



# **WOMEN'S HEALTH WEST**

**VALUES, PRINCIPLES & BEHAVIOURS 2020**

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## 2.0 Vision, Mission & Values

### 2.1 Vision

Equity and justice for women in the west

### 2.2 Mission

We work together for change by supporting women and their children to lead safe and healthy lives and changing the conditions that cause and maintain inequity and injustice.

### 2.3 Values

1. Freedom
2. Connection
3. Resistance
4. Love
5. Creativity

## 3.0 Values in Detail

### 3.1 Freedom

#### 3.1.1 Principle

We centre freedom from oppression, discrimination and violence in all our work. We take responsibility for behaving and working in ways that promote freedom and we are accountable for the actions we take.

#### 3.1.2 Behaviour Statement (Code of Conduct)

WHW understands freedom to be the opposite to oppression, domination and control. We recognise that we cannot achieve our vision and mission unless we have a thorough commitment to embodying freedom in all areas of our organisation.

#### 3.1.3 Behaviours

This means we:

- Practice non-violent communication
- Keep rules and regulations to a minimum and encourage people to problem solve
- Believe that people do their best work when they are given autonomy and are trusted to do the right thing
- Move towards an anti-oppressive framework that seeks to provide maximum freedom while ensuring compliance
- Provide as much opportunity for people to exercise their own agency
- Have an intersectional understanding of power and seek to re-distribute power throughout our organisation
- Give people the opportunity to meaningfully contribute to decisions that affect them
- Reflect on the power we hold. Always seek to make visible our own privileges and understand our own particular social location. Consider the power dynamics in any situation, and how your social position (including your role, age, ability, ethnicity, gender, race, religion, sexuality etc.) shapes your interactions with other
- Be aware of information and/or experiences you may not or cannot know
- Understand that with greater freedom comes greater responsibility and accountability
- Take full responsibility for our actions and decisions
- Have an invitational approach to participation

This means we do not:

- Micro-manage people
- Presume that freedom means *laissez faire* or abandoning people to their own devices. We give clear guidance and support when people need it
- Seek to overly control what people do or say, but rather try to understand it
- Think that freedom means that “anything goes” and no one is responsible or accountable
- Prioritise our own freedom at the expense of someone else’s

## 3.2 Connection

### 3.2.1 Principle

We foreground connection to ourselves, each other, our clients, the community, the land and the environment. Connection is fundamental to achieving our purpose. We believe in the strength of belonging, of being inclusive and in working together to achieve change.

### 3.2.2 Behaviour Statement (Code of Conduct)

At WHW we believe in the power of a healthy web of reciprocal relationships. We tend to and nurture this web because we know that it is vital in sustaining all of us and achieving our vision and mission.

### 3.2.3 Behaviours

This means we:

- Co-operate across streams and teams to develop relationships and share information in support of the organisational vision and mission
- Ask for what we need, and encourage others to ask for what they need, understanding that this builds connection
- Are clear about where our responsibility ends and that of others begins
- Are aware of our own behaviour and how it impacts on others
- Work in a relational way with our co-workers, our clients, our partners and our funders. This involves acknowledging our mutual responsibilities, being accountable and engaging in equitable practice
- Believe that the health and wellbeing of individuals impacts the health and wellbeing of the whole
- Do what we say we will do
- Listen. We really listen
- Care for the natural environment in all that we do
- Can disagree with each other without rupturing connection
- Do our best to repair when there has been a rupture
- Have kind, firm boundaries with ourselves, each other, our clients and partners, and our funders
- Understand that the work of all streams is equally important and are demonstrative of this in the way we remunerate and communicate
- We purposefully create opportunities to acknowledge, respect and learn from the lived experiences of the people we work with, both internally and externally

This means we do not:

- Use divisive practices in our teams or streams
- Presume the relative importance of the work of one stream over another
- Enforce connection when what someone wants is disconnection
- Take someone's agency away from them in the process of fostering connection
- Provide tokenistic opportunities for people to have a say in place of meaningful collaboration
- Ask someone to represent a whole community or population group

## 3.3 Resistance

### 3.3.1 Principle

We uphold human rights and in solidarity, work together to disrupt injustice and transform lives. We unapologetically challenge systems that disempower while simultaneously acknowledging that we are part of these systems.

### 3.3.2 Behaviour Statement (Code of Conduct)

At WHW we understand resistance to be that which rises up spontaneously whenever there is an experience of oppression. We have an obligation to put this to good use in service of dismantling systems of oppression and taking a stand even when it is inconvenient for ourselves or others. We believe resistance to be a constructive force, that inspires positive and transformative change.

### 3.3.3 Behaviours

This means we:

- Learn to look both inward and outward to understand systems of oppression
- Understand that where there is oppression there is resistance
- Acknowledge that society disproportionately oppresses certain individuals and communities, and this is who we advocate for and alongside. These are the individuals and communities we need to be most accountable to.
- Take responsibility for educating ourselves and each other about the past and present of this land and the specific country that we are located on, Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung and Bunurong Country.
- Examine the ways in which our organisation has and is continuing to perpetuate a white settler-colonial mindset
- Take concrete steps as an organisation to redress the colonial injustices of the past and present
- Seek out guidance by First Nations in our attempt to redress the colonial injustices of the past and present, and commit to allying their efforts to exert sovereignty
- See it as all of our responsibility to contribute to organisational advocacy, internally and externally
- Positively challenge the status quo
- Challenge inappropriate behaviour when we witness it
- See discomfort and dissonance as vital in our work to change systems of oppression

This means we do not:

- Pathologise people's resistance to oppression, instead we acknowledge it as highly adaptive
- Turn a blind eye when someone raises something of concern to them
- Take on too much work at the expense of our health, or encourage/ require others to do so
- Blame individuals for what are systemic problems
- Shy away from difficult conversations and decisions, particularly when we have made a mistake
- See our complicity in systems of oppression as a reason why we should not challenge them

## 3.4 Love

### 3.4.1 Principle

We practice fierce, revolutionary love. We are open to all ways of knowing and being. We treat each other with respect, kindness and compassion and are committed to creating an environment where all feel seen, heard and valued.

### 3.4.2 Behaviour Statement (Code of Conduct)

At WHW we want to reclaim the word “love” from its meagre romantic associations and restore it to something more expansive, more inclusive and more generative. We know that real social change requires an ethic of love, care and commitment.

### 3.4.3 Behaviours

This means we:

- Understand love as a practice and a way of living and acting in the world. It is not romantic feeling, but rather a mindset that allows us to extend compassion and respect to all, through recognising our shared humanity.
- Have unconditional positive regard for all people
- Understand that if we had lived the totality of someone else’s experience we would act just as they do
- Give people the benefit of the doubt, be generous in our assumptions and practice trusting people to do the right thing
- Understand that people are naturally inclined towards good, given the right conditions
- Practice self and collective care
- Make decisions in a way that cares for people and prioritises the collective; including the people we serve and the organisation as a whole
- Being purposefully open-minded, and deliberately seek out and appreciate diverse ways of knowing and being
- Seek to understand the consequences of our choices and actions
- Ensure a supportive environment where team members can accept responsibility for, and learn from failure and success
- Support and encourage others to develop their knowledge, skills and behaviours
- Believe that solutions to problems can be mutually beneficial
- Practice cultivating joy in our workplace
- Make mistakes and slip up in all of the above and don’t collapse into guilt or blame. We are human.

This means we do not:

- Glorify romantic love at the expense of other forms of love
- Have to like each other, or be friends with each other, in order to work together in transformative ways
- Seek to apportion blame when something goes wrong
- Automatically presume malicious intent when something goes wrong
- Talk about our colleagues or clients in a demeaning manner

## 3.5 Creativity

### 3.5.1 Principle

We embrace and nurture creativity and curiosity. We reflect critically, ask questions, listen and actively pursue learning. We see uncertainty as opening up spaces for new possibilities.

### 3.5.2 Behaviour Statement (Code of Conduct)

At WHW we know that tackling a problem like family violence demands creativity and ingenuity. We aim to disrupt traditional ideas, patterns, habits and rules because that's what it takes.

### 3.5.3 Behaviours

This means we:

- Are proactive in carving out time and space for creativity and curiosity
- Actively encourage dissenting voices and celebrate a questioning approach
- Celebrate mistakes as potent avenues for learning and innovation
- Prioritise time for critical reflection in all roles across the organisation
- Commit to reflecting on our own actions and practice
- Have an enabling environment for trying new ways of doing things and actively reduce barriers to people trying new things
- Identify areas of the organisation where risks can be taken and take them
- Embrace discomfort and uncertainty as potent catalysts for growth and change

This means we do not:

- Do things the way they always have been done
- Put obstacles in the way of innovation
- Focus on generating ideas without paying attention to following through
- Allow the fear of failure to inhibit innovation
- Complain instead of doing something
- Blame individuals when things go wrong
- Present only the problem with no consideration of the solution
- Block change or fail to engage with others' ideas for change

## 4.0 Glossary of Terms

### **Equitable Practice**

A method of working that treats everybody with agency and respect. It requires the provision of an accessible, culturally safe and responsive service, that addresses the specific needs of the people it is designed to support. Equitable practice acknowledges that people have different needs and circumstances and is adaptive and understanding of these needs.

### **Intersectionality**

Intersectionality is the convergence of different social categories and identities, such as ethnicity, gender, sexuality, ability, age and class, for example. It describes the unique compounding effects experienced by individuals, when these overlapping categories and identities meet. It refers to the experience in which a person encounters multiple systems of oppression and discrimination that intersect with each other to create new, and compound forms of oppression and discrimination.

### **Non-violent Communication**

Non-violent communication involves bringing an awareness to what we are thinking, saying, doing and listening, in order to connect and communicate with more clarity, empathy and compassion. Rather than judging, blaming or criticizing, it aims to understand someone's position. It involves listening actively and respectfully, reflecting on what is heard, and acknowledging that what someone is saying is important to them.

### **Power**

Power is the ability of an individual, group or institution to control or assert their will over others, often by constraining their options. Structural power is the large-scale economic and political forces that shape our society, including our institutions and social order.

### **Privilege**

Privileges are the unearned advantages or entitlements, that benefit some to the detriment of others. Often privilege is acquired by belonging to a dominant social group including social class, age, ability, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, religion, level of education etc. Privilege can be used to affect positive change and redress inequity, discrimination and oppression.