



## SOCIAL INCLUSION POLICY

### Purpose

A Social Inclusion culture is one that welcomes and celebrates diversity. It means being proactive in improving access, participation and safety for those who have faced barriers. This policy aims to ensure that Jewish engagement at Temple Beth Israel includes people from a variety of ages, gender identifiers, sexual orientations, physical and non-physical abilities, cultural backgrounds and communication styles. It is intended to cover all aspects of diversity.

### At a glance

This policy applies to TBI staff, lay leaders, volunteers, congregants and visitors.

This policy outlines the values, scope, procedures and responsibilities for achieving and maintaining a culture of inclusion at TBI throughout its core elements of staffing, lay leadership, volunteerism, programs, events and activities.

### Introduction

There is a sound basis in Jewish texts for being inclusive:

#### Equality

*“And God created humankind in God’s image b’tzelem Elohim, after God’s likeness”* (Genesis 1:26)

*“For my house shall be a house of prayer for all peoples.”* (Isaiah 56:7)

Every person, with their unique character is created in the image of God, *b’tzelem Elohim*, and our places of gathering, prayer and activities are to be for everyone. So we must create environments that are open, understanding and accepting of all.

#### Equity

*“Once I was walking in the darkness and I saw a blind man who was walking with a torch in his hand. I asked him my son, why do you need this torch? He said to me: as long as this torch is in my hand people can see me and save me from thorns and ditches.”*(Talmud Bavli Megillah 24b)

*“It is a positive commandment to give tzedakah according to your capacity. And in many places it appears as a positive commandment. And there is a negative commandment not to avert one’s eyes from a poor person as it says: do not harden your heart and shut your hand against your needy kinsman”* (Shulkhan Aruch, Yoreh De’ah 247:1)

It is not enough to passively tolerate difference. The texts challenge us to actively work towards equitable participation.

## Inclusion

*“I have a disability and I am whole”* (Pamela Schuller Jewish educator who has Tourette Syndrome)

We must recognise and include every person who wishes to be involved in the life and activities of the synagogue.

## Facilitation

*“But he said please O God make someone else your agent. The Eternal became angry with Moses and said there is your brother Aaron the Levite. He, I know speaks readily...You shall speak to him and put words in his mouth- I will be with you and with him as you speak and he shall speak for you to the people.”* (Exodus 4:13-16)

God sets an example of facilitating the talents of a person with a disability. Not only does Moses become the best he can be, but the whole community, the entire house of Israel benefits.

## Sacred Community

*“When congregations take this charge (b’tzelem Elohim) seriously, every interaction with members and potential members is looked upon as an opportunity to create a unique, special, holy and sacred community. This is the first step in establishing a synagogue of relationships.”* (Ron Wolfson, The Spirituality of Welcoming)

It is incumbent on synagogue leadership to build relationships and use every opportunity for inclusion.

## Scope

### The Law in Australia

This policy ensures that TBI complies with the various anti-discrimination laws at both Commonwealth and State levels. Specifically, The *Equal Opportunity Act 2010 (Victoria)*. This includes a number of important elements that apply:

- The Act makes discrimination, or unfavourable treatment on the basis of a personal characteristic, unlawful in various areas of public life. The law covers situations when a person is treated unfavourably, and situations when a practice or condition might appear neutral, but has the effect of disadvantaging people with a protected personal characteristic.
- The Act prohibits discrimination in a range of settings, including at work, in education, when providing goods and services or accommodation, to sport and clubs, and local government.
- The Act imposes a duty to provide reasonable adjustments - reasonable and proportionate measures to support people with disabilities in employment, education and when providing goods and services, to help the person with a disability to perform the job or access education and services.

### Other Policy Guidance

This policy supports the principles of Access and Equity set out in the Victorian Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) Access and Equity Framework 2013-2017.

This policy supports the following elements from the Jewish Community Council of Victoria (JCCV) Disability Strategy (2017):

*3.31.3 JCCV recognises the diverse experience of persons with disability, and that there are members of the Victorian Jewish Community with disabilities, who require types and levels of response.*

*3.31.4 JCCV supports the development of projects which improve opportunity for inclusion and access. In addition, the JCCV supports projects that promote full and effective participation and inclusion in the community, of people with disabilities on an equal basis with others and without discrimination.*

*3.31.5 JCCV acknowledges that inclusion of and access for people with disability to mainstream services, community based activities is a shared responsibility and therefore in its role as a roof body calls on organisations within the Jewish community to be inclusive.*

This policy acknowledges assistance given by the Social Inclusion Leadership Committee (SILC), chaired by David Southwick, in its efforts to provide leadership and resources to Jewish organisations to implement socially inclusive procedures in their organisations.

## Policy

1. Every effort will be made not to disadvantage congregants and participants in their access to Jewish engagement at TBI, regardless of their country of birth, language, culture, race, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, physical, psychological or cognitive ability or communication style.
2. In our role as an employer, we will ensure that all applicants have equal access to advertised positions and to interviews.
3. Wherever feasible we will take reasonable and proportionate measures to respond to the particular needs of our employees.
4. We will promote diversity in the membership of our Board, committees and working groups.
5. We will provide ongoing training for staff and lay leaders so that they develop the skills and knowledge to work effectively in an inclusive framework.
6. Wherever feasible we will make arrangements to ensure that our programs, events and activities are accessible and inclusive of people from diverse backgrounds and abilities.
7. Wherever feasible we will consider issues of diversity and ability in the design and delivery of our programs, events and activities.
8. Where necessary and feasible we will provide for the special needs and particular circumstances of individuals who wish to participate in TBI programs, events and activities.
9. We will engage in ongoing consultation and collaborative partnerships with relevant organisations so that the needs of people from diverse backgrounds can be addressed.
10. We will institute a feedback mechanism so that issues of inclusion can be raised and feedback given, so as to improve our processes.

## Procedures

1. We will promote attitudinal change – from acceptance model to inclusion model - via awareness raising, education and training for staff, lay leaders and volunteers.
2. We will conduct needs assessment(s) - by survey and/or focus groups in order to map the level of need and range of diversity within our congregation.

3. We will engage in proactive consultation with organisations and advocates, to ascertain processes that could be improved, and any barriers to participation that could be removed.
4. The TBI Education Committee will ensure that the particular needs of individual participants in education programs are identified and, if required, an action plan put in place to address those needs (See TBI Tamid application, B'nei Mitzvah program application).
5. For community events such as the Purim Carnival, the responsible staff member (or person staffing the volunteer point) will, where required, complete the Inclusive Community Events checklist (See SILC Inclusive Community Events Checklist) and then take appropriate actions.
6. In developing new events, programs and activities, we will, wherever feasible consult with congregants from diverse backgrounds who may be adversely affected by the event program or activity.
7. In the advertising and promotion of programs, events and activities, TBI will consider and, if feasible, provide information in accessible formats.

## **Responsibility and Reporting**

The TBI Board of Governance through its respective Committees is responsible for ensuring that socially-inclusive procedures are considered and implemented wherever feasible.

Progress on Social Inclusion strategies and procedures will be reported to the TBI Annual General Meeting and will include a summary of actions taken, training delivered and any further recommendations and/or amendments.

## **Authorisation**

Date of approval by Board: September 2016

Review date: 2019 (3 years)