

# Spyns

## Access & Equity Policy

### **Background**

Australia is an ancient land which has been inhabited by human beings for many thousands of years. It is acknowledged that the Aboriginal people of Australia were the prior owners and occupiers of this land. Through the colonisation of Australia policies and practices imposed on the original owners has resulted in disempowerment and dispossession for many Aboriginal people leading to marginalisation and social disadvantage.

Past policies of successive Australian governments, including the White Australia Policy and the Assimilation Integration Policy, have been discriminatory and have led to the marginalisation of not only Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people but also migrants. Other groups in our society, namely that of women, people with disabilities, people with different religions, sexual preferences, philosophies or different health status have also experienced lack of equal opportunity.

This discrimination has been acknowledged and has/is being addressed by Federal, State and Local levels of Government through **Access & Equity** provisions, **Social Justice** as the underpinning principle for **inclusion, Equity and Fairness**, and **Multiculturalism** as a national agenda.

Current **Federal legislative requirements** include

- Racial Discrimination Act 1975
- • Sex Discrimination Act 1984
- • Disabilities Discrimination Act 1972
- • Human Rights & Equal Opportunities Act 1984
- • Racial Hatred Act

Current **State legislative requirements** include

- Anti-Discrimination Act 1977
- • Ethnic Affairs Amendment Act 1997
- • Racial Vilification Act

## **Introduction**

Australia is a multicultural, multilingual, multi expressive and politically diverse society.

Therefore South Penrith Youth & Neighbourhood Services Inc. has a responsibility and commitment to ensure that the services and facilities we provide are relevant and responsive to the diverse needs of the community we serve.

This means that everyone who is entitled to our services should be able to use them and there should be no barriers that inhibit access to any individual or group.

## **Principles**

1. Commitment to **Social Justice**
  - (a) **Equity** - a fairer distribution of economic resources and power through the design and delivery of services.
  - (b) **Access** - fair and equal opportunity for all people to use those services that are important for the quality of life (to be informed about and use those services without physical, cultural or financial barriers).
  - (c) **Participation** - opportunity to be involved with the management, service provision and planning.
  - (d) **Rights** - developing fairer, more comprehensive rights that are equally accessible by all people regardless of their income and social background. This includes civil, political, industrial, social and economic rights as well.
  
2. All members of Australian society have the right to access and equity of services and resources regardless of their race, age, gender, disability, sexual preference, religion, philosophy, cultural background of health status.
  
3. Whilst we have a responsibility and commitment to respond equitably to the needs of all individuals and groups within the broader community, we acknowledge the importance and necessity of dedicated specialist services for disadvantaged groups e.g. Womens Services, ATSI Services, NESB services and therefore support them in their commitment to providing their specialist services.

4. Spyns Inc. is committed to working within a community development model which incorporates principles of social justice, cultural diversity, acceptance of difference and a 'rights' not welfare approach to service delivery.

### **Implementation of this Commitment**

1. To ensure that the principles of access and equity are reflected throughout all policies, procedures and practised of the organisation.

2. Every attempt will be made to ensure that services and activities of the organisation will be promoted to all residents.

3. To ensure the organisation adheres to the principles of non discrimination in the planning and delivery of its services, resources and activities and be reflective of the social, political, economic and cultural diversity of the area.

4. To ensure that all management committee members and staff (paid and unpaid) are given effective and relevant training and support to consistently implement access and equity appropriate services.

5. Spyns Inc. has a commitment and obligation to challenge discriminatory attitudes and practises through various strategies such as community education, lobbying, reallocation of resources etc.

6. The effectiveness of this policy will be monitored through the use of the Access & Equity Audit Tool, yearly evaluation and reflection.

Adopted: January, 1999

Next Review Date: January, 2008