



The Rainbow Children's Centre Inc.



1) Centre Philosophy

- a) We acknowledge that each person's life journey is unique, and that support needs can vary from person to person. We respect each child as an individual with personal rights and the programs provided by Rainbow should create an environment which supports and encourages the potential of each child.
- b) We prioritise the best interests of children, but also recognise that we must look at the best interest of families, community and staff in determining the best interests of children.
- c) We respect families as the primary carers of their children with the centre and its staff supporting families in caring for and educating their children. Rainbow recognises the value of open and trusting communication between the centre and the child's home and family.
- d) We hold the values of respect, care, justice, unity and service to be central to our culture and believe in demonstrating them in creative responsiveness to the family needs of our community. We foster in each child the values of respect and consideration for others.
- e) We believe in offering services that recognise and honour the whole person: body, mind, heart and spirit.
- f) We believe a learning environment that combines the warmth and nurturing of a home with the stimulus of an early childhood educational setting encourages optimal development of each child.
- g) We value the natural environment, both within the centre and in the wider community and we encourage children to respect and nurture the environment.
- h) We recognise the diversity of Australian culture and will encourage respect for that diversity and will reflect and celebrate diversity within the centre. In particular Rainbow recognises this region as being home to many Indigenous Australians and that Rainbow services will operate in ways to respect and value that aspect of Australian culture.
- i) We believe in responsible stewardship: placing high value on our human resources, while promoting rigorous attention to the financial, structural and material.

- 2) **Mission** –It is the mission of Rainbow Children’s Centre to:
- a) In relation to its child care and OOSHC services
 - i) provide high quality education and care for children; and
 - ii) maintain affordable fees for families; and
 - iii) provide services which are suitable for and responsive to the members of the local community.
 - b) In relation to its early childhood intervention services
 - i) provide an educational service which maximises the learning and development of each child; and
 - ii) support families in accessing appropriate support and specialist services; and
 - iii) provide family friendly experiences and opportunities to support the child’s everyday learning environments; and
 - iv) strengthen the capacity of other early childhood services in Ballina Shire to meet the needs of children through inclusive programs.

3) **Vision** Our vision of an ideal Rainbow Childrens Centre features:

a) **Our organisation**

- i) We should be collaborating with other organisations that share our values to better benefit the community we serve. We should be open and alert to the views of other organisations in the community to understand how our services complement and supplement those organisations in the best interests of the community.
- ii) We would recognise the valuable community facility we manage and maximise its functioning to the benefit of the community. We would develop the uses of the centre premises in both a functional and qualitative way to improve the overall centre's program and environment for children, families, staff and the community in general.
- iii) We would see Rainbow in turn acknowledged by the community as a high quality place of learning for young children. It would be well recognised and respected by the community as an early childhood centre nurturing the growth and best interests of young children.
- iv) We would ensure appropriate knowledge at management and committee level, to ensure Rainbow is aware of and can address all its managerial, legal and ethical responsibilities as required.
- v) We would acknowledge the importance of Rainbow's services continuing to operate into the future and as such implement adequate and effective management and administration that ensures sufficient income to operate, efficient expenditure to ensure we have the resources we need and sensible stewardship of the annual budget to ensure our organisation remains financially viable.
- vi) We would know that each family comes to the centre with their own identity and rights and the centre would acknowledge and respect each one's life outside the centre. The rights of children, staff and families would all be respected and acknowledged. Hence, children, staff and families would have a right to be involved in planning and implementing any change in their centre as an inclusive gradual process. The centre would also recognise that at times the rights of two or more individuals may cut across each other. The centre would strive to find the right balance between those conflicting rights.

b) **Our human resources**

- i) We would recognise the importance to our centre of our staff, our volunteers and our committee members as the most important resource we have.
- ii) We would be providing working conditions that support our staff's capacity to operate our services.
- iii) We would recognise the value of consistency among our team and be working to support the continued employment of each staff member.
- iv) We would be providing staff and committee with the opportunity to gain new skills, to undertake further training and
- v) We would acknowledge the value of a pleasant and fulfilling work environment and commit to creating and maintaining such an environment.
- vi) We would acknowledge that staff have needs, interests and wants as individuals and as staff team members and the centre would acknowledge, value and respond to each staff member.

c) **Our educational programs** We will implement high quality early childhood educational programs.

- i) **Long Day Care.** While the program is informed by external documents such as the National Quality Framework and the early Years Learning Framework, our program will be based on approaches to the education of young children that has been developed by the centre staff and families including :
 - (1) The service would have a friendly home like environment within which children can feel "at home" and hence be supported to learn
 - (2) There would be an emphasis on the outdoors as a learning environment in addition to indoor playrooms. Our external play spaces would include many natural features and children would have extended opportunities to interact with the natural world.
 - (3) Children would be organised during the day in groups where children's learning could occur within groups containing peers of a variety of ages, siblings and children with similar interests.
 - (4) Each child would be able to choose to be involved and also choose not to be involved as they wish and children would be able to play in ways they choose and follow the ideas that are of interest to them.

- (5) Our program would feature extended periods of free choice time encouraging and allowing children opportunities to build social relationships and interact with peers. Learning experiences available each day would be based on the interests and expressed wishes of the children.
 - (6) The learning experiences available to children would support Being, Belonging and Becoming.
 - (7) Recognising the values of the Aboriginal community, which forms such a high proportion of the Ballina community, the program would reflect those values in all aspects of its care and education of all children.
 - (8) Services would be inclusive for all children, and would ensure children with additional needs felt as much a part of the service as any other child. Families of children with additional needs would feel respected and listened to in regard to all aspects of the services.
 - (9) The service would be operating on all levels as much as possible in a sustainable way and all major decisions to be made within the service would be made after consideration of the sustainability implications of any outcome.
- ii) **OOSHC** We would be:
- (1) Providing high quality programs for children. We would recognise that while some children attend our programs on an ongoing basis over the year, others only attend on a spasmodic basis attending just a few days of vacation care over the year. We would balance what we provide to encompass the best interests of all children. We would be encouraging children in the development of self belief and personal initiative and allowing the interests of children to guide the program. We would provide a balance of fun and play based learning experiences. We would ensure children feel at home at Rainbow with rights to determine their program, balanced by the knowledge of staff and families about children's best interests.
 - (2) Operating from a variety of premises and locations in the Shire that allowed as many families as possible to access Rainbow. The premises would provide a safe, fun, stimulating and challenging learning environment, with facilities that allowed staff to meet children's and families needs
 - (3) The services offered would be regularly evaluated to ensure they matched the needs of the Ballina community, and balancing the capacity to provide all types of care for OOSHC with the need to ensure all services are financially sustainable.
 - (4) The service fees would be affordable to families as possible, and staff would be informed and alert to all funding opportunities to assist families.
 - (5) Services would be inclusive for all children, and would ensure children with additional needs felt as much a part of the service as any other child. Families of children with additional needs would feel respected and listened to in regard to all aspects of the services.
 - (6) Services would be respectful of the cultures of all families, including Aboriginal families and would ensure children from all cultures felt as much a part of the service as any other child. Families of children from various cultures would feel welcome to share aspects of their culture within the program.
 - (7) There would be a staff team that was well qualified with a strong skill base in caring for school aged children and they would be provided with training opportunities to ensure they felt encouraged to maintain high level work skills. They would be employed under reasonable wages and other working conditions.
 - (8) Meeting all accountabilities and requirements of the National Quality Standard and the MyTime Our Place framework. We would be balancing the expectations of families and children, with the need to address those external requirements of an educational basis, by providing a program based on child initiated play incorporating appropriate educational learning experiences.
 - (9) We would be ensuring all services operated within a culture of sustainability, and were implementing a variety of sustainable practices.
- iii) **Early Intervention** While the service is required to meet the NSW Disability Services Standards for funding requirements, it will also be influenced by the National Quality Framework (early childhood services) and the Early Years Learning Framework. Our service will also be influenced by the Early

Childhood Australia and Early Childhood Intervention Australia Position Statement on the Inclusion of children with a disability in early Childhood Education and care.

- (1) Our service would keep aware of the early childhood intervention sector and recognise the recommendations of research and current best practice principles in determining an optimum program.
- (2) The service would recognise the child as part of a family and emphasise a sense of belonging first to a family, then to the wider community. The service would promote inclusive practice to enhance this sense of belonging. Our programs would emphasise learning to participate fully and actively in society.
- (3) Each child would have their strengths and challenges acknowledged as part of the program and individualised educational plans would reflect the diversity of each child's learning and development within their everyday learning environment, at home and in services within their community.
- (4) Planning would be ongoing and dynamic with realistic goals developed with the family and documented within Individualised Family Service Plans and Individualised Educational Plans. Families would be respected, supported and involved in all decisions affecting their child. We have a vision of families being agents of positive social change and would empower families to advocate on behalf of their child and by providing information to understand systems supporting people with a disability and strengthening their understanding of their rights.
- (5) Early Intervention Educators would respect parent's feelings and recognise that many will be coming to terms with their child's disability. We would communicate honestly and sensitively with families and work with other professionals to assist the child and family as appropriate.
- (6) The service would have links with community organisations and early intervention educators would collaborate and share information with relevant agencies and encourage families to share ideas and contribute to these partnerships.
- (7) The service would recognise the importance of a well qualified and experienced staff team and ensure ongoing professional development so that evidence based practice is reflected in the programs provided to children.
- (8) Early Intervention educators would share knowledge, information and expertise on inclusive practice with educators of mainstream early childhood settings for children under 8 years of age to enable those settings to ensure children have equitable access and appropriate inclusive programs.
- (9) The service would ensure that each family, including their child, is supported with the many transitions experienced in the early childhood years. Clear processes would be in place to support families with the transitions from home to early childhood setting and into school.
- (10) Recognising the values of inclusion, cultural competence and a strengths based approach, the service would reflect the values of the diverse Ballina community including the Aboriginal community, which forms a high proportion of the Ballina community. We would use strategies which focused on building the capacity of each family.
- (11) Meeting all accountabilities and requirements of the NSW Disability Standards as well as various funding accountabilities, we would balance the expectations of families and children, with the need to address those external requirements by providing programs based on evidence based practice which reflect educational practices for supporting the learning and development of children with disabilities and inclusive practice.