



Early Childhood Australia
A voice for young children

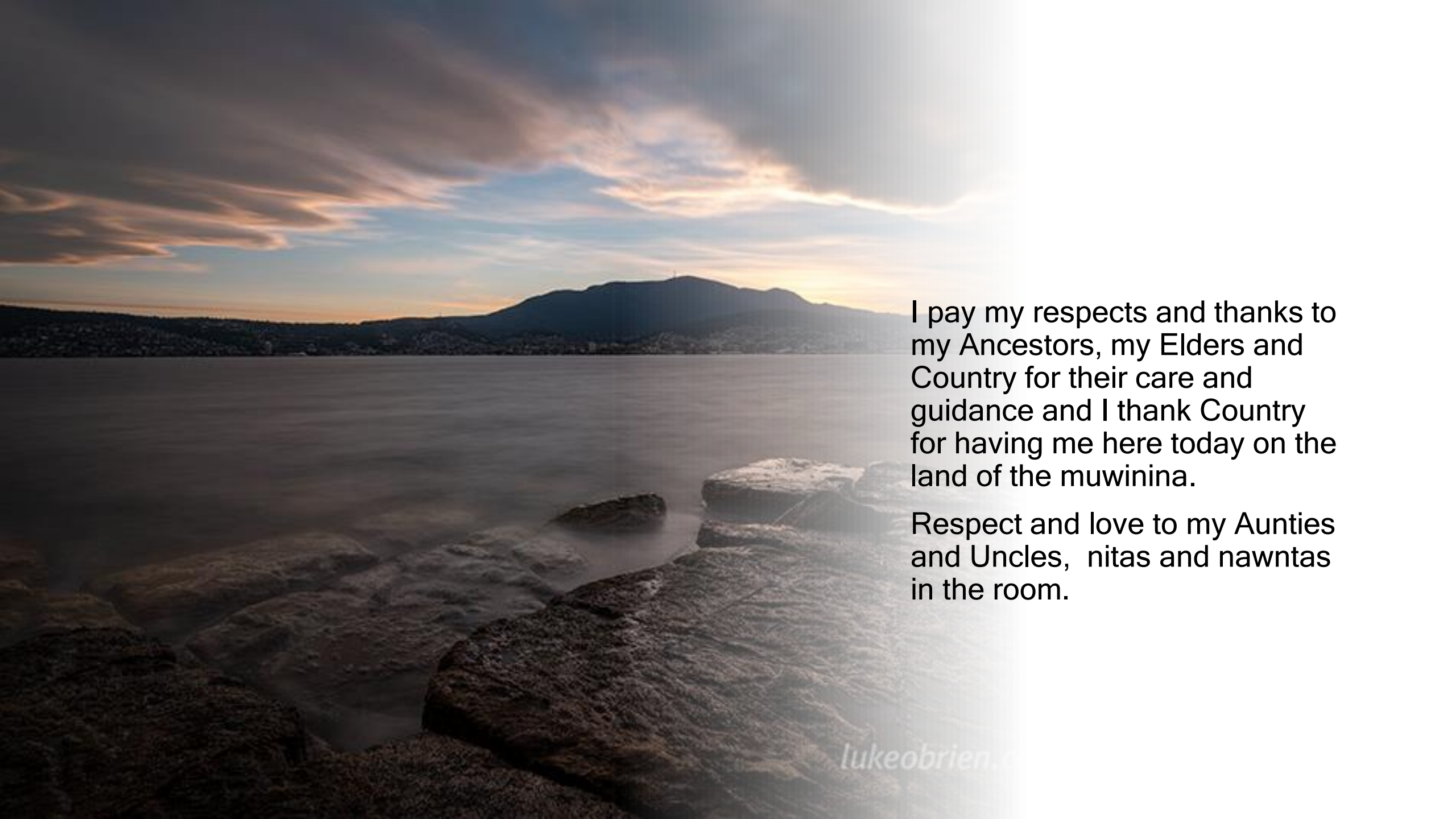
Advancing reconciliation in early childhood education and care

Let's have a yarn

about building a culturally inclusive organisation
and

establishing an authentic
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander
workforce in Early Childhood Education and Care





I pay my respects and thanks to my Ancestors, my Elders and Country for their care and guidance and I thank Country for having me here today on the land of the muwinina.

Respect and love to my Aunties and Uncles, nitas and nawntas in the room.



Today's session should help you to

- Understand what drives Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workforce development in early childhood education and care
- Gain some tips for attracting & retaining Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to your organisations.
- Better understand barriers for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people across all non-Aboriginal workplaces and
- Work towards decreasing barriers and increasing workplace diversity and workplace satisfaction in regard to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees.

National Reconciliation Week 2023: Be a Voice for Generations

During National Reconciliation Week, reflect on our shared histories and work towards reconciliation.

This year's theme, "Be a Voice for Generations," urges us to create a just, equitable, and reconciled country.

In our workplaces, we can make a real difference for Aboriginal people.

Here's what we can do:

- **Aboriginal employment plans:**
Develop and implement plans to support higher rates of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff at all levels. Break barriers and provide equal opportunities for a diverse workforce.
- **Aboriginal representation:**
Value and amplify Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander voices within our organisations. Ensure diverse representation in leadership positions, decision-making processes, and service design.
- **Collaboration and partnerships:**
Engage in meaningful partnerships with Aboriginal communities and organisations. Co-create initiatives for positive change and address systemic issues.
- **This National Reconciliation Week, be a voice for reconciliation and shape our society.**
Together, we can build a better future.



Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Cultural Safety in the workplace self assessment tool

This very basic self assessment tool is designed to get you thinking about some of the most simple things you can be aware of or undertaking in your workplace to promote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander safety and sustainability in your workforce.

Have I attended cultural awareness or cultural respect training program/s designed and delivered by Aboriginal people?

Yes: have I implemented learnings into my workplace and work practices?

Examples:

No: Why not?

Have I developed organisational principles to make it clear how Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander community engagement and employment should work in practice?

Yes: Examples

No: Why not?

Have I placed a focus on workplace readiness (cultural safety) rather than worker readiness to ensure Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff are safe in my workplace?

Yes: Examples

No: Why not?

Have I personally taken the time to look at my workplace environment and see if it is visually welcoming to Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander employees?

Yes:

Examples:

No: Why not?

Have I personally taken the time to reflect on my workplace policies and procedures to ensure they are inclusive of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and their needs, to ensure safety, engagement and ultimately retention in the workplace?

Yes:

Examples:

No:

What might I do, or what could I learn to do?

Shaping Our Future

A ten-year strategy to ensure a sustainable, high-quality children's education and care workforce 2022–2031



National Children's Education
and Care Workforce Strategy

September 2021

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workforce

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander educators and teachers have a crucial role in supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children to grow up strong in their culture. Their presence has also been found to increase attendance of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families at education and care services.

Based on the most recent available national workforce census data, just over two per cent of the children's education and care workforce identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander. While the majority of these educators hold at least a certificate III level qualification, they continue on to higher level vocational and degree-level qualifications at a lower rate than their non-Indigenous colleagues.

Potential factors that may impact Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander individuals studying and completing early childhood education and care qualifications include:

- a lack of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff in tertiary institutions
- the level of cultural competence amongst staff in tertiary institutions
- any assumption that all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students are the same, including any deficit assumptions about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander capability
- possible stigma regarding tertiary study in home communities
- a lack of understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural commitments and obligations to family and community
- any culturally unsafe professional placement sites.

Case study: The rural and remote early childhood teacher scholarship program (RATEP), Queensland

This community-based teacher education program for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander educators and pre-service teachers is offered across Queensland through locally based programs, support and co-ordination in community. It uses a combination of on-line and intensive residential learning, and provides ongoing individual study support. Scholarship recipients are offered pathways through the Certificate III and Diploma of Early Childhood Education and Care, and a Bachelor of Education (Early Childhood Education and Care) delivered in partnership between vocational training provider TAFE Queensland and higher education institute James Cook University.

There are a range of programs that have supported the skills development and qualification attainment for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander teachers and educators, from regional and state-wide programs to community and service-level programs and partnerships. Common characteristics that have been identified as important to their success include:

- a strengths-based approach
- a combination of on country, online and on-campus tuition
- local mentors and/or study groups
- face-to-face visits from lecturers/trainers
- financial support for study costs, including food, accommodation and transport
- close involvement of academic staff specialising in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education.



Linkages with other strategies and policy frameworks

This national workforce strategy supports and complements broader national strategies, such as Closing the Gap and the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Early Childhood Strategy. The latter strategy, being developed concurrently with this strategy, will provide a long-term approach to inform future policy and enable stronger whole of government collaboration and coordination, refocus policy investment, and highlight the centrally important role Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled organisations and services have in responding to the needs of children, families and communities, alongside the critical roles of governments and mainstream services.

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NATIONAL ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER EARLY CHILDHOOD STRATEGY



ORIGINAL AND
TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER CHILDREN
ARE **SUPPORTED TO THRIVE
IN THEIR EARLY YEARS**



- “Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander led playgroups, childcare centre and kindy programs, staffed and attended by community members, (I) want my child to be surrounded and supported by mob” Family consultation, SA
- Of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children accessing early childhood education and care services, most participate in mainstream services. It is important that all early childhood education and care services are culturally-safe and have inclusive practice. Access and engagement is critical to support children to thrive and has been identified as an area for improvement.

GOAL 5

ABORIGINAL AND
TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER

**CHILDREN, FAMILIES AND
COMMUNITIES ARE ACTIVE
PARTNERS IN BUILDING A
BETTER SERVICE SYSTEM**



"I would be happy to be asked for feedback about my experiences with services, but I find that sometimes services want you to take on the work of making them more culturally accessible or appropriate, instead of doing the work themselves"

Family survey respondent, NSW

Opportunities

- Increase the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples completing relevant qualifications and being employed in early childhood education and care and development services. This includes: supporting partnerships between the community-controlled sector and tertiary institutions and providers; and
- increasing, attracting and retaining employment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people,
- Improve cultural awareness, competency and safety in mainstream government agencies and service providers that support children and families, by addressing workforce capability and systemic reform
- Boost Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leadership and governance at all levels within the early childhood sectors.



ECA would like to see more Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander professionals taking up leadership roles across the sector, however, this relies on employers and policy-makers investing in leadership development opportunities and addressing barriers.

ACTION	DELIVERABLE
3.1 Increase the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees across ECA and at all levels of our workforce.	3.1.1 Develop a position statement supporting the recruitment and of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in the early childhood sector, in consultation with: • Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people currently working in the sector—across geographic areas, service types and job roles • registered training providers offering early childhood qualifications • universities offering early childhood qualifications • Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employment and recruitment agencies.
	3.1.2 Review and implement an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Recruitment Strategy.
	3.1.3 Increase the proportion of our paid workforce who identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander from current 2.4% (2022) to 3% in 2024 and 4% or higher by 2025
	3.1.4 Work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff to identify effective retention and advancement strategies to foster career development into leadership roles and develop succession plans for key roles.



Aboriginal employment isn't charity.

BlakWorks

It's strategy.

The best way to improve your service to Aboriginal clients is by employing Aboriginal people.

Not just because Aboriginal staff could be servicing your Aboriginal clients, but having Aboriginal staff can help improve the cultural capability of your staff.

And, culturally capable staff will service your Aboriginal clients better.

Of course, it's important to remember that building the cultural capability of your staff isn't the responsibility of your Aboriginal staff - it's your responsibility.

In the same way it's your responsibility to provide a safe workplace.

The best way to make sure that your Aboriginal employees can contribute to growing the cultural capability of your service is to do much of the work before they start - or hand in hand with them.

When you have a workplace that respects, welcomes and supports Aboriginal people, you have a workplace where Aboriginal people can have success.

And, successful Aboriginal staff are able to influence and grow the cultural capability in your workplace.

But only if you do the groundwork first.

If you want to improve your service for Aboriginal people, start with Aboriginal employment.

Gari Yala
(speak the truth in
the language of the
Wiradjuri people)
www.dca.org.au



Sharing your Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander background at work is vitally important

- 78% said it was important for them to identify as Indigenous within their workplace

But it can be complicated

- 63% experience high identity strain – the strain Indigenous employees feel when they themselves, or others, view their identity as not meeting the norms or expectations of the dominant culture in the workplace

- 39% carry the burden of high cultural load, which comes in the form of extra work demands and the expectation to educate others

What is cultural safety in the workplace?

- **Thinking about Aboriginal culture, history and protocols as they affect the workplace needs to occur across all businesses.**
- But, this is especially important if your business employs Aboriginal people, provides services to Aboriginal people, or engages with Aboriginal communities.
- Aboriginal people can be easily isolated in non-Aboriginal organisations.
- In Aboriginal-run organisations, Aboriginal people may find themselves working with people from different Country and with different protocols, political leanings, family groups.

A culturally safe business for Aboriginal people will be able to state:

- our organisation is culturally safe for workers and community
- we are well connected to our local Aboriginal community
- we respond to the identified needs of Aboriginal people
- we are accessible to Aboriginal people and communities
- we work in a culturally safe and appropriate manner
- we understand there are nuances, differences and protocols within Aboriginal Australia and we seek to understand those and work with those..

When you advertise an Aboriginal position, you are inviting an Aboriginal person to come and work for you.

What policies or strategies do you have in place to understand and embrace Aboriginal employees Aboriginality?

How do you acknowledge/ honour/ celebrate that person in terms of their Aboriginality?

What
strategies do
you use to
attract
Aboriginal
employees?

When advertising?

When interviewing?

When onboarding?

Thank you

Please don't hesitate to contact me at heleneransom@gmail.com or 0409248582 if there is anything I can help you with to create a culturally safe workplace.

You can check out my website at helenransom.com

