



Early Childhood Australia
A voice for young children

EARLY CHILDHOOD AUSTRALIA

Reconciliation SYMPOSIUM 2023

Advancing reconciliation in early
childhood education and care



Tools to support learning
implementation

Early Childhood Australia's Vision for Reconciliation

Early Childhood Australia (ECA) acknowledges the unique place of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in Australian society. ECA recognises the enduring strength of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in the face of past and current injustices.

Our vision for reconciliation is that every young child has the opportunity to thrive and learn in a nation that values, respects and celebrates Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ways of knowing and being. (ECA Stretch Reconciliation Action Plan 2023–2026, *Winanggaay: Look, Listen and Learn*)

Introduction

The *Early Years Learning Framework* (EYLF) V2.0 and the *National Quality Standard* (NQS) make very clear statements about what they expect early childhood educators to do in relation to the history, culture and ongoing contribution of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to Australian life. The updated EYLF has positioned Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives as a central part of our vision for Australia's children and elevated this commitment to the status of a principle.

'The history and culture of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples is respectfully and truthfully reflected through community involvement and culturally sensitive practices. Embedding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledges and perspectives encourages openness to diverse perspectives, enhances all children's experiences and assists in the authentic advancement of Reconciliation. It is a commitment to children learning about what has come before and working together for what is to come.'

(AGDE, 2022, p 17).

The first and most important thing to become aware of and embed in our thinking is the unique place that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture holds in Australia as our nation's first people. Alongside this, we must understand our colonised history and the damage this has caused—and continues to cause. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have histories in Australia dating back almost 75, 000 years. Theirs is one of the oldest cultures in the world and therefore demands daily respect and consideration.

Taking action

It is fair to say that in Australia, there has been a limit to the degree that 'true history' has been shared in relation to the experiences of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Understanding history is as important as understanding the present. This is true for any social phenomenon.

One problem with history can be that it is told through the lens of a particular person or peoples, and that it is constructed using the information or perspectives accessible to them. This is particularly relevant to people who may not use the same mechanisms for storytelling (e.g. oral cultures) or have the same access to the means through which history is told. It can be the case that historical accounts are not often told from the perspective of the subject about which the history is

being told. Arguably, this is very much the case in the context of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander 'history', which is generally told from the perspective of the coloniser. True history is important to understand in terms of how it shapes who we are and how we can advance meaningful reconciliation. Culture, on the other hand, relates to the ideas, customs and social behaviours of a group of people more broadly. Understanding how culture shapes experiences and perspectives is fundamental to understanding the people who identify with culture.

The stories and perspectives of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are diverse so it is important to learn from communities and individuals. The more Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people you can learn from, the better your understanding will be.

To experience success when progressing reconciliation, time must be invested in the development of culturally safe relationships with the community in which you live, work and play.

The following are essential features of cultural safety:

- An understanding of one's own culture. It is essential to understand that we are all immersed in our own culture—with its associated beliefs, attitudes and behaviours—which guides and, at times, determines our personal and professional interactions.
- An acknowledgement of difference and a requirement that educators are actively mindful and respectful of difference(s).
- Informed by the theory of power relations and acknowledges power imbalances.
- An appreciation of the historical context of colonisation, the practices of racism at individual and institutional levels, and their impact on First Nations People's lives and wellbeing—both in the past and the present.
- Its presence or absence is determined by the experience of the recipient—it is not defined by the educator.

Reflection

To encourage your reflection process after the symposium, we have compiled a few questions that will assist you to put some of the things you have heard and learned into action and support your reconciliation journey.

Q: What is important to me about reconciliation, and why do I care?

Q: What can I do?

Q: Where do I start?

Q: How can I do it?

Q: What message do I send on a daily basis about my views on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples?

Q: What do my personal and service philosophies tell people about how I value culture?

Q: We need to start locally and find our own stories in our own landscape. How much do I really understand about the land on which I work with children, families and communities?

Q: What do I know about the histories of my local land, where I live?

Q: Where do I currently rate my attitudes, skills and knowledge when considering cultural responsiveness and reconciliation with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people?

Q: What opportunities can I see in my service to progress reconciliation?

Q: What could happen that would enable me and others in my personal and professional life to feel fully engaged and energised about reconciliation?

Q: What is my personal action plan for reconciliation at a:

⇒ National level?

⇒ Local level?

⇒ Service/centre level?

⇒ My life level?

Staying connected

ECA has created an online interest group on Facebook that allows participants to stay connected after the event, to share their reconciliation journey and progress, ideas, and useful resources. Sign up to Facebook if you are not already a member and search for **ECA Reconciliation Champions** if you want to join. This is just one of many mechanisms for attendees to continue conversations following on from the symposium and membership is not compulsory.

Resources

Key Organisations and Peak Bodies

Provided below is a list of key organisations and peak bodies who can be referred to for further information, support and knowledge around Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island culture.

Organisation Name	Description	Web link
Aboriginal Children's Day	National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children's Day (Children's Day) is the national day dedicated to celebrating Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander's children. It is celebrated across the country each year on 4 August.	https://www.aboriginalchildrensday.com.au/
Coalition of Peaks	The Coalition of Peaks came together to change the way Australian governments work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. As community-controlled organisations, they work for and are accountable to communities, not governments.	https://coalitionofpeaks.org.au/
First Peoples Disability Network Australia (FPDN)	FPDN is a national organisation of and for Australia's First Peoples with disability, their families and communities. Their organisation is governed by First Peoples with lived experience of disability.	https://fpdn.org.au/
The Healing Foundation	The Healing Foundation is a national Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisation that partners with communities to address the ongoing trauma caused by actions like the forced removal of children from their families.	https://healingfoundation.org.au/
The National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation (NACCHO)	NACCHO is the national leadership body for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health in Australia. NACCHO provides advice and guidance to the Australian Government on policy and budget matters and advocates for community-developed solutions that contribute to the quality of life and improved health outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.	https://www.naccho.org.au/
NAIDOC	NAIDOC originally stood for 'National Aborigines and Islanders Day Observance Committee'. This committee was once responsible for organising national activities during NAIDOC Week and its acronym has since become the name of the week itself.	https://www.naidoc.org.au/

Organisation Name	Description	Web link
National Indigenous Television, News and programs (NITV)	NITV News anchors the News and Current Affairs slate on air and online with regular daily updates, breaking stories and original storytelling. Natalie Ahmat and a team of Indigenous journalists across the country deliver the news that matters from a unique Indigenous perspective.	https://www.sbs.com.au/nitv
Reconciliation Australia	Reconciliation Australia is the lead body for reconciliation in Australia. They inspire and build relationships, respect and trust between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and non-Indigenous Australians.	https://www.reconciliation.org.au/
SNAICC	SNAICC is the national non-government peak body in Australia representing the interests of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families. Over the past 30 years SNAICC's efforts have resulted in many key milestones and achievements both in policy developments at state, territory and federal levels and in developing innovative and useful resources for the sector.	https://www.snaicc.org.au/

Cultural Awareness Training

There are many providers who can assist with tools and programs to develop cultural awareness amongst staff. ECA would recommend liaising with a local provider to assist with any cultural training within your workplace and would suggest consulting with Reconciliation Australia (<https://www.reconciliation.org.au/>) or Supply Nation (<https://supplynation.org.au/>) to gather a list of registered providers.

Useful resources and links

ECA does not endorse or promote particular resources, but has put together a list for attendees of this event who are interested in conducting further research, as well as assisting their reconciliation journey.

1. ACECQA: Trauma-informed Practice

This ACECQA resource is about trauma-informed care and includes additional resources to consider.

<https://www.acecqa.gov.au/sites/default/files/2020-12/Trauma-informed%20practice.PDF>

2. Australian Broadcasting Commission

The ABC has an extensive collection of resources relating to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture, art, history and language.

<http://www.abc.net.au/indigenous/>

<http://www.abc.net.au/radio/programs/speakingout/>

<http://www.abc.net.au/radionational/programs/awaye/>

3. Australian Human Rights Commission

‘RACISM. IT STOPS WITH ME’ aims to;

- ensure more Australians recognise that racism is unacceptable in our community
- give more Australians the tools and resources to take practical action against racism
- empower individuals and organisations to prevent and respond effectively to racism.

All across Australia, there are people and organisations doing great things to reduce and prevent racism. This campaign isn’t about reinventing the wheel: we want to learn from past achievements and challenges. Their consultations have shown that it’s often the people working on the ground within local communities or specific environments who have the best understanding of the issues and ideas of how to overcome them. They believe that the most effective way to make a difference in the incidence of racism is to encourage and coordinate these efforts.

<https://itstopswithme.humanrights.gov.au/>

4. Be You

Be You aims to transform Australia’s approach to supporting children’s and young people’s mental health in early learning services and schools. Our vision is that every learning community is positive, inclusive and resilient – a place where every child, young person, educator and family can achieve their best possible mental health.

Be You promotes mental health and wellbeing, from the early years to 18, and offers educators and learning communities evidence-based online professional learning, complemented by a range of tools and resources to turn learning into action.

Be You is led by Beyond Blue in partnership with Early Childhood Australia and **headspace**.

<https://beyou.edu.au/>

5. ECA and SNAICC Position Paper: Working together to ensure equality for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children in the Early Years

This position paper provides insights into creating the best outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children. It looks at some of the barriers and recommendations services can undertake to ensure Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children are empowered to reach their potential and determine their future.

<https://www.earlychildhoodaustralia.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/SNAICC-ECA-Early-Years-Position-Paper-.pdf>

6. ECA's The Spoke Article: Engagement in reconciliation in practice By Adam Duncan

This article, written by an Aboriginal teacher and educator, provides one perspective of what reconciliation in practice looks like.

<http://thespoke.earlychildhoodaustralia.org.au/engagement-reconciliation-look-like-practice/>

7. ECA's The Spoke Article: Indigenous Food Nourishes Connections By Molly Rhodin

This article written by a non-Indigenous teacher and consultant who offers a perspective regarding how they include First Nations perspectives through connecting through social media.

<http://thespoke.earlychildhoodaustralia.org.au/indigenous-food-nourishes-connections/>

8. ECA resource: How to talk about ECEC

This guide, developed by ECA, encourages best practices regarding terminology within the early childhood sector.

<https://www.earlychildhoodaustralia.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/How-to-talk-about-ECEC.pdf>

9. Narragunnawali Terminology guide

A terminology guide provided to support the use of respectful and inclusive language and terminology.

<https://www.narragunnawali.org.au/about/terminology-guide>

10. Narragunnawali: Reconciliation in Education Flyer

<https://www.narragunnawali.org.au/storage/media/page/75f91a72904eef3eb6728984112a617e.pdf>

11. Narragunnawali: Reconciliation in Education - Key Messages

Key messages you need to consider when engaging with reconciliation in education.

<https://www.narragunnawali.org.au/reconciliation-in-education-key-messages>

12. Reconciliation Australia

Reconciliation Australia is an independent, national not-for-profit organisation promoting reconciliation by building relationships, respect and trust between the wider Australian community and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

www.reconciliation.org.au

13. SNAICC (Secretariat of National Aboriginal and Islander Child Care)

They are a national non-government peak body in Australia representing the interests of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families.

www.snaicc.org.au

14. AIATSIS (Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies)

AIATSIS is Australia's only national institution focused exclusively on the diverse history, cultures and heritage of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australia.

<https://aiatsis.gov.au/>

References

Australian Children's Education and Care Authority (ACECQA). (2017). *Guide to the National Quality Standard*. Canberra, ACT: Commonwealth of Australia.

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.