



**The Rainbow Children's Centre Inc.**

## **Section 6 Management Policies**

(developed and endorsed June 2014, reviewed and amended March 2018)

### **Preamble**

Rainbow Management policies have been developed to show the intention of the Association to operate as an open community based non-profit organisation. While we have policies that show our intent as an organisation, and a Management Committee that has legal responsibility for our operations and services. However, it is important to recognise that we are under a high level of control from external mandates from various government and legal obligations. In most aspects of our operations there are numerous requirements we have to follow and there is little scope for us to do anything other than follow those requirements.

As the Association receives Government funds that support many of our services and operations we have written agreements with government about the procedures and policies we follow. We are required to operate within and adhere to various laws, regulations and accountabilities. Our early childhood education & care services and our early childhood intervention services are regulated by both the NSW State Government and the Commonwealth Government.

Our use of our premises is regulated by our Development Approval from Ballina Shire Council. Our kitchens are inspected and approved by Ballina Shire Council. Our hygiene and health procedures are set out by the NSW Government. All operations are also governed by the Workplace Health & Safety Regulations.

At the same time we also operate as an Incorporated Association under the requirements of the NSW Dept Fair Trading. As an Association we are bound by laws governing Associations and are also bound by our Constitution.

Our employment practices and procedures are governed by Fair Work Australia.

We can and do then make some choices about some aspects of how we operate within all those mandatory frameworks. As a result any policy set out in the section is by its nature to be taken as policy in addition to those government regulations. The clauses of these policies provide specific detail that supplement the external mandates that deal with many aspects of our operations. In no way are they to be taken in any way to override, set aside or act contrary to those external mandates. As such it is not necessary for our policies to set out in detail the various aspects of operation that are covered already by Regulation. The detailed requirements of Regulations can be taken to apply to the operation of the service.

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## 1) Management Committee

- a) **Explanation** The Rainbow Childrens Centre Inc. is a community owned non-profit Association managed by its Management Committee. The operation of the volunteer Management Committee is considered an essential means of ensuring families using the children's services of the centre have an opportunity for input to our operations. To ensure that such opportunities are available to families and that family members are encouraged to be involved, the decision making of the centre should be open and transparent and management should be accountable to all families. Hence Rainbow needs to seek support and advice about its operations from outside bodies; it needs to employ staff able and willing to support its operation in a suitable manner; and its Committee members, and especially office bearers, have a responsibility to understand the impacts of their decisions.
- b) **Implementation - Operation of the Management Committee**
- i) The committee will undertake a planning process on a regular basis and at least annual basis which establishes and updates the Philosophy and Vision of the Association to reflect the needs, interests and aspirations of the Ballina community. The Committee will establish a mission for the centre and will undertake regular reviews of the operation of the Association's services to ensure they are contributing to the achievement of that mission. Those reviews will be used in the establishment of an annual plan for the centre. All staff, families and committee members will be invited to play a role in the development and implementation of the planning process.
  - ii) The committee will ensure there is at least both a Public Officer and a Secretary who understand the Constitution of the Association and can assist the committee to ensure its operations remain within the Constitution.
  - iii) The Committee shall ensure all members of the committee are aware of the roles and responsibilities of the Committee and its Office Bearers, by maintaining position descriptions of such roles and responsibilities and making them available to all committee members.
  - iv) The Committee will ensure that its operations are conducted in an open fashion.
    - (1) notices of meetings will be prominently placed to ensure all members and staff are aware of meetings
    - (2) timing of meetings will be decided on the basis of maximising the number of members able to attend and participate
    - (3) conduct of meetings shall normally be held in an open fashion which both allows and encourages all present to contribute to the discussion. If necessary, the committee reserves the right to restrict discussion and attendance to some meetings or parts of meetings only to members of the committee
    - (4) minutes of meetings, committee reports, sub-committee minutes, Committee advice and meeting reports will be made available to all persons (Committee members, staff and any others) who attend the meeting and will be posted in prominent places within Rainbow so as to be available to all staff and all families except for minutes covering matters specifically determined by the Committee to be confidential to the Committee only.
    - (5) Members will be provided with all papers and reports from Committee meetings, unless those minutes and papers have been determined by the Committee to be confidential.
  - v) Under the Constitution the committee has the right to determine its own operations and decision making. In most cases decision making will be by consensus and the

President will allow sufficient time for all those present to contribute and for consensus to emerge. If necessary a vote shall be used among the members of the committee to decide any matter by simple majority except where otherwise set out in the Rules. Any person present at any meeting may ask for a non-binding vote to be held among all those present prior to any committee vote being held.

- vi) The office bearers shall ensure that the primary business of each meeting will be the reports provided by various staff and committee members about the operations of the children's services. All committee members will ensure that acceptance of such reports and any decisions taken are in accordance with the agreed Philosophy and Vision of the Association.

## 2) Liaison with Community Services in Ballina

- a) **Explanation** The nature of Rainbow services is that we provide very personalised services to families. We care for and educate children and provide advice and support to families. It is the nature of those services, that families often disclose to us the need for other family supports in addition to care and education of children. As a result we often provide referral to other organisations and we liaise with other family support agencies in assisting families. To ensure such support is effective we need to maintain strong links and liaison with those other agencies and organisations.
- b) **Implementation – liaison with the community**
  - i) The Committee shall ensure that the Association joins and remains an active member of appropriate children's services sector and community service peak and advisory organisations so that it can ensure it remains up to date with its legal and other obligations and aware of developments within the sector
  - ii) The Committee shall ensure the employment of any staff member in a senior position takes into account the need to ensure centre management is aware of the Association's responsibilities and obligations and is sympathetic to the aims and philosophy of Rainbow as a non-profit community managed organisation.
  - iii) The Director, and the OOSHC Coordinator are expected to attend most meetings of the Committee and to organise their hours of work to accommodate this responsibility. All other staff are invited to attend meetings and take part in discussion if they wish.
  - iv) The Director, and the OOSHC Coordinator are expected to join and remain an active member of relevant sector bodies and professional contact groups to maximise opportunities for Rainbow to liaise with other organisations with similar or complementary aims within the local community, the region and the State.

## 3) Financial Management

- a) **Explanation** - Rainbow as an organisation operates a number of services assisting hundreds of families in Ballina Shire on an ongoing basis. It employs numerous staff and receives funding from a variety of sources. It is important the organisation can continue to operate over the long term and as such requires careful and realistic management of its balance sheet and cash flow as well as its income and expenditure.
- b) **Implementation –**
  - i) **Annual Budget** The centre will develop an annual budget prior to the end of each calendar year for the operation of the centre and its services.

- (1) The budget shall allow sufficient resources so that the management can implement the policies of the Association; operate within all relevant laws and regulations; and meet the objectives as set out in the annual plan for the centre.
  - (2) The early childhood education and care fees shall be set at a level necessary to allow the service to operate at a break even level plus provide a reasonable contingency amount in case of adverse circumstances plus provide funds to be set aside to allow for the long term development of the service and maintenance of the centre premises.
  - (3) The budget shall be considered by the Committee and approved in sufficient time to give at least one month's notice to families of any necessary early childhood education and care fee rise
  - (4) The budget shall not rely on fund raising as a normal means of funding the operation of the centre's services. The Committee may approve and undertake fund raising from time to time at its discretion to achieve one off aims, but is under no obligation to fund raise as a regular part of the operation of the Association.
- ii) **Sustainability** – The Committee shall ensure that the annual budget is set in a way that ensures the long term economic sustainability of The Rainbow Children's Centre Inc. as an organisation. That sustainability will recognise that in addition to the normal operating costs of the services each year, the centre needs to
- (1) Maintain appropriate provisions for long term staff entitlements e.g. long service leave and accrued sick and annual leave, and provide sufficient resources to ensure staff are able to maintain appropriate professional knowledge and skills
  - (2) Set aside adequate provisions for the long term maintenance of the buildings in recognition that while The Rainbow Children's Centre Inc. does not pay rent to the local Council on its premises, it is expected to take responsibility for the long term maintenance of the building. Such long term maintenance needs (e.g. roofing replacement, flooring, electrical fittings) may not become obvious for many years but should be considered to be inevitable and costly.
  - (3) Set aside adequate depreciation so that when the equipment, furniture and fittings of the centre have reached the end of their useful life, adequate funds are available to replace, renew or renovate the centre and its equipment.
- iii) **Financial control**– The Committee shall ensure suitable procedures are in place to maintain oversight of the ongoing operations of the service. The Committee shall
- (1) Provide sufficient staff and other resources to allow the centre management to maintain proper books of accounts and to institute required receipting, banking, purchasing and account payment procedures.
  - (2) Provide sufficient staff and other resources to allow the centre management to maintain a timely payroll and wages payment system.
  - (3) Delegate to the Director and other authorised persons the day to day responsibility for the operation of the service within the approved budget.
  - (4) Require regular reporting from the Treasurer of the income and expenditure of the centre and the cumulative operating figures for the year in relation to budget.
  - (5) Approve all items of expenditure made by the centre after delegating to the approved bank signatories the right to make payments for expenditure within budget allocations in a timely manner.
  - (6) Consider and approve the delegated decisions of the Treasurer to authorise major items of expenditure made outside of budget. In most cases such Committee approval shall be made before the Treasurer authorises the

expenditure, except in cases when that procedure will unduly delay or compromise the operations of the centre.

- (7) Ensure a suitable qualified Auditor certifies the Annual Financial Statements of the Association as required by all applicable laws and regulations.
- (8) Ensure that no member of the Committee profits from or receives remuneration or other monetary benefits from the Association except in reimbursement or reasonable expenses incurred for the benefit of the Association.

#### 4) Policy Development

- a) **Explanation.** The upper management decisions about the operation of early childhood education and care services are in almost all cases taken outside the Association by government bodies. Early Childhood Education & Care services are operated within a number of very strict set of rules and regulations set by various departments and agencies within government. Such regulations determine the size, scale and type of early childhood education and care services the Association may offer. They determine the type of premises, equipment and staff the Association must provide and determine the standards of care, education, health, safety and child protection the Association must implement. They determine the ways in which staff are employed. They determine the ways in which the centre must be accountable to families.

While the Association can and does make many decisions about the operations of the centre and the policies and procedures which are in place – those policies must be set within the boundaries set by those outside agencies. Families using the Association's services must and should be made aware of those Regulations so as to be assured about the external standards to which the services must abide.

For the long term successful and transparent operation of the service and its decision making, clear policies must be developed that make it clear to all Association members, families, staff and other organisations how Rainbow operates. Such policies should be developed by a consultative process within the Association to ensure they reflect the views and intentions of the members and are in accordance with all relevant legal requirements.

#### b) Implementation

- i) The Association will develop policies for all areas of its operation as required by all applicable laws and regulations and for any aspect of its operation for which the Committee considers a policy to be of value.
- ii) Following its original development, at least every three years each policy of the Association should be reviewed, renewed if required and approved by the Committee.
- iii) All policies shall be made available to all members, staff and interested community members to ensure all aspects of the Association's operations can be considered in light of its policies.
- iv) The process of development of each policy shall include reference to all underlying legal requirements of the Association to ensure the policy is in line with those legal requirements. As well, opportunities for all members and staff to comment on and have input to the new policy shall be provided prior to the policy be considered by

the Committee for approval. The policy shall be endorsed with the date of approval to ensure it can easily be reviewed within at least three years.

- v) Policies should not include detailed information taken from applicable laws and regulations. The Association should maintain copies of the applicable original laws and regulations, so that members can access them when required. Including a précis of excerpts from such documents within Rainbow policies may lead to confusion and misunderstanding and it is better that reference is always made to the original documents. As well since such laws and regulations may be amended after the date of approval of the Rainbow policy, it will avoid possible inconsistency between those laws & regulations and the policies.
- vi) When any matter arises within Rainbow for which there is no applicable policy or when Committee decisions are made which override existing policy, the Committee should ensure the policies are expended or updated to reflect the new intention of the Association.

## 5) Participation and access

- a) **Explanation** Rainbow is a community based centre operated by an Incorporated Association and managed by the Association's Management Committee. Membership of the Association and the Committee normally consists of parents using the service. Rainbow actively encourages all family members to participate at the level they feel comfortable with. Parents are encouraged to be involved through participation and discussion about all issues relevant to the running of the centre and the education and care of their children. However the centre also acknowledges that some families will not wish to be involved and the centre should accept and respect that decision.

### b) Implementation

- i) Parents will be informed of all relevant issues in the centre through an appropriate variety of means. Those means will include regular centre newsletters and matters posted on centre notice boards as well as daily communication about the centre's programs and the care of the children.
- ii) Parents are welcome in the centre at all times and staff will discuss practices, procedures and learning experiences with them as requested. Parents need to be aware of the staff's responsibility to interact with and supervise the children in the centre. If parents wish to discuss or exchange detailed information about their child or the centre, an appointment may need to be made with a suitable staff member.
- iii) Parents are encouraged to keep up to date on current issues in the centre by reading notices and newsletters and discussing the centre program with staff. Various reports are distributed at Committee meetings regarding matters that arise in the operation of the centre and all parents may access a copy of those reports. As well the annual report is distributed each year which gives an overview of the centre's operations.
- iv) The Management Committee meetings will be held in the centre on a regular basis and will be open to any family member to attend, although the discussion of some matters may be restricted to Committee members only at the discretion of the Committee. The minutes of meetings will be displayed in the centre following meetings and a notice of meetings with an agenda will be posted on centre notice boards to assist all families to access Committee meetings.
- v) Other opportunities for family involvement will be made available from time to time at the discretion of the Committee. Those opportunities may include opportunities

for families to offer their assistance and participation in particular events, (e.g. excursions, working bees, social functions).

- vi) Opportunities for feedback and input about the centre in relation to the program, policies or any other issues relating to the centre shall be made available to families and will include an option for feedback to be made anonymously.

## 6) Code of conduct

a) **Explanation** Rainbow is troubled by the external requirement of the Education and Care Services National Regulation 2011 and other Regulations that it have a policy re a management and staff code of conduct. As an organisation within the Ballina community, run by a volunteer management committee and operated on a not-for-profit basis concerned with the care of children we operate on an ethical, lawful basis. Our philosophy clearly sets out the principles of operation of our services including mutual respect between staff children families and our community. Our policies overall, make it clear the organisation requires all staff and management to follow all Laws and all Regulations and act in a way that attempts to be as sustainable and responsive to families as is possible. Our ethical operation as an early childhood education and care service is implicit in all we do and all we stand for. As such an explicit statement that staff and management follow a code of conduct that requires them to act ethically and lawfully seems quite unnecessary.

### b) Implementation.

- i) On appointment or on employment all staff and management will be made aware of the philosophy and mission of the Association.
- ii) All staff will be given access to a copy of the ECA Code of Ethics and the Education and Care Services National Regulation 2011 and it will be made clear those documents should be used as a guide in consideration of all aspects of their work.
- iii) Staff and management shall make themselves familiar with the policies of the Association and will follow such policies at all times.
- iv) Staff and management shall make themselves familiar with the mandates of the Association and will follow all such external requirements at all times.
- v) Where any doubts arise for any staff or management member about appropriate conduct in any situation, they should seek support from other team members, the Director, or the Management Committee.

## 7) Record Keeping

a) **Explanation** The operation of an early childhood education and care service requires Rainbow to collect information about children and families. Families and children will disclose private information about themselves, their health, their family circumstances and their children to service staff. That information will be of a sensitive, private nature and it is important that families are confident that such information will only be collected and used when it is necessary and disposed of once it is no longer needed. It is essential that the centre has appropriate policies re the collection, storage, access to, use, disclosure, maintenance and eventual disposal of such information.

b) **Implementation** Requirements re acquisition, storage, retention and disposal of records and information collected in the course of operating an early childhood education and care service are set out in the Education and Care Services National Regulation 2011 (especially clauses 181-184 Confidentiality and Storage of Records)

as well as the NSW Privacy Act 1999. The centre follows those requirements and in doing so:

- i) The design of all forms shall ensure that information to be collected is only that information which is required for the effective operation of the service and to ensure the centre complies with all Regulations about information which is required to be collected.
- ii) Centre management shall be informed on appointment and all staff shall be informed on employment :
  - (1) Of the confidential nature of all records held about children and families
  - (2) That such information shall only be used to provide optimum education and care for children and families; and
  - (3) Of the expectation that they will not disclose such information to anyone outside the centre except as required by law.
- iii) All records accumulated by the service shall be stored and maintained in a manner which allows ready and appropriate access for staff and management to the information as necessary to operate the centre balanced against the need for the information to remain confidential.
- iv) All information collected shall be maintained on site for use by the centre staff and management as required while the child is enrolled.
- v) Once a child or family ceases to use the service all records for the family will be reviewed and records will either be
  - (1) archived as required by Regulation or Law and then destroyed after the statutory time required for retention has lapsed; or
  - (2) destroyed or at least shredded prior to disposal if the centre is not required to retain the records.

## 8) Access to Confidential Information

- a) **Explanation** The operation of an early childhood education and care service requires Rainbow to collect information about children and families. Families and children will disclose private information about themselves, their health, their family circumstances and their children to service staff. That information will be of a sensitive, private nature and it is important that families are confident that such information will not be shared or made available to anyone who does not have a right to access that information.
- b) **Implementation** Rainbow is committed to transparency in its operations and to ensuring it is open to public scrutiny. It must also balance this with upholding the rights of individuals to privacy and of the organisation to confidentiality on sensitive corporate matters
  - i) Information about children
    - (1) Information about children will be available to all staff in undertaking activities relating to their role within the service.
    - (2) Information may only be made available to other parties with the consent of the family, or in the case of requests by an authority with legal rights to access the information.
    - (3) Rainbow will permit families access to their own child's records with reasonable notice.
    - (4) Rainbow will not provide families with access to records of children from other families.
    - (5) Rainbow recognises the difficulty of determining who the service client is when providing services to children and especially vulnerable children. Is it the child,

the family or community authorities? As such may restrict family access to documents that have been provided to the Association or generated by Association staff when this is reasonable and appropriate. Some documents may contain information about children and families that will normally remain confidential to allow staff to share and consider knowledge with appropriate authorities relating to the best interest of the child.

- ii) Information about Members of the Association
  - (1) Information about members of the Committee will be routinely made available in the foyer of the service to enable members to contact the Committee if required.
  - (2) Information about members of the Association will not be routinely made available unless the person requesting that information can demonstrate to service management why the information should be made available to them.
- iii) Information about staff
  - (1) A personnel file is held for each staff member and contains: contact details and contact details in case of an emergency, as well as a copy of the employee's terms of employment and all correspondence relating to job description changes, salary changes, leave entitlements, staff assessments etc
  - (2) Access to personnel information is restricted to: the individual staff member accessing their own file, managerial staff undertaking normal administrative tasks and authorised officers of government or other external bodies who request the information in the normal course of their role.
- iv) Information about the Association's affairs will only be made available to Committee members and staff undertaking normal administrative tasks and authorised officers of government or other external bodies who request the information in the normal course of their role.
- v) Rainbow management will develop procedures for accessing confidential records
  - (1) Informing families about their right to access records containing personal information about themselves and how they can request this.
  - (2) Recording family requests to access files.
  - (3) Making fair and appropriate decisions about permitting or refusing access to personal information.
  - (4) Providing access for families or former families to access their own confidential information.
  - (5) Advising families refused access to personal information how to appeal (if appropriate).
  - (6) Enabling families to change records they believe to be inaccurate or misrepresenting, when appropriate.]

And will inform all families using Rainbow services of those procedures, including a copy of those procedures being posted in locations accessible to all families.

## 9) Managing Contracts and Funding Agreements

- a) **Explanation** When the Association enters a contract for services, including its agreements with funding providers, each contract becomes a part of the legal obligations of the Association. As Rainbow is committed to meeting all its legal obligations and maintaining a positive working environment with contract partners and funding providers - there needs to be clear guidelines to ensure Rainbow can meet all obligations in an effective and timely manner.

- b) **Implementation**

- i) When Rainbow is offered funding agreements by government agencies, the Director shall consider the agreement and provide a report to the Committee about the implications of accepting that funding.
- ii) The Committee shall delegate the authority to senior staff to enter into minor contracts for work within normal budget expectations. The Committee shall consider all contracts outside budget limits or any contracts with a value above \$5,000.
- iii) When Rainbow needs to enter into a contract for any services, the Director shall consider whether the contract needs to be brought to the attention of the Committee.
- iv) The Director and /or Coordinators of a service shall ensure prior to entering into any contract that the service has considered the merits of otherwise of the contract and the merits and costs of alternatives suppliers.
- v) The Committee shall note, consider and approve all funding and other contracts entered into by the Association, and ensure all contracts are appropriately signed by authorised representatives.
- vi) The Association shall recognise the service requirements and implications of all contracts/agreements, especially funding agreements, and ensure resources are allocated so that the Association's services can meet those requirements.
- vii) The Director and service coordinators shall consider all contracts and agreements to familiarise themselves with the obligations entered into, so as to be in a position to determine what needs to be done to meet those obligations.
- viii) The Committee will delegate authority to senior staff to implement services that fulfil Rainbow's obligations under all agreements and contracts.
- ix) The Director will ensure all contracts and agreements are made available to the auditor each year to confirm Rainbow has met its obligations.

## 10) Annual Plan

- a) **Explanation** Rainbow promotes regular evaluation and feedback for all its services on the effectiveness of the organisation. It recognises a review of its internal practices and Management Committee can strengthen its capacity. Such an assessment provides the Management Committee and staff with an opportunity to reflect on how well all elements of the Association are meeting our responsibilities and expectations.
- b) **Implementation** The Committee will conduct a review of Rainbow's performance on an annual basis. The review process will be the Rainbow Annual Plan and will incorporate the following:
  - i) Committee, members & staff agreement on mission and purpose
  - ii) Identification of shared values and differences within the community and the members and expectations of Government and the community.
  - iii) Review of effectiveness of all services
  - iv) Review of responsibilities and external accountabilities and Management Committee effectiveness in meeting these
  - v) Review of Rainbow achievement of goals from the previous year's plan and setting of new objectives for the coming year.
  - vi) Identification of areas for improvement and strategies to achieve goals
  - vii) Where appropriate, input from staff, volunteers, families, or an independent consultant, to evaluate achievements, strengths and weaknesses.
  - viii) The plan shall identify longer term plans adopted by the Association.

## 11) Risk Management

- a) **Explanation** The Management Committee has ultimate responsibility for safeguarding the organisation and its personnel and for ensuring that adequate risk management processes are in place. Risk management processes will be designed in order to prevent injury or harm to individuals, to protect the assets and interests of the organisation and to limit the impact of any unavoidable risk.
- b) **Implementation**
- i) The Management Committee will
    - (1) ensure that adequate resources are made available within the budget to implement all risk management processes.
    - (2) delegate the monitoring and reporting of risk management to the Director of Rainbow Education & Care, the Coordinator of OOSHC program (for OOSHC) and the Coordinator of Ballina Early Intervention (for BEI).
  - ii) The Director/Coordinators
    - (1) will develop and maintain the risk management plan for the organisation. The plan will cover all aspects of the organisation's activities and document all potential risks and their risk rating.
    - (2) will be responsible for the day to day implementation of risk management procedures and for ensuring that all staff are aware of these procedures.
    - (3) will report to the Committee re compliance checks and any irregularities.
  - iii) All staff are responsible for maintaining an awareness of potential risks in their areas of responsibility, ensuring that procedures are followed and notifying Director/Coordinators of any potential or actual risk.
  - iv) The Risk Management Plan will
    - (1) identify specific risks, assess risk ratings, identify action to manage risk, assign responsibility for any tasks and monitor and review outcomes.
    - (2) Include and cover at least
      - (a) Currency and adequacy of insurance cover
      - (b) Probity and security of financial management
      - (c) Compliance with contractual arrangements, and funding agreements in particular
      - (d) Compliance of all Rainbow Children's Centre procedures with WH&S
      - (e) Compliance of all Rainbow Children's Centre procedures with other relevant legislation.
    - (3) be reviewed on an annual basis,