

# Providing a Culturally Safe Environment for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Families and Educators (6D)

## Related Frameworks

### EYLF V2.0

#### Learning Outcomes

- Children have a strong sense of identity
- Children are connected to their world
- Children have a strong sense of wellbeing
- Children are confident and involved learners
- Children are effective communicators

#### Principles

- Secure, respectful and reciprocal relationships
- Partnerships
- Respect for diversity
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives
- Inclusion and high expectations
- Sustainability
- Critical reflection and ongoing professional learning
- Collaborative leadership and teamwork.

#### Practices

- Holistic, integrated and interconnected approaches
- Responsiveness to children
- Play-based learning and intentionality.
- Learning environments
- Cultural responsiveness
- Continuity of learning and transitions

## Policy Statement

“Cultural Competence is about our will and actions to build understanding between people, and to be respectful and open to different cultural perspectives, strengthen cultural security and work towards equality of opportunity.” (ACECQA, 2014, para 1)

SNAICC (2012 p.2) has identified three strong areas of culturally competent service delivery. These cultural competency areas include:

- Respect for the cultural identities of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, including language, lore, and traditions, in Early Childhood Care and Education service delivery.
- Understanding that culture is embedded in all that a service does and doesn't do, and acknowledging the privilege granted to the dominant culture.
- Valuing positive, mutually supportive, and equal relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families, communities and organisations.

We strive to become excel in these areas by identifying goals and strategies that support a safe and culturally competent preschool community.

## Goals

Mt Warning Community Preschool will:

- Build strong relationships with our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, families, and members of our immediate and surrounding communities.
- Acknowledge and respect the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community as First Nation people and traditional custodians of our land, past, present, and future.

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‘Early childhood education not only works to create a strong and stable foundation in formal education for Aboriginal and Torres Strait children, but also provides an opportunity for those children to grow in, and share their sense of pride in their connection to culture, language, community and country.’ Adam Duncan  
Biripi EC Teacher.

Closing the Gap, 2016 Report.  
<https://www.niaa.gov.au/sites/default/files/reports/closing-the-gap-2018/infancy-and-early-childhood.html>

## Organisations

ACECQA- Australian Children’s Education and Care Quality Authority  
<https://www.acecqa.gov.au/>

SNAICC- Secretariat of National Aboriginal and Islander Child Care  
<https://www.snaicc.org.au/>

AIATIS- Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies  
<https://aiatsis.gov.au/>

NIAA- National Indigenous Australians Agency  
<https://www.niaa.gov.au/>

ANTAR- Australians for Native Title and Reconciliation  
<https://antar.org.au/>

## Goals. Cont.

- Engage with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in a culturally safe environment which promotes positive dispositions for lifelong learning.
- Be a part of the process of reconciliation by honouring and respecting traditional practices and protocols of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, particularly the Bundjalung People of the Bundjalung Nation. Acknowledging protocol is a recognised basic human right in that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have the right to protect their heritage.
- Promote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in a positive manner, throughout our community.

## Strategies – How will it be done?

- Provide opportunities for employment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people within our services.
- Ensure our educators are culturally competent and our service practices culturally appropriate and trauma informed practices.
- Incorporate traditional language into our curriculum and daily practices. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages are at risk of dying out. Being able to communicate in a person’s first or home language connects a person to their country and shapes identity (aphref.aph.gov.au, 2012). Language is interrelated to lore, culture, family, country and kinship for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians. ‘Speaking and learning traditional languages improves the wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, by providing a sense of belonging and empowerment’ (AIATIS, 2019).

## Aim to build the capacity of our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, families, and members of our immediate community by:

- Maintaining high expectations of our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and ensure their outcomes for learning are equivalent to those of non-Aboriginal & Torres Strait children. This is supported by the *UN Convention on the Rights of the Child* (UN General Assembly, 1989), *Early Childhood Australia’s [ECA] ‘Code of Ethics’* (2018) and the Alice Springs (Mparntwe) Education Declaration (2020).
- Invite Aboriginal and Torres Strait family members to have input into our curriculum by:

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## Relevant Guidelines and Sources

**The Alice Springs (Mparntwe) Education Declaration, 2020**  
<https://www.education.gov.au/alice-springs-mparntwe-education-declaration/resources/alice-springs-mparntwe-education-declaration>

**United Nations Convention for the Rights of the Child**  
<https://www.unicef.org.au/Upload/UNICEF/Media/Our%20work/childfriendlycrc.pdf>

**Early Childhood Australia**  
ECA Code of Ethics

**Secretariat of National Aboriginal and Islander Child Care [SNAICC]**  
<https://www.snaicc.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/02499.pdf>

## Strategies – How will it be done? Cont.

- consulting formally with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families, as families are children's first and foremost educators (DEEWR, 2009. p.12).
- by including an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander parent/carer representative on our committee.
- Recognising 'non-Indigenous people may not have the authority to speak about certain aspects of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures, and cannot speak for or about the experiences of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people', welcoming Indigenous members of the community in teaching Indigenous perspectives (Narragunnawali, RAP, 2020).
- Embedding relevant cultural curriculum that encourages progressive relationships with community members.
- Connecting with our local Indigenous community; strengthen these relationships by a foundation of respect and trust in our cultural competence and reflective practice.
- Develop and publish a Reconciliation Action Plan in collaboration with educators and community.
- Promote long-term positive educational outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children using the Narragunnawali platform.

## Create a culturally safe environment in which Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander children can develop a positive sense of identity and achieve to their full potential by:

- Providing a variety of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander resources, which are used in context. We will acknowledge the origin of stories, songs and resources when introducing them to children.
- Be instinctive in pedagogical practice and curriculum, providing diverse resources that acknowledge and celebrate the diversity in Indigenous cultural identity.
- Provide culturally appropriate curriculum that scaffolds educational outcomes for Indigenous children.
- Have high expectations of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander capabilities. We will expect the same level of participation and capabilities as non-Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander children.
- Strive to reach outcomes described in the National Partnerships agreement regarding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Early Childhood Development (COAG, N.D).
- Create a Reconciliation Action Plan and be guided by the outlined actions as outlined by Narragunnawali: Reconciliation in Education.
- Consult with community and elders to ensure the suitability and cultural inclusiveness of our curriculum and practices.

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## Relevant

### Sources

What Does it look like to be culturally competent? (2014) (ACECQA)

<http://wehearyou.acecqa.gov.au/2014/07/10/what-does-it-mean-to-be-culturally-competent/>

The Council of Australian Governments (COAG) N.D.

*The National Partnership Agreement regarding Indigenous Early Childhood Development*

[http://www.federalfinancialrelations.gov.au/content/npa/education/national-partnership/past/ctg-early-childhood-NP\\_superseded.pdf](http://www.federalfinancialrelations.gov.au/content/npa/education/national-partnership/past/ctg-early-childhood-NP_superseded.pdf)

The Role of Indigenous Languages (2012)

[http://www.aphref.aph.gov.au/house\\_committee\\_at\\_sia\\_languages2\\_report\\_chapter2.pdf](http://www.aphref.aph.gov.au/house_committee_at_sia_languages2_report_chapter2.pdf)

Stronger Smarter Jarjums

<https://strongersmarter.com.au/honouring-indigenous-languages/>

Narragunnawali-Reconciliation Action Plan

<https://www.narragunnawali.org.au/>

Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies

<https://aiatsis.gov.au/explore/articles/indigenous-australian-languages>

## Strategies – How will it be done? Cont.

- Work with local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander services in referring children who are at risk or in need of medical assessment.
- Prioritise enrolments for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, as required by Department of Education, and subsidise fees to facilitate inclusion.

### Aim to be a part of the process of reconciliation through:

- honouring and respecting traditional languages, practices, and protocols of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, particularly the Bundjalung people of the Bundjalung nation by:
  - Joining in cultural celebrations e.g. NAIDOC celebrations, our local Kinship Festival.
  - Consult with Elders and community on all matters, which involve our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families.
  - Strive to promote Welcome to Country or Acknowledgement to Country before meetings or gatherings.
  - Be respectful of traditional child rearing practices and respect families' decisions.
  - Acknowledge kinship and family group in child rearing practices.
  - Understanding 'families and communities want their children to grow up in a safe, healthy, and nurturing environment surrounded by their culture and community. For generations, tradition and dreaming have built tremendous strength, resilience, and pride.' (Closing the Gap Report, 2018)
  - Consult always with community and elders when implementing and designing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander specific programs.
  - Recognise local protocols when embarking on excursions away from preschool. Acknowledging local sites of significance and traditional protocols are followed. e.g. significant sights, men's and women's business.
- Consult with community and elders when designing and incorporating singing and images, which reflect local Aboriginal people.
- Weave local Indigenous language and dialects into the everyday curriculum, promoting the importance of using Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander language in the early educational environment.
- Use the 8 Ways of Learning to shape the curriculum.

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## Related Service Forms and Policies

Service Philosophy  
Priority of Access  
Enrolment  
Orientation  
Inclusion, Anti- Bias & Cultural Diversity  
Parental Involvement  
Continuous Improvement  
Staffing

## Related Guidelines, Standards, Frameworks

### National Quality Framework

Quality Area 1:  
Educational Program and Practice – Standard 1.1.1, 1.1.2, 1.1.3, 1.2.1

Quality Area 3: Physical Environment – Standard 3.2.1, 3.2.2

Quality Area 5:  
Relationships with Children – Standard 5.1.1, 5.1.2, 5.2.1

Quality Area 6:  
Collaborative Partnerships with Families and Communities – Standard 6.1.1, 6.1.2, 6.2.3

## Strategies – How will it be done? Cont.

### Aim to promote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in a positive manner, throughout our community by:

- Utilising documents such as the *EYLF Principles, Practice and Outcomes*, the *ECA Code of Ethics* and *UN Convention of the Rights of the child* in guiding our pedagogy and curriculum.
- Invite Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander guests to engage with our children and families.
- Use resources that depict Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in a positive manner. Displaying both a traditional and contemporary images of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.
- Encourage the use of “Red, Black and Yellow” in signage and lettering, as these colours are synonymous with Aboriginal identity.
- Celebrate NAIDOC and National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children's day, without a tokenistic approach.
- Engaging with, and embedding into our curriculum and pedagogy, Indigenous resources and relevant information, such as *Australian Institute for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander studies*, *Narragunnawali* and *First languages Australia* and local Bundjalung resources, such as *Murrumbidgee Aboriginal Language and Culture Co-operative*.

### Aim to provide opportunities for employment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people within our services by:

- Seeking funding and grants to supplement our budgeting requirements.
- Budgeting will allow for the sustainability of funding and grants secured which are targeted towards Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.
- Ensure Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander educators are employed when funding is secured working specifically with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children.
- Encourage and support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander educators to further their training and education within Early Childhood Education.
- Educators will have opportunities to attend a variety of in-service training to enhance their skills.
- Ensure Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander educators can attend important matters of family, culture, and community such as funerals and sorry business.

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## Strategies – How will it be done? Cont.

### Further Relevant Sources

#### AIFS

<https://aifs.gov.au/cfca/publications/strengths-australian-aboriginal-cultural-practices-fam/export>

#### Australian Government: Closing the Gap

<https://www.niaa.gov.au/sites/default/files/reports/closing-the-gap-2018/infancy-and-early-childhood.html>

#### Murrumbidgee Aboriginal Language and Culture Cooperative

<https://murrumbidgee.org.au/languages/bundjalung/>

### Aim to ensure our educators are culturally aware and our service practices culturally appropriate by:

- Being mindful of authentic resources that are not be stereotypical of culture. Generic resources will be used as a method of discussing traditional culture, however consultation will be undertaken when discussing local culture or using local culture in learning environments and intentional teaching opportunities. We will acknowledge other country's resources if not local.
- Promoting holistic pedagogical practice, in understanding the 'connectedness of mind, body and spirit' (DEEWR, 2009, p.16); this encourages pedagogical practice and curriculum that acknowledges and celebrates the importance of 'reciprocal relationships and partnerships for learning' (DEEWR, 2009, p.16).
- Offer opportunities for educators to be involved in cultural competency, cultural awareness, and intergenerational trauma training.
- Educational leaders will share information on cultural competence-based publications in journals, newsletter etc.
- Be informed in regards the findings of the Joint Council on Closing the Gap, and strive to implement any recommendations where relevant.
- Educators will attend professional development programs, workshops and events, which are Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander specific.
- Funding and grants secured which are targeted towards Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people will only be used to increase our capabilities of creating a culturally safe environment.
- Examine "intergenerational trauma" as a means of understanding hardships, inequalities and social injustice within Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander society.

### We will incorporate traditional language into our curriculum.

Aboriginal languages are at risk of dying out. Being able to communicate in a person's first or home language connects a person to their country and shapes identity.

Language is interrelated to lore, culture, family, country and kinship for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians.

- We will ensure language is authentic and used in our conversations and transitions.
- We will recognise language is inclusive of all aspects of cultural communication.

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## Strategies. Cont.

### We will incorporate traditional language into our curriculum. Cont.

- Whilst promoting and interlacing local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander spoken and written language in our learning environment, we will strive to ensure we are honouring, and utilising, the diverse Indigenous methods of communication.
- We will only use language in consultation with community.
- We will acknowledge if the language we are using is not representative of local Bundjalung language. Giving reference to the nation of origin if able to be identified.
- We will firstly source local images regarding art and design. However, if unable, we will use culturally accepted generic images ensuring stereotyping and generalisations do not occur.

## Monitoring, Evaluation and Review

This policy will be monitored to ensure compliance with legislative requirements and unless deemed necessary through the identification of practice gaps, the service will review this Policy every 24 months.

Families and staff are essential stakeholders in the policy review process and will be given opportunity and encouragement to be actively involved.

In accordance with R. 172 of the Education and Care Services National Regulations, the service will ensure that families of children enrolled at the service are notified at least 14 days before making any change to a policy or procedure that may have significant impact on the provision of education and care to any child enrolled at the service; a family's ability to utilise the service; the fees charged or the way in which fees are collected.

<b>Approved by Management Committee. Name:</b>	<b>Signature:</b>
<b>Date Approved:</b>	<b>Date of Review:</b>
<b>Daye Adopted:</b>	<b>Review Cycle: Bi-annual</b>