



# Providing a culturally safe environment for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families and educators

Review Date: 20/06/2025

## Introduction

"Cultural safety: recognition, respect and protection of the inherent rights, cultures, and traditions of a particular culture. In a culturally safe environment, there is "no assault, challenge or denial of their people's identity, of who they are and what they need. It is about shared respect, shared meaning, shared knowledge and experience, of learning, living and working together with dignity and truly listening". (Williams 2008).

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

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

We strive to become competent in these areas by identifying goals and strategies that support these themes.

## Goals – What are we going to do?

1. We aim to build the capacity of our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, families and members of our immediate community.
2. We aim to engage with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in a culturally safe environment which promotes positive dispositions for lifelong learning.
3. We aim to 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 Bandjalang 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.
4. We aim to promote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in a positive manner, throughout our community.
5. We aim to provide opportunities for employment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people within our services.
6. We aim to ensure our educators are culturally competent and our service practices culturally appropriate and trauma informed.
7. We will 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.

## Strategies - How will it be done?

### 1. **We aim to build the capacity of our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, families and members of our immediate community.**

- We will maintain high expectations of our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and ensure their outcomes for learning are equivalent to those of non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait children. This is supported by the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.
- We will invite Aboriginal and Torres Strait family members to have input into our curriculum by:
  - consulting formally with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families, as families are children's first and foremost educators.
  - by including an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander parent representative on our committee.
- We will develop and implement programs that build relationships with community members, particularly school students. This further encourages a smooth transition to school as preschool children develop relationships with school students. Programs which are inclusive of school aged students encourage empathy, a positive sense of identity and a sense of responsibility to be developed.
- We will develop and publish a Reconciliation Action Plan in collaboration with educators and community.
- We will promote long-term positive educational outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children using the Narra Gunna Walli platform.

### 2. **We will 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.**

- We will provide a variety of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander resources, which are used in context. We will ensure we do not 'other' or make these seem different or exotic. We will acknowledge the origin of stories, songs and resources when introducing them to children.
- We will have high expectations of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander capabilities. We will expect the same level of participation and capabilities as non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children.
- We will strive to reach outcomes as described in the National Partnerships agreement regarding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Early Childhood Development (COAG, N.D).
- We will consult with community and elders to ensure the suitability and culturally inclusiveness of our curriculum and practices.

- we will utilise local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander services to refer children who are at risk or in need of medical assessment.
- We will prioritise enrolments for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, as required by Department of Education, and subsidise fees to facilitate inclusion.

**3. We aim to 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 Bandjalang people of the Bundjalung nation. As they are the traditional custodians of this land.**

- We will join in cultural celebrations when possible e.g. NAIDOC celebrations.
- We will consult with Elders and community on all matters, which involve our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families.
- We will perform a Welcome to Country or Acknowledgement to Country before meetings or gatherings.

**Welcome to Country** acknowledges the traditional custodians of the land and shows respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as Australia's first peoples. A traditional custodian of the land performs Welcome to Country (an Elder on Bandjalang Country).

**Acknowledgment to Country** is performed in the absence of an elder of traditional custodian. The expectation is to acknowledge and pay our respects to elders past and present.

- We will be respectful of traditional child rearing practices and respect families' decisions.
- We will acknowledge kinship and family group in child rearing practices.
- We will consult always with community and elders when implementing and designing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander specific programs.
- We will 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.
- We will consult with community and elders when designing and incorporating singing and images, which reflect local Aboriginal people.

**4. We aim to promote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in a positive manner, throughout our community.**

- We will utilise documents such as the ECA code of Ethics and UN Convention of the Rights of the child to guide our practices.
- We will invite Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander guests to engage with our children and families.
- We will 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.
- We will encourage the use of "Red, Black and Yellow" in signage and lettering, as these colours are synonymous with Aboriginal identity.
- We will celebrate NAIDOC and National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children's day.

**5. We aim to provide opportunities for employment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people within our services.**

- We will seek 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.
- We will ensure Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander educators are employed when funding is secured working specifically with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children who are at 'risk.'
- We will 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.
- We will ensure Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander educators are able to attend important matters of family, culture and community such as funerals and sorry business. This is without detriment to any leave allowances e.g., personal leave.
- Support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander educators to acquire the tools they need to be successful in their profession. With reference to financial arrangements around uniforms, electronic devices or 'other', this is at the discretion of the Director's.

**6. We aim to ensure our educators are culturally aware and our service practices culturally appropriate.**

- Resources will not be stereotypical of culture. Generic resources will be used as a method of discussing traditional culture as a whole, 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.
- We will 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.
- Educators will attend conferences (when the budget allows), 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.
- We will examine "intergenerational trauma" as a means of understanding hardships, inequalities and social injustice within Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander society.

**7. We will incorporate traditional language into our curriculum and daily practices.**

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 (2012. [aphref.aph.gov.au](http://aphref.aph.gov.au)). Language is interrelated to lore, culture, family, country and kinship for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians.

- We will ensure language is inclusive and used in our conversations and transitions.
- We will only use language in consultation with community.
- We will acknowledge if the language we are using is not representative of local Bandjalong language. Giving reference to the country of origin if able to be identified.
- We will firstly source local images in regards to art and design. However, if unable, we will use culturally accepted generic images ensuring stereotyping and generalisations do not occur.

## References

- What Does it look like to be culturally competent? (2014) (ACECQA) retrieved from:  
<http://wehearyou.acecqa.gov.au/2014/07/10/what-does-it-mean-to-be-culturally-competent/>
- Australian Government Department of Education [AGDE] (2022). *Belonging, Being and Becoming: The Early Years Learning Framework for Australia (V2.0)*. Australian Government Department of Education for the Ministerial Council.  
<https://www.acecqa.gov.au/sites/default/files/2023-01/EYLF-2022-V2.0.pdf>
- The Council of Australian Governments (COAG) N.D. *The National Partnership Agreement regarding Indigenous Early Childhood Development* retrieved from:  
[http://www.federalfinancialrelations.gov.au/content/npa/health\\_indigenous/ctg-early-childhood/national\\_partnership\\_superseded.pdf](http://www.federalfinancialrelations.gov.au/content/npa/health_indigenous/ctg-early-childhood/national_partnership_superseded.pdf)
- The Role of Indigenous Languages (2012) retrieved from:  
[http://www.aphref.aph.gov.au\\_house\\_committee\\_atsia\\_languages2\\_report\\_chapter2.pdf](http://www.aphref.aph.gov.au_house_committee_atsia_languages2_report_chapter2.pdf)
- Secretariat of National Aboriginal and Islander Child Care (2012) *Cultural Competence in Early Childhood Education and Care Services, SNAICC Consultation Overview* retrieved from  
<http://www.snaicc.org.au/uploads/rsfil/02865.pdf>
- Stronger Smarter Jarjums  
<https://strongersmarter.com.au>

## Links to Policies/Documents

- Service Philosophy
- Reconciliation Action Plan
- Inclusion
- Employee Orientation
- Enrolment and Orientation
- Family Participation and Communication
- Priority of Access
- Professional Development

**President's Name:** Narissa Cuskelly

**President's Signature:** .....

**Date Adopted:** 20/06/2025

**REVIEW DATE:** 20<sup>th</sup> June 2025