



Policy #P4.0

Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Policy

1. Introduction

Mercy Education Limited (**MEL**) is committed to upholding human dignity and advancing justice, respect and compassion by promoting gender equality, diversity and inclusion across all aspects of its operations. Consistent with the Mercy tradition and Catholic Social Teaching, MEL recognises that gender equality, diversity and inclusion is integral to the flourishing of individuals, the strength of communities, and the realisation of the common good.

MEL affirms that every person is created equal in dignity and worth. Drawing on the theology of creation, the example of Jesus who challenged unjust power structures, and the social teaching of the Church articulated in *Gaudium et Spes*, MEL is committed to fostering workplaces free from discrimination and systemic barriers so that all people may participate equitably in opportunity, leadership and community life.

This Policy also reflects MEL's obligations under Australian workplace and anti-discrimination laws, including, but not limited to, the *Workplace Gender Equality Act 2012* (Cth), the *Fair Work Act 2009* (Cth) and the *Sex Discrimination Act 1984* (Cth), and aligns with national gender equality reporting frameworks administered by the WGEA.

2. Purpose

The purpose of this Policy is to:

- articulate MEL's commitment to gender equality, diversity and inclusion as a matter of justice, governance and compliance;
- provide a clear framework for promoting equality across the employment lifecycle;
- support compliance with applicable State and Commonwealth legislation;
- drive continuous improvement in gender equality, diversity and inclusion outcomes across MEL and its Colleges; and
- ensure accountability, transparency and consistent practice across the organisation.

3. Policy Application

This Policy applies to all MEL Board members, employees, contractors, consultants and volunteers or any other participants working with or for MEL and its Colleges (referred to in this Policy as **team members**), across all the operations and activities of MEL.

MEL holds overall accountability for compliance with this Policy and relevant legislative obligations.

4. Principles

MEL's approach to gender equality, diversity and inclusion is guided by the following principles:

Alignment with our Vision and Catholic teaching

We are led by the teachings of Jesus Christ and the vision of Catherine McAuley, foundress of the Sisters of Mercy, and we are united by the Mercy charism. Our policies and strategies to create a fair and equal workplace must be informed by the teachings of Jesus Christ and the vision of Catherine McAuley. All team members must demonstrate a commitment to the mission, vision and values of MEL and the ministerial works of the Mercy Ministry Companions.

Human dignity and equity

All people are entitled to dignity, respect and equitable treatment. Gender equality, diversity and inclusion does not require sameness, but fairness in rights, responsibilities and opportunities.

Justice and inclusion

MEL recognises that historical and systemic inequities continue to affect participation and progression in the workplace. Achieving a workplace that is equal, diverse and inclusive requires intentional action to identify and remove barriers and biases.

Merit and transparency

All employment decisions must be based on lawful, merit-based and transparent criteria, applied consistently and free from unlawful discrimination.

Shared responsibility and accountability

Gender equality, diversity and inclusion are a shared responsibility across leadership, governance and the workforce. Clear accountability mechanisms are essential to achieving meaningful and sustained outcomes.

Alignment with Mercy values

This Policy is grounded in MEL's values of **Compassion, Justice, Respect, Hospitality, Service** and **Courage**, and seeks to model these values within the workplace and broader community.

5. Policy Requirements

5.1 Gender Equality

1. MEL is committed to achieving gender equality across its workforce and leadership. This includes addressing structural barriers affecting women, as well as ensuring inclusion and equitable participation for people of all genders, including gender-diverse team members. MEL recognises that inequality often arises from systemic factors and is committed to identifying and removing those barriers.
2. MEL acknowledges that while discrimination against a person based on gender is unlawful, there are many systemic, often unintended, and largely invisible effects which continue to affect participation, pay equity and progression outcomes across the workforce.
3. This Policy is designed to assist MEL to:
 - comply with the Gender Equality Indicators
 - provide equitable access to opportunities, remuneration, benefits and leadership

- pathways for employees of all genders
 - remove any barriers to the full and equal participation of women and men in the MEL workforce
 - provide full and genuine access to all occupations within MEL, including to leadership roles, for women and men
 - provide full and equal access to training, professional learning and enrichment opportunities for men and women according to their role
 - provide gender equality principles to health and safety and other employee support processes
 - drive a culture where rewards are linked to employee contributions and performance
 - eliminate discrimination based on gender particularly in relation to family and caring responsibilities for both women and men
4. MEL is committed to promoting a culture that embraces gender equality at all stages of the employment cycle including advertising, selection, interview, recruitment, appraisal processes, training and development and exit interviews. Appointments will be made on merit and on the requirements of the role. MEL will review the employment cycle on a regular basis to eliminate unintended sources of bias.
 5. A range of leadership styles are recognised and fostered within MEL. Potential leaders are identified and nurtured and performance standards and feedback processes are designed to be equitable and transparent ensuring fair opportunity for advancement for team members of all genders.
 6. Promotional opportunities are widely advertised and accessed by all employees in the organisation and support is provided to assist with transition to new roles. Succession planning is aligned with gender equality considerations and strategies.
 7. MEL is committed to provision of support for employees with family and caring responsibilities, including while employees are on parental leave.
 8. MEL is mindful of the need to consider flexible working arrangements where practicable for all employees in alignment with the applicable enterprise bargaining agreement.
 9. Colleges governed by MEL will establish specific local protocols that are compatible with this Policy and may choose to form a gender equality review committee.
 10. MEL Colleges will be particularly mindful of their obligations to provide role models of gender equality practices to students.

5.2 Remuneration Commitment

MEL is committed to applying the remuneration principles set out below, as applicable. For most MEL team members, classifications and rates of pay are governed by the industrial instrument that covers and applies to their employment, for example modern awards or enterprise agreements. MEL will monitor pay equity outcomes and, where required, implement remediation measures consistent with reporting obligations under the Workplace Gender Equality framework.

MEL is committed to applying the following principles to remuneration processes and practices:

- ensuring and maintaining compliance with relevant laws, including our obligations under industrial instruments;
- supporting fair remuneration and pay parity objectives;
- reducing or eliminating gender pay gaps;
- remediating instances of unequal pay;
- ensuring a performance-based approach that is fair and equitable;
- designing people and culture processes, including those related to recruitment, performance management, promotion, career development, succession planning and reward and recognition, with a lens that challenges any bias and supports fair, equitable and performance-based remuneration outcomes;

- ensuring participation in incentive and recognition programs is fair, equitable, performance-based and free from bias; and
- holding our leaders accountable for supporting fair remuneration and pay equity objectives, by minimising bias in relation to decision-making and ensuring consistency of approach in remuneration processes.

5.3 Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

1. MEL is committed to providing a workplace free from discrimination, harassment, vilification and victimisation, consistent with applicable Commonwealth and State legislation. MEL recognises diversity across attributes including sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, age, disability, race, religion, cultural background, caring responsibilities and other protected characteristics.
2. MEL will engage fairly and equitably with all its team members and other stakeholders, regardless of their gender, in a positive, respectful, and constructive manner.
3. MEL requires that all Board Directors and team members be respected for their unique attributes and not excluded, harassed, or bullied through unconscious bias, stereotypes or unlawful actions that may form the basis of discrimination, harassment, vilification, or victimisation.
4. MEL will develop strategies and educate all employees that any form of sexual harassment or discrimination will not be tolerated and will respond swiftly to any complaints.
5. MEL seeks to ensure that its publications and official documents, and those of its Colleges, use inclusive and non-discriminatory language and imagery.
6. MEL will implement reasonable and practical strategies to remove barriers experienced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, culturally and linguistically diverse team members, and other under-represented groups, and will work to strengthen cultural capability and inclusion across the organisation. This includes honouring our first nations people and seeking to learn from them as our original custodians of the land upon which we operate our Colleges.
7. MEL will develop reasonable and practical strategies to remove unconscious biases faced by people with disabilities and advance the accessibility and empowerment of team members with disabilities.

5.4 Exceptions

MEL is a Catholic educational ministry and operates in accordance with its religious mission. Where permitted by law, including under applicable religious-body exemptions in anti-discrimination legislation, certain roles may require incumbents to support and uphold the Catholic ethos of the organisation. Any such requirements will be applied lawfully, proportionately and transparently, and only where required to undertake the inherent requirements of the role.

5.5 Consultation

MEL recognises the importance and value of employee consultation to assess the lived experience of all employees and identify barriers to a fair and inclusive workplace. Strategies to promote gender equality, diversity and inclusion, will therefore be informed by employee feedback obtained through consultative processes such as surveys and focus groups.

6. Implementation

MEL, as an organisation, is accountable for implementing this Policy across its Colleges and National Office. Colleges governed by MEL are responsible for implementing this Policy within their local context, consistent with this framework and any supporting procedures.

This Policy will be the subject of induction and subsequent in-service refresher training. Regular training will be provided to every employee.

This Policy is accessible to all people connected with MEL and the public. This includes being available on the MEL Education Portal, public website and College websites.

This Policy is not a term of any contract, including any contract of employment, and does not impose any contractual duties, implied or otherwise, on MEL or its officers and team members. This Policy may be varied by MEL from time to time pursuant to the MEL Policy Framework.

MEL will periodically review workforce data, employee feedback and incident reporting trends to assess whether this Policy is effective in meeting legal obligations and organisational inclusion objectives.

7. Failure to Comply with this Policy

Any breach of this Policy may result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment or contractual arrangement.

8. Definitions

Term	Definition
<i>Diversity</i>	means that the workplace includes individuals of varying characteristics including gender, age, religion, race, ethnicity, cultural background, sexual orientation, languages, education, abilities, etc
<i>Gender Equality</i>	means that people of all genders have equal rights, responsibilities, opportunities and outcomes, and are not disadvantaged by structural or systemic barriers
<i>Gender Equality Indicators</i>	means the Gender Equality Indicators developed by the Workplace Gender Equality Agency, and as amended from time to time
<i>MEL</i>	means Mercy Education Limited (ABN 69 154 531 870)
<i>Policy</i>	means this Policy; P4.0: Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Policy
<i>WGEA</i>	means the Workplace Gender Equality Agency

9. Related Documents

Australian Government

- *Workplace Gender Equality Act 2012 (Cth)*
- *Workplace Gender Equality Amendment Bill 2023*
- *Gender Equality Strategy Guide (October 2019)*
- *Fair Work Act 2009 (Cth)*
- *Sex Discrimination Act 1984 (Cth)*
- *Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (Cth)*
- *Racial Discrimination Act 1975 (Cth)*
- *Age Discrimination Act 2004 (Cth)*

Workplace Gender Equality Agency

<https://www.wgea.gov.au/>

Australian Human Rights Commission

- *Australian Human Rights Commission Act 1986 (Cth)*
- *Gender Equality: <https://humanrights.gov.au/quick-guide/12038>*
- *Australian Human Rights Commission guidance on positive duty*

State Legislation

- *Equal Opportunity Act 2010 (Vic)*
- *Equal Opportunity Act 1984 (WA)*
- *Equal Opportunity Act 1984 (SA)*

Victorian Catholic Education Authority (VCEA)

- *Catholic Education Multi-Enterprise Agreement 2022 (CEMEA)*

Catholic Education South Australia (CESA)

- *South Australian Catholic Schools Enterprise Agreement 2020*

Catholic Education Western Australia (CEWA)

- *WA (Western Australian) Catholic School Teachers Enterprise Agreement 2022*
- *WA Non-Teaching Staff Enterprise Bargaining Agreement 2014*

Church Documents

- *Created and loved – A guide for Catholic Schools on Students' Identity and Gender: Second Edition 2026*
- *GAUDIUM ET SPES: The Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, DECEMBER 7, 1965, Paul VI. (1965)*

This Policy should be read in conjunction with the following MEL documents, as amended from time to time:

- *Codes of Conduct*
- *Complaints Management Policy*
- *Sexual Harassment Policy*
- *Whistleblower Policy*
- *Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy*
- *Risk Framework*

10. Evaluating this Policy

The CEO and Executive Sponsor will monitor the implementation of this Policy and review the Policy's suitability and effectiveness including that internal control systems and procedures are periodically audited to ensure that they are effective in minimising the risk of non-compliance with this Policy.

This Policy's effectiveness will then be reviewed by the Risk and Compliance Committee of the Board (**RISKCOM**) via reports from the CEO and Executive Sponsor.

11. Policy Review History

Originally entitled 'Gender Equality Policy' since its inception in 2016, this is the fifth version of this Policy, now entitled 'Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Policy'.

This Policy was reviewed in consultation with the MEL Executive Team before being presented to the RISKCOM for recommendation for approval to the Board.

Substantial revisions bring the format of this Policy into alignment with the new MEL Policy Framework developed in early 2026.

This Policy will be reviewed in accordance with the MEL Policy Framework every three years, or earlier, if required, to:

- ensure reports or breaches are appropriately recorded, investigated and responded to;
- ensure that it remains current with respect to legal and regulatory requirements;
- ensure that it operates effectively; and
- confirm whether any changes are required.

Any amendments to this Policy must be done in consultation with the MEL Executive Team, endorsed by RISKCOM and approved by the MEL Board.

Version	Date Released	Next Review	Executive Sponsor	Approved
1.0	October 2016	2020	Risk and Compliance Leader	MEL Board
2.0	June 2020	2023	Head of People and Culture	MEL Board
2.1	Sep 2023	Jul 2026	Head of People and Culture	MEL Board
2.2	March 2024	March 2027	Head of People and Culture	MEL Board
3.0	March 2026	March 2029	Head of Legal	MEL Board