, religion, culture, linguistic background, marital status, geographic location, socio-economic background, disability, sexual preference, family responsibility or political conviction;
- c) all nominations and enrolments into training courses and programs will be conducted at all times in an ethical and responsible manner, ensuring fairness and compliance with Equal Opportunity legislation; and
- d) all participants have equitable access to training resources, facilities, equipment, support services, information, training and assessment personnel, materials, assessment opportunities, training opportunities.

## 3 Definitions

**The following words and expressions have the following specific meaning, as in the Standards for Registered Training Organisations (RTOs) 2015.**

### **3.1 Access and equity**

Means policies and procedures aimed at ensuring that VET is responsive to the individual needs of participants whose age, gender, cultural or ethnic background, disability, sexuality, language skills, literacy or numeracy level, unemployment, imprisonment or remote location may present a barrier to access, participation and the achievement of suitable outcomes.

### **3.2 Discrimination**

Discrimination occurs when a person is treated less favourably than others due to the person's circumstances, characteristics or beliefs.

#### **a) Direct Discrimination**

Direct discrimination takes place when a person, organisation or group of persons is treated less fairly than others on the basis of stereotyped beliefs or views.

#### **b) Indirect Discrimination**

Indirect discrimination includes rules, practices or policies which appear to be non-discriminatory and equally applicable, but operate in such a way that certain groups of people are excluded without just cause.

### **3.3 Workplace Harassment**

Harassment is any behaviour which is unwelcome, offends, humiliates or intimidates a person and causes the work environment to become unpleasant. If a person is being harassed then their ability to do their work is affected as they often become stressed and suffer health problems.

Harassment may result from behaviour which is not intended to offend or harm, such as jokes or unwanted attention however, this does not mean that it is lawful.

### **3.4 Sexual Harassment**

The most common form of harassment is sexual harassment. Examples of sexual harassment include, but are not limited to:

- a) Unwanted touching
- b) Sexual innuendo propositions
- c) Nude pin-ups and posters
- d) Obscene telephone calls
- e) Wolf whistles

Sexual harassment can occur among peers or co-workers, and in subordinate-supervisor, supervisor-subordinate or staff-participant, participant-staff, participant-participant situations.

### **3.5 Verbal Harassment**

Examples of verbal harassment include, but are not limited to:

- a) Sexual comments, advances or propositions
- b) Lewd jokes or innuendos
- c) Racist comments or jokes
- d) Spreading rumours
- e) Comments or jokes about a person's disability, pregnancy, sexuality, age or religion

- f) Repeated questions about one's personal life
- g) Belittling someone's work or contribution in a meeting
- h) Threats, insults or abuse
- i) Offensive obscene language
- j) Obscene telephone calls, unsolicited letters, faxes and emails

### 3.6 Non-Verbal Harassment

Examples of non-verbal harassment include, but are not limited to:

- a) Leering (e.g. staring at a woman's breasts)
- b) Putting offensive material on notice boards, computer screen savers and emails
- c) Wolf whistling
- d) Nude or pornographic posters
- e) Displaying sexist or racist cartoons or literature
- f) Demoting, failing to promote, or transferring someone because they refuse requests for sexual favours
- g) Following someone home from work
- h) Standing very close to someone or unnecessarily leaning over them
- i) Mimicking someone with a disability
- j) Practical jokes that are unwelcome
- k) Ignoring someone, or being cold and distant to them
- l) Crude hand or body gestures

### 3.7 Physical Harassment

Examples of physical harassment include, but are not limited to:

- a) Unwelcome physical contact such as kissing, hugging, pinching, patting, touching, or brushing up against a person
- b) Indecent or sexual assault or attempted assault
- c) Hitting, pushing, shoving, spitting, or throwing objects at a person
- d) Unfastening a person's attire

## 4 Policy Principles

CEDAR Centre will not accept any form of discrimination and we will apply the following principles in support of access and equity:

### 4.1 Access and Equity Principles

- a) CEDAR Centre abides by access and equity principles.
- b) CEDAR Centre will respect a participant's right to privacy, confidentiality and be sensitive to participants needs.
- c) CEDAR Centre provides equal opportunity for all participants and is responsive to the individual needs of participants whose gender, pregnancy, race, marital status, sexuality, age, family/carer responsibilities, disability, transgender, political conviction, cultural or ethnic background, linguistic background, religious belief, geographic location, socio-economic background, employment/unemployment, imprisonment may present a barrier to access, participation and achievement of suitable outcomes.

- d) At enrolment, participants will be asked to identify personal needs or circumstances that may exist and for which they may require additional support (See Enrolment Policy).
- e) CEDAR Centre will ensure that all staff, employees, and contractors have access to the information and support needed to prevent discrimination, sexual harassment, bullying and violence, victimization, and vilification or to deal with it appropriately if it occurs.
- f) CEDAR Centre seeks to create a learning environment where all participants are respected and can develop their full potential.
- g) All participants are given fair and reasonable opportunity to attend and complete training.
- h) All staff are given fair and reasonable opportunity to participate in relevant decision making processes and the allocation of resources and services as required to fulfil their duties and responsibilities.
- i) Deficiencies will be investigated to determine whether a breach or policy deficiency exists. Should a discrepancy be proven, the impact of that breach or deficiency will be identified along with how the policy should be amended to eliminate the breach or deficiency in the future.
- j) All perceived deficiencies in the Access and Equity Policy are to be documented, assessed and reviewed by the CEO.
- k) CEDAR Centre will demonstrate its commitment by:
  - i. Selecting participants according to a fair and non-discriminatory process
  - ii. Making its training relevant for a diverse population
  - iii. Providing suitable access to facilities and resources
  - iv. Providing appropriate support services
  - v. Providing appropriate complaints procedures
  - vi. Consulting with relevant industry groups
  - vii. Raising awareness of equity issues with staff, contractor and participant.

## 4.2 Equal Opportunity

CEDAR Centre is an equal opportunity organisation and does not discriminate against or favour target groups in either recruiting or training, unless prescribed by funding contracts.

Target Groups are defined as:

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders;
- People with a disability;
- People from non-English speaking backgrounds;
- People in transition and other special groups (i.e. people re-entering the workforce, long term unemployed, sole parents, people with literacy problems, and those who have been institutionalised);
- Women;
- People from regionally isolated communities.

### 4.3 Special Needs/Considerations

- a) Participants intending to enrol for training with CEDAR Centre are requested prior to enrolment to advise if they have any disability, physical or other impairment which may adversely affect their ability to successfully undertake training and assessment.
- b) Participants are encouraged to discuss with CEDAR Centre any 'special needs' and/or 'reasonable adjustments' to the study environment which they consider are necessary or would assist them in the performance of their studies.
- c) ,in collaboration with the Participants, will assess the potential for the Participants to successfully complete the training which may include flexible delivery options to optimise the ease and benefit of the Participants' learning. However, no compromise to the integrity of the assessment against competency will be allowed.
- d) Participants with a disability are required to have the ability to fulfil the core requirements of the units of Competence to attain the relevant award. However, it is recognised that flexibility in arrangements may need to be implemented.

### 4.4 Language, Literacy and Numeracy

- a) Each Training Package sets a minimum requirement in language, literacy and numeracy skills of learners, with which must abide.
- b) CEDAR Centre makes appropriate concessions for language, literacy and numeracy issues of participants where these concessions do not compromise the requirements of the relevant Training Package and the integrity, equity and fairness of assessment.
- c) Where a Participant is deemed, either prior to enrolment or throughout the training program, to possess a lower level of language, literacy or numeracy than is the minimum requirement for the Training Package, CEDAR Centre will provide appropriate advice and support to the participant regarding further learning options. At times, further language or literacy development or remedial assistance may be required to be completed prior to the continuation or completion of the participants's course of study.

### 4.5 Harassment

- a) Harassment will not be tolerated at CEDAR Centre. If harassment occurs, the person responsible will be subject to disciplinary procedures. Disciplinary action will be taken against any staff or participant involved in such behaviour. This may include termination of employment and removal of the participant from the training course.
- b) Serious cases of harassment may constitute a criminal offence.
- c) CEDAR Centre will not tolerate behaviour which is considered to be sexual harassment and expects all staff, contractors and participants to treat each other with dignity and respect.

#### 4.6 Bullying and Violence

- a) CEDAR Centre will not tolerate bullying or violent behaviour and expects all staff, contractors and participants to treat each other with dignity and respect.
- b) CEDAR Centre recognises bullying and violence demeans and infringes the rights of individuals and groups, damaging the work and learning environment.

#### 4.7 Vilification

- a) CEDAR Centre will not tolerate behaviour which vilifies another person and expects all staff, contractors and participants to treat each other with dignity and respect.

#### 4.8 Complaints

- a) CEDAR Centre encourages informal resolutions of discrimination, sexual harassment, bullying and violence, victimization, and vilification grievances in the first instance, as close to the source as possible, with the option of conciliation or investigation of the complaint if necessary.
- b) Complaints will be investigated in a confidential manner and action will be taken to ensure that the discrimination/harassment stops. Appropriate warning or disciplinary action will be taken where harassment is found to have occurred.
- c) Those responsible for advising, conciliating or investigating a complaint must act fairly and impartially, they must act without bias and avoid any conflict of interest. The respondent must be given a fair opportunity to know the case against him or her and to be given the opportunity to make a considered response.
- d) All staff, participants and contractors involved with the complaint procedures will be treated with respect and courtesy. Enquiries and complaints will be dealt with in a sensitive, equitable, fair, and confidential manner. All attempts will be made to deal with matters expeditiously while ensuring all parties are provided with sufficient time to prepare and/or respond.
- e) CEDAR Centre acknowledges that it is of paramount importance and in the best interests of all parties that confidentiality is maintained during these procedures.
- f) CEDAR Centre encourages the reporting of behaviour that breaches equal opportunity policy, but will not tolerate vexatious or frivolous complaints.

#### 4.9 Victimization

- a) In order for complaints to be brought forward, complainants must feel secure in the knowledge that the CEDAR Centre procedures will be followed without fear of reprisal.
- b) CEDAR Centre will not victimise or treat any person unfairly for making a harassment complaint.
- c) CEDAR Centre will not tolerate behaviour of victimisation of another person and expects all staff, contractors and participants to treat each other with dignity and respect.
- d) Any complaint of victimisation will be treated in the same manner as a complaint of discrimination, sexual harassment or vilification.

## 5 Responsibilities

CEDAR Centre has a legal and moral obligation to provide equal opportunity in an environment free from discrimination for staff, contractors and participants to ensure that discrimination/harassment does not occur in the workplace.

CEDAR Centre will:

- Maintain policies and procedures for equal opportunities for all staff, contractors and participants;
- Disseminate policies and procedures to staff, contractors and participants;
- Examine all policies and practices, as they affect staff, contractors and participants to ensure the elimination of discrimination and harassment;
- Ensure that there is no discrimination against any individual participant or group of participants or staff, in access to facilities, products and services;
- Educate staff and contractors on the general goals and philosophy of equal opportunity together with the rationale for policies and practices which are adopted;
- Eliminate sexist and other discriminatory language from all publications and discourage the use of such language in all printed material and in the speech of its staff, contractors and participants;
- Establish and maintain mechanisms to deal with complaints.

### 5.1 CEO Responsibilities

CEO and Managers are responsible for participant equity.

The CEO will not condone nor engage in discriminatory/harassing behaviour.

The CEO is responsible for ensuring that all staff is aware of this policy and that complaints will be dealt with in accordance with the terms of the Complaints and Appeals Policy.

The CEO and Manager(s) are to ensure staff acts according to this policy and all participants are made aware of their rights and responsibilities pursuant to this policy.

The CEO will maintain the confidentiality of all complaints. If the CEO feels that they are not the appropriate person to deal with the complaint, they will refer the matter to either a member of the management team or an external independent party for review and/or action.

### 5.2 Staff, Contractors and Participants Responsibilities

CEDAR Centre staff, contractors and participants have the responsibility to:

- Act to prevent harassment, discrimination and victimization against others;
- Respect differences among other staff, participants and contractors, such as cultural and social diversity;
- Treat people fairly, without discrimination, harassment or victimization;
- Respect the rights of others;

- Respect people's rights to privacy and confidentiality;
- Refuse to join in with these behaviours;
- Support the person in saying no to these behaviours;
- Act as a witness if the person being harassed decides to lodge a complaint;
- Observe site rules or behaviour guidelines set by Trainers/Assessors;
- Behave in a manner that does not interfere with the learning of others; and
- Conduct themselves in a responsible manner while in training;
- Ensure the rights of all participants to have their say, balanced with the responsibility to listen to others and allow others to have their say.

If a staff, contractor or participant feels harassed, bullied or otherwise a victim of unwelcome behaviour, the staff, contractor or participant is encouraged to inform the person where the behaviour is unwanted, unacceptable and/or offensive. If the staff, contractor or participant feels unable to approach the person, or if the behaviour continues following their request that the behaviour cease, the CEO should be contacted.

## **6 Legislation**

This policy reflects our commitment to the following legislation:

- a) National Vocational Education and Training Regulator Act 2011 (NVR Act) – Commonwealth
- b) Vocational Education, Training and Employment Act 2000 (Queensland)
- c) Age Discrimination Act 2004 (Commonwealth)
- d) Disability Discrimination Act 2009 (Commonwealth)
- e) Racial Discrimination Act 1975 (Commonwealth)
- f) Sex Discrimination Act 1984 (Commonwealth)
- g) Anti-Discrimination Act 1991 (Queensland)

## **7 Records Management**

All documentation regarding complaints concerning Access and Equity matters are maintained in accordance with Records Management Policy. (See Records Management Policy)

## **8 Monitoring and Improvement**

All Access and Equity practices are monitored by the CEO and areas for improvement identified and acted upon. (See Continuous Improvement Policy)