



# Chosen Family Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Policy



## Vision

We are here to co-design your future, transforming disability services with the strength of family and the power of community. Together, we create spaces where everyone belongs, where your voice shapes the care you receive, and where your future is crafted with compassion. We envision dismantling oppressive technologies, systems, and moral frameworks, fostering a future grounded in true family and community values





## Mission

We envision a future where every participant can live confidently, free from barriers and biases. By fostering connection and belonging, we create communities where everyone feels valued and supported, and every individual can grow, contribute, and live with dignity. Replenishing imagination, co-designing the future, disrupting the disability sector with true family and community values. Provides refreshing disability and psychosocial services to all participants.

## Our Values

### A foundation for care rooted in connection and individuality.

At Chosen Family, we believe values should guide every action and decision. Our approach ensures that participants, families, and communities feel seen, supported, and valued.

-  **Belonging and Empathy** – Belonging starts with being seen and heard. We create spaces where every individual's voice matters, and their unique story is honoured.
-  **Joy** – Joy is at the heart of what we do. We celebrate every achievement and create meaningful moments to brighten each participant's day.
-  **Equity and Empowerment** – Genuine support means giving everyone a fair chance to grow. We focus on providing personalised care that fosters independence and helps participants confidently shape their futures.
-  **Trust**– Trust is built by showing up and following through. We prioritise open communication and consistency, creating strong, dependable relationships that participants and their families can rely on.

# 1. Acknowledgement of Country

Chosen Family is committed to cultivating inclusive environments for all. We celebrate, value and include people of all backgrounds, genders, sexualities, cultures, bodies and abilities. In the spirit of Reconciliation, Chosen Family Australia acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of the lands and waters across Australia. We pay our deepest respect to Elders past, present and emerging, and recognise their continuing connection to land, culture and community. Sovereignty was never ceded—this always was and always will be Aboriginal land.

## 2. Diversity Statement

### Diversity Statement | Chosen Family Australia

#### Belonging and Empathy

At Chosen Family Australia, we celebrate diversity as our greatest strength. We honour every individual's identity and lived experience, embracing differences across culture, race, disability, neurodiversity, gender, sexuality, faith, and more.

Inclusion is not just a value—it's a practice. We commit to safety, accessibility, and equity at every level, and actively work to dismantle systemic barriers that marginalise our communities.

Rooted in equity, belonging, and tenderness, we are reimagining care, co-creating futures, and disrupting the disability sector with love and true community. In this chosen family, everyone is seen, heard, and valued.

#### Longer Version

At Chosen Family Australia, we believe that every identity carries a story, every experience holds wisdom, and every difference is a thread in the tapestry of collective belonging. We are not simply an organisation—we are a gathering place for the voices and visions too often unheard.

We honour diversity not as a checkbox, but as the heartbeat of who we are. Our commitment reaches across cultures, races, ethnicities, ages, faiths, beliefs, abilities, neurotypes, sexual orientations, intersex variations, gender identities and expressions, parental and marital statuses, and every unique way a person exists in the world. We see you. You belong here.

Inclusion, to us, is not passive—it is a deliberate, daily act. It is in how we build our programs, shape our leadership, create our policies, and speak with one another. We centre safety. We demand accessibility. We champion equity. And we remain unwavering in our work to dismantle the systemic forces that exclude, marginalise, and silence.

We imagine a world unbound by the limitations of outdated frameworks and oppressive systems. A world where care is not conditional, where tenderness leads, and where community is not defined by blood, but by belonging. Through co-design, collective wisdom, and radical hope, we are reimagining the disability sector—and beyond.

- ✔ **Our vision is bold**— to dismantle the technologies, systems, and moral frameworks of oppression.
- ✔ **Our mission is clear** – to replenish imagination, co-create futures, and disrupt with love.
- ✔ **Our values are our roots**– Equity. Belonging. Tenderness.

We are Chosen Family. And in this family, there is room for all of you.

## 3. Purpose

This Policy outlines how Chosen Family Australia will fulfil its commitment to Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI), with a particular emphasis on inclusion for people with disability and intersecting identities.

## 4. Key Definitions

### 1. Definitions

#### Affirmative action

A set of policies and practices seeking to actively address historical and/or contemporary marginalisation of identifiable group or groups of people.

#### Biphobia

Abuse towards someone who is attracted to more than one gender, and even includes when that person's identity is erased. This can be in the form of telling someone that their sexuality is "just a phase", or even telling them to "pick a side." (definition from IDAHOBIT.org.au)

## **Diversity**

Includes the traits and characteristics that make people unique and the range of communities that our service users and staff come from. This explicitly includes people from the following communities: LGBTIQ+, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) and those with a Disability.

## **Gender equity**

Fairness of treatment for all regardless of gender and according to their respective needs. This may include equal treatment or treatment that is different, but which is considered equivalent in terms of rights, benefits, obligations and opportunities.

## **Employee**

For the purposes of this Policy, any reference to employees includes any person engaged by CF, including volunteers, students, contractors, or office bearers and board members. The term “staff” can be used interchangeably with this term.

## **Equity**

Ensures everyone has access to the services, support, resources and opportunities. It acknowledges that all people have different needs, experiences and opportunities and that they may require support in different ways to achieve their goals. It also means equal right to all opportunities and freedom from discrimination.

## **Homophobia**

Verbal homophobia is the most common form. Things like name-calling, rumours, and abusive words. Phrases like “that’s so gay” which compare sexuality to words like ‘crap’ can have a negative impact. Homophobia also includes abusive threats or actual physical violence, sexual harassment and deliberately excluding someone because of their sexuality (definition from IDAHOBIT.org.au).



## **Inclusion**

Covers the behaviours and social norms that ensure everyone in the workplace feels culturally safe and welcome. People can: share their perspective and are recognised for their strengths and contributions; feel connected and share a sense of belonging; have equal access to services, resources and opportunities; are respected and celebrated for who they are and are able to be authentic while working at or accessing CHOSEN FAMILY services.

## **Interphobia**

Intersex discrimination happens when a person is treated less favourably than another person in a similar situation because that person has physical, hormonal, or genetic features that are neither wholly female nor wholly male; a combination of female and male; or neither female nor male. This can include exclusion or mistreatment in medical services.

## **Sexual Harassment**

Any unwelcome sexual advance, unwelcome request for sexual favours, or other unwelcome conduct of a sexual nature which makes a person feel offended, humiliated, or intimidated and where that reaction is reasonable in the circumstances. Sexual harassment can occur at any level of an organisation and can be experienced by any person, regardless of gender. The harasser does not need to be in a position of power over the person being harassed, and the alleged harasser's intent is not relevant in determining whether someone has been harassed. It can include conduct of which occurs in the workplace or in connection with work, for example at a work function outside of work hours. Sexual harassment has nothing to do with mutual attraction and private, consenting friendships, whether sexual or otherwise.

Examples include: intrusive inquiries into an individual's personal life, reference to their sexuality or physical appearance, unwanted sexual compliments or excessive flirting, offensive or demeaning comments, questions, jokes and innuendo, physical threats or offensive gesture (including standing too close, staring, leering, indecent exposure), physical contact (e.g. touching, excessively lengthy handshakes, patting, unnecessary familiarity, sexual assault), possession and/or display of erotic or sexually graphic material including posters, photographs, reading matter, objects, pictures, calendars, cartoons, graffiti, electronic mail, screen savers (words or images).

## Transphobia

Describes negative feelings or actions towards someone who's trans or gender diverse. You may have heard transphobic language or seen restrictions on the way that people are allowed to express their gender. Things like which uniform you're allowed to wear or toilets you can use. Transphobia can also include abusive threats or actual physical violence, sexual harassment and deliberately excluding someone because of their gender (definition from IDAHOBIT.org.au).

## 5. Policy Commitments

### 5.1 Organisational Commitments

CFA is committed to:

- ✓ Upholding the principles of equity, diversity, and inclusion beyond legal compliance.
- ✓ Actively eliminating discriminatory practices and promoting equal opportunity for all.
- ✓ Prioritising accessible, inclusive design in all services, programs, and physical or digital spaces.
- ✓ Embedding disability-inclusive language, systems and feedback mechanisms across all organisational activities.

### 5.2 Responsibilities

CFA is committed to:

- ✓ **All Staff & Volunteers** - Uphold inclusive values, challenge discrimination, and model respectful behaviour.
- ✓ **Leadership Team** – Embed EDI into all practices and monitor compliance and culture.

## 6. EDI Implementation Procedures

CFA will operationalise its EDI values by:

### 1. Creating a Safe and Inclusive Workplace

- ✔ Zero tolerance for discrimination, harassment, ableism, homophobia, transphobia or other exclusionary behaviours.
- ✔ Regular review of workplace safety, physical and psychological accessibility.

### 2. Inclusive Complaint and Feedback Systems

- ✔ All complaints related to discrimination, bullying or exclusion are treated seriously and confidentially
- ✔ Feedback from service users is used as a key tool for improvement.

### 3. Staff Training and Development

- ✔ Provide regular training on disability inclusion, cultural competence, and unconscious bias.
- ✔ Ensure staff have access to professional development to realise their potential.

### 4. Fair and Inclusive Recruitment

- ✔ Ensure inclusive hiring practices that prioritise merit and address historical disadvantage.
- ✔ Proactively recruit and support employees with disability and from underrepresented communities.

### 5. Inclusive Service Design

- ✔ Embed Universal Design principles across service planning and delivery.
- ✔ Ensure accessible communication, including Easy Read and Auslan options.

### 6. Inclusive Language and Communications

- ✔ All policies and communications will use inclusive and affirming language.
- ✔ Content will be reviewed for accessibility prior to release.
- ✔ Email signatures to contain pronouns if consent obtained.



## 7. Support for Identity-Based Employee Networks

- ✓ Staff will be encouraged and supported to participate in staff-led networks related to identity, experience or advocacy.

## 7. Affirmative Action Strategies

CFA is committed to affirmative action as a proactive tool to achieve genuine equity:

### 1. Disability Leadership

- ✓ Proactively recruit and support people with disability into leadership and governance roles.

### 2. Board Diversity

- ✓ Target Board recruitment processes to ensure gender balance and representation of people with lived experience of disability, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, and LGBTQIA+ communities.

### 3. Supplier Diversity

- ✓ Where possible, CFA will prioritise partnerships with organisations that are disability-led or owned by people from underrepresented communities.

### 4. First Nations Engagement

- ✓ Strengthen partnerships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations, including targeted hiring and co-designed initiatives.

## 8. Monitoring & Evaluation

The EDI Policy is a living document that evolves with our organisation. Oversight is led by the Diversity & Inclusion Advisor in consultation with the Executive Team.

### Monitoring methods include:

- ✓ Annual equity and inclusion audit from ACON & Traidy Bugeja-Naidoo
- ✓ Staff and service user surveys
- ✓ Regular reporting to the Senior team and clients on EDI metrics
- ✓ Review of training completion rates (e.g., Rainbow Tick, Acon)
- ✓ Assessment of workforce and leadership demographics (voluntary disclosure only)
- ✓ Tracking progress on accessibility and inclusive service goals

Where gaps or issues are identified, responsive action will be taken. This may include updates to this Policy, targeted training, or changes in practice.