

LFC Call to Inclusivity

Everyone closer to God

Summary

Living Faith Church recognises that our diversity is a strength, and that seeking the full participation of our members and community in everything we do is an element of our worship. (*Psalm 34:8, we can recognise right conduct by its fruit*)

Our policies and processes can sometimes limit the full participation of our members and community. An individual's capacity and specific circumstances can make our processes unintentionally burdensome. Examples of this include disability and trauma, but may also include structural hurdles such as access to meetings.

Our vision "Everyone closer to God" and our key focus area "Acceptance" requires a deliberately inclusive application of policy, one that is both accessible and accountable.

Purpose

This document forms a policy framework and is intended to shape how LFC creates and applies policies and procedures. It is informed by our vision, our governing bodies, the Uniting Church in Australia and Churches of Christ Victoria Australia, both state and federal legislation, and our history.

Jesus taught that a house divided cannot stand (Mark 3:22-30). We have not always lived up to that standard. Instead, we have at times, prioritised programs above acceptance. We acknowledge that the consequences of falling short have been individually harmful, as well as detrimental to our mission. This document is a call to reflection and repentance.

Practically, the purpose of this document is to:

1. Support our vision by clarifying our priorities;
2. Outline how we will keep our commitments to our community and governing bodies;
and
3. Address specific areas of worship requiring further attention.

Commitment

When applying policy and process, we commit to:

1. Keep our legal and regulatory obligations;
2. Fully adhere to all LFC policies where possible, keeping the intent of our policies where processes cannot be kept in full;
3. Inform our community about their rights and responsibilities, invite them to participate in decisions affecting them, and take their representations seriously;
4. Ensure policy and procedures are understandable and accessible to all members of the community;
5. Support our teams and members, and to equip them to support each other;
6. Provide worshiping and pastoral communities that are free from abuse, and that provide safe environments for all people to explore and express their faith in God; and

7. Call out policy and process that falls short of our vision and commitment to each other. (*Colossians 3:12, an attitude of humility and repentance brings us closer to God*).

Where modifications of policy and process are needed, Church Council will assess if a general change is needed, rather than a specific allowance. This document will be subject to annual review.

Areas of specific focus

In recognition of historic and legal obligations, LFC identifies areas of inclusion that currently require specific focus. Consideration to these obligations should include:

1. codes of conduct;
2. complaints;
3. position descriptions; and
4. proposals.

Cultural Inclusivity

1. LFC expects staff, volunteers, and leaders will act to promote an inclusive and respectful culture in which the identities and experiences of people are respected and valued.
2. LFC will look for opportunities to learn and express appreciation of our cultures and history. We especially seek reconciliation and renewal with First Nations peoples because of historic and continuing injustices.
3. Strategies to prevent racism and discrimination are implemented. Staff, volunteers, and leaders will act on incidents of racism including referral to the Formal Complaints Process.

Diversity

1. Staff, volunteers, and leaders are supported to understand diversity, identify risk factors and to promote equity and safety.
2. Take action to support and respond to people who are experiencing vulnerability.
3. Uphold equity, promote safety and work to prevent child abuse and harm.
4. Welcome all people, irrespective of age, sexual orientation, gender identity, or sex/intersex status.
5. Acts of discrimination or prejudice towards LGBTQ+ people are unacceptable and will be responded to appropriately.

Adopted by Church Council on 28th November 2023