



**BDAC**  
BENDIGO & DISTRICT  
ABORIGINAL CO-OPERATIVE

## **Aboriginal Early Years Access Project**

# **Cultural Participation Guidelines**

*Funded by*

*The Communities for Children Initiative*



## **1. Introduction**

The Bendigo and District Aboriginal Co-operative Aboriginal Early Years Access Worker Project was funded by Communities for Children Bendigo for a period of two years. The project commenced in March 2015.

The aim of this project is to address the participation rate of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander accessing the Early Years service sector within the city of Greater Bendigo. A key initiative of the project has been the development of Cultural Participation Guidelines. The guidelines have been developed to assist Early Years services within the City of Greater Bendigo with the implementation of policy procedures and process, with the aim of boosting the participation rates of Aboriginal people accessing the service system. The guidelines emerged following a survey conducted amongst early year's service providers that focused on understanding organisational responses to supporting and engaging with Aboriginal people and families.

This document provides suggestions and recommendations and does not intend to be the only solution or strategy in services should look to implement. We recommend that all suggestions be explored in partnership with Aboriginal community members and/or Aboriginal Service users.

## **2. Survey Overview**

The Survey / Questionnaire helped to inform the development of the Cultural Participation Guidelines for the use in mainstream services to implement policy and procedural changes that are culturally appropriate and considerate which will in turn help address the participation rate of the Aboriginal people accessing the Early Years service system.

Below is a summary of each question with responses.

- ***Organisation Structure and Policy***

*Do you have Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander employees? If so how Many?*

From this question we had eight services which indicated that they had no Aboriginal staff employed and two services had a total of two Aboriginal staff in total.

*Does your organisation have a RAP (Reconciliation Action Plan)?*

The answers that were provided by the services were informative, with 50 percent of services informing us that they had a RAP in place currently and 50 percent not having RAP in place at all.

- *Reflection*

Reflection on the previous two questions shows that RAP's have had little effect as of yet on the employment of Aboriginal staff and lastly only fifty percent of services have taken up this opportunity to implement a RAP.

*What have you or your organisation done to help engage Aboriginal Families?*

The response was that no services had any specific strategies to engage Aboriginal families

A few responses stated “We address all nationalities” but were unable to provide specifics relating to the comments on how they address all nationalities. Other responses included:

- Two services have indicated the service has acknowledgement to country plaques.
- One service informed that they have implemented nothing at this stage.
- Two services did not answer the question.
- Five services said that they utilise the local Aboriginal service.

o *Reflection*

A response which we found confronting was a service informed us that all families are welcomed at the centre, families were invited to attend the centre and an outing and that this was extended to BDAC to advise families. This response that had been provided showed the lack of understanding and consideration of ways of working differently and being more considerate of Aboriginal people. Service providers often have the assumption that BDAC would be able to advise Aboriginal families to attend an event and/or service. It is not solely responsibility of local Aboriginal organisations to inform Aboriginal families of other service’s events. Services should be seeking to build relationships with their Aboriginal service users and families to then be able to effectively advertise their own events.

If no careful consideration has gone into ways of working with Aboriginal Families we feel that services will continue to miss opportunities to address Aboriginal participation rates within their service.

*What does your organisation have in place currently as a visual acknowledgement of the local Aboriginal Culture?*

- Five services have acknowledge plaques for the Dja Dja Wurrung Traditional custodians in the foyer/ or entrance.
- Two services noted that they have an Aboriginal flag displayed.
- Out of those services listed above, three services had both the Acknowledgement plaque and flags displayed.
- Majority of services had nothing on display or any visual cultural resources and not one service noted to display any form of artwork from local community members.

How does your organisation get feedback from your Consumers / Clients?

Upon reviewing the results of these questions we noted the following:

Parents are given the option to have their input and add comments about their culture which is sent to families via mail and is a written response. Five services indicated that they operate in this manner.

Five services did not provide an answer to this question.

○ *Reflection*

If written feedback is the only method to receive feedback within services, this could be potentially a gap which does not cater for Aboriginal culture. As services may be aware Aboriginal culture is an oral culture and services may not see the amazing potential to receive vital feedback if not done in an oral manner which is culturally appropriate.

● **Service Delivery**

What key questions and considerations have been taken to help or support Aboriginal people in receiving the best possible service, when thinking about your organisations assessment and referral forms?, Risk Management forms?

Five services stated they were unsure of any considerations to support Aboriginal people, two services did not provide specific details in their answer, two services provided the response that they believe it helps the service with funding opportunities and lastly one service had indicated that they work in partnership with the local Aboriginal service.

○ *Reflection*

Upon reflection of the responses we received it was noted that the one service had developed a working partnership with the local Aboriginal organisation. This partnership was working quiet well and that they as service go to the local Aboriginal organisation and provide staff with information relating to their service and consult with staff which imbeds a meaningful and purposeful relationship.

What does your organisation do with the information regarding the client's identity? E.g. The Question – Are you Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander?

Two services responded with unsure, two services stated that information was to support funding, two services indicated that they do nothing with the information, one shared information with Centrelink through a database, and one service saw the need to have a partnership with the local Aboriginal organisation. Two other services used the information to help with planning for significant events throughout the course of the year and for considerations to individuals in many areas even to the individuals' dietary requirements.

○ Reflection

The responses were varied and we have noted that it was disappointing to see services indicate they were unsure of why they are asking these questions. Two services indicated that they use this information primarily for funding purposes again without providing specific. This could be a very negative approach if services are not imbedding culturally appropriate service but are applying for funding relating to Aboriginal people. It was really good to hear two services were using the information they collected to develop events throughout the calendar year to relate to Aboriginal people, even to the point in which the services are considering the dietary requirements of the individual/s whom may be attending their service and events.

Does your organisation ask all people entering the service if they are of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander decent?

This question saw eight services provide a 'yes' answer with two services indicating their service "Asks all nationalities".

What cultural beliefs or considerations has your service taken into account when supporting your client? Does your Risk Management form look at eye contact as a risk? Sleeping on the floor as a risk? Too many people living in a home as a risk? Extended Family? Softly Spoken? If clients are unwell and speaking of visions of their deceased family members visiting them?

Reviewing the answers provided it was found that one service noted they do their best but find it difficult due to their knowledge base. One service had shown that they had not considered this topic at this current point in time, and six services did not provide an answer to the question. Two services had mentioned that they have enrolment forms which request information from the families about their cultural beliefs and practices and the services then works with the family to incorporate those beliefs within the child's room and centre.

○ Reflection

There were a few concerns that we have noticed within these answers or lack thereof. It was astounding to see six services not provide an answer to the question; this in turn raises questions as to why the service thought it appropriate to not answer this section. Upon reflection if services choose not to answer the question relating to cultural beliefs and considerations we would deem the service to be unable to therefore provide any form of culturally considerate response and services to Aboriginal people.

*Please note it was really good to see that two services had a form in which allowed the service to capture the cultural beliefs of all families and that they aimed to address these cultural beliefs and considerations within the individual class room and across their entire centre. The only other concern we thought we should mention was that again forms can be a barrier and we would recommend that services consider doing this process through collecting this information via verbal means.*

- **Events / Activities**

*Does your organisation run any cultural events / activities? If yes what events?*

Responses were as follows:

- One service stated No
- Five services provided a Yes response
- One service did not answer
- Three services stated that they use the BDAC kindergarten support service for cultural activities

Out of the five of which indicated that they did run cultural events, one service informed that BDAC make irregular visits to hold information sessions and activities for the kinder children. Further exploration into this response shows that the service does not actually run any cultural event but rely on an external service to provide information and cultural activities which their service is funded to do. The local Aboriginal organisations are not funded in any way shape or form to provide cultural activities to any service but have do so to ensure all children have a taste of Aboriginal culture.

Following events were listed as being cultural events that service had run:

- Australia Day and Chinese New year, Aboriginal elder showing artefacts, Aboriginal dance groups, dreamtime stories, damper making, fire making, Aboriginal flag information, NAIDOC week outings, reconciliation week, and BDAC education officer.

- *Reflection*

It was great to see the diversity in events which services indicated they had run. Some services informed us that having a BDAC service attend their service was achieving the goal of running cultural events. Having a BDAC service attend a service is not achieving the goal of a service taking responsibility for organising cultural events.

If relating events to Aboriginal people, it could be very damaging to celebrate Australia day as this marks the day in which marks the anniversary of the 1788 arrival of the First Fleet of British Ships at Port Jackson, New South Wales, and the raising of the Flag of Great Britain at that site by Governor Arthur Phillip which is also when Australia made claim to being *Terra nullius* meaning "nobody's land". Generally this day can be referred to as being called Invasion Day, Survival Day to some Aboriginal peoples. Aboriginal understand and have experience damaging effects on the culture and people and this event can be seen as a traumatic experience.

*Does your organisation run any other culturally significant events throughout the year for the Aboriginal community as well as the wider community?*

Again this is similar to the above answer, which saw four services say No they did not provide any Aboriginal cultural events and five services providing cultural events. One service did not answer.

*Have your organisation financially contributed to Aboriginal community events? If so what events?*

This question provided feedback through response of ten services stating 'no' they did not contribute to any Aboriginal community events. Please note after this survey reported on, BDAC had one service financially contribute to a NAIDOC event and two whom were actively involved in the running of the event.

○ *Reflection*

It is a necessity to work in a meaningful partnership with local Aboriginal organisations or other services which actively run and facilitate events that Aboriginal people attend and participate in. This is a great way to build trust and relationships with the local Aboriginal community and break down barriers.

*Does your service run activities or programs for the wider community? If so what programs?*

Two services did not answer, three said yes, three said no and two said yes for schools only.

Events which were run included market days, relay for life, mothers and fathers day, afternoon teas and red nose days.

*What has been implemented in those programs / activities to promote or educate positive Aboriginal culture?*

*Three services did not answer, five services said they did nothing and two said yes. This included posters and cultural resources including books, etc.*

○ *Reflection*

*It was great to see that two services had looked at resources which could relate to Aboriginal participants.*

***Training / Professional Development***

*Have you or your organisation completed any Cultural awareness training or workshops? If so who delivered it?*

There were a total of six services which indicated that the service had not completed cultural awareness training. Four services had indicated that they had staff that attended training.

*Has your organisation been a part of the Communities for Children run – “Cultural Safety Self-Reflection Tool Program? If not are you aware of this program /tool?*

*Of the ten services which had responded all of these services said they had not attended the reflection training.*

*Comments you would like to add:*

*One service provided information that their service required more training.*

## Cultural Participation Guidelines

The Cultural Participation Guidelines have been developed to assist Early Years services within the City of Greater Bendigo with the implementation of policy procedures and process, with the aim to boost the participation rates of Aboriginal children and families accessing the service system.

It is also important to note that focusing on one or two key areas and implement those within the service may not help boost the participation rates of Aboriginal children and families. It is encouraged to implement and focus on all key areas listed below as they are equally as important as one another and as a collective should be developed and implemented within the service.

Services will also need to think about why they consider their service has a low rate of Aboriginal participants and as a service, what they can do to make a difference in this area. As services may be aware, historical factors and mistrust based on these events have played into the low rates of participation into services. Racism and poorly managed environments which are unsafe and non-welcoming for Aboriginal people are key factors in low participation rates.

### Visually welcoming and safe spaces

Services should endeavour to look at ways they can boost the participation rate of Aboriginal children and families accessing their service. One way for doing this is implementing visual responses within the service's public access areas or areas in which community members utilising the service, will have access too.

Our recommendations should be considered but are not the only answers. It is encouraged for the service to look at other options with input from Aboriginal staff or Aboriginal community members when developing strategies.

Our recommendations are as follows:

- To contact the Dja Dja Wurrung Clans Aboriginal Corporation to organise an acknowledgement plaque to be placed at the front of the organisation in full view for public viewing. Dja Dja Wurrung can be contacted on the below details:
  - Phone: 03 5444 2888
  - Website: <http://www.djadjawurrung.com.au/>
- To display local Aboriginal art work/ Traditional boundaries map of Dja Dja Wurrung/ Posters or material that is of importance to the Aboriginal community and is relevant to the service.
- To display the Aboriginal and also the Torres Strait Islander flags
- For resources to be Aboriginal specific, contacting the SNAICC website would be a great place to start: <http://www.snaicc.org.au/tools-resources/dsp-landing.cfm?loadref=182>
- Display local Aboriginal children's art work within foyer and meeting/ interviewing rooms within the service.

### Other items of key interest:

We recommend services visit St Luke's in Hargreaves Street in Bendigo, Catholic Care on McCrae Street in Bendigo, Golden Square Kindergarten on Panton Street (Golden Square) and/or Kalianna School on Nolan Street, Bendigo for ideas relating to culturally considerate visual displays within their waiting room areas or outside of the services. All services have a different approach to achieve really good visually inviting areas for the Aboriginal community to feel more safe and welcoming.

## **Policy procedures and forms**

Policies and procedures can be a barrier for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people seeking to access a service. For the sake of keeping this document to a reasonable level we have not included many examples which highlight the barriers Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people experience on a daily basis.

Your service should consider the following and how it may affect other cultures:

*(Focus groups or input for other cultures should be done when reviewing any policies and procedures)*

- Who wrote the document?
- What beliefs and customs does this writer of the policy and procedure believe in?
- What culture does the person live in?
- Language of the policies and procedures?

When considering the list above we can then start to understand that policies and procedures are potentially only developed from that person's cultural beliefs and understanding. This may potentially benefit or only meet the needs of people who are from that individual's culture.

For example – if a staff member who writes a policy relating to staff leave which also covers leave in which that staff member can take time off to look after a family member, does this leave cover the idea of other cultures concepts of what family is? In some Aboriginal customs and beliefs family could encompass, cousins (this can mean 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup> all the way to 100<sup>th</sup> cousin but not limited too), aunties (Aunties and Uncles can be a person in which are a person of respect, an older cousin, but not limited too), uncles, family friends (whom can be referred to as sister, brother, mother, fathers, cousins, etc).

Identification documentation - Services at times require people seeking to access their service to provide forms of Identification and documentation. This can be a major barrier for people who were part of the stolen generation, people who have been subject to removals from their families, and/or were not born within the Australian system (i.e. not within a hospital for example). Considerations should be made when services encounter these concerns and seek to develop alternative ways of getting around the issues.

Does your service have a service dictionary that the service is required to use when describing certain topics?

1. What wording does your service utilises in regards to Aboriginal people - Indigenous or Aboriginal?

Our recommendation is to develop, in partnership with your services Aboriginal staff members and Aboriginal service users the correct term in which should be then used across the organisation on every instance.

An example of wording:

- Indigenous
- First Nations
- Aboriginal

### **Cultural heritage - Asking the question**

Why is asking someone's cultural heritage so important? We believe your service will benefit greatly in supporting outcomes for Aboriginal peoples if the question is asked correctly and in a sensitive and meaningful way.

As mentioned earlier in these guidelines, due to the historical factors which have had a detrimental impact on Aboriginal peoples across Australia, trust is again a major factor in why so few Aboriginal peoples identify within non-Aboriginal services. A few years ago the Bendigo and District Aboriginal Co-Operative did a survey which showed that around 4000 Aboriginal peoples are residing within the Bendigo region, in comparison to the Australian Bureau of Statistics which recorded 1200 people identifying as Aboriginal. This is an example of how the question/wording about cultural identity impacts on Aboriginal people and the trust they feel as an Aboriginal person. This issue needs to be a very high priority within every service.

Service staff members indicated within the survey at the start of this document, that they had no knowledge on why they were required to ask the question on someone's cultural identity. We believe it is important that ALL people's receiving a service or seeking to access the service through your organisation be asked about their cultural identity. We recommend that services consider what is deemed an appropriate and meaningful way in which this information is collected and to also state to the service user exactly why the service is asking these questions for.

The list of question below has been taken from a survey which had been developed by the Family Alliance staff which aims to explore working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families at three levels: you/staff; your organisation and policy and procedures. We recommend that these questions below be sent through as an internal survey for every staff member across your service. This is to gain current understanding of the internal staff member's knowledge and to develop a plan to address the organisations reasons of why the service asks about Aboriginal cultural identity and to then inform staff internally of the reasoning. Questions are below:

2. Are you asking all clients presenting for service whether they or anyone in their family are Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander?  
Yes: Always                      Sometimes  
No:  
If no please share some of the reasons you aren't.
3. Have you found other ways to ask the question?
4. What do you say about why we ask the question?
5. Why does your service ask the question if clients are of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander decent?

Other recommendations and or suggestions in which we would like for your service to consider are the wording in which the question could be asked, they are as follows:

*(Again we believe working with Aboriginal staff members and/or Aboriginal Service users to properly obtain the best way to achieve the desired outcome.)*

Q. – What is your cultural background/heritage?

By asking this question you are more than likely not going to upset people with prejudged views of other nationalities or cultures and people may feel less reluctant to answer the question and with pride.

Q. – Do you identify as a First Nations person

An overview could be read out before the question is asked.

Overview – Our service is working towards closing the gap of life expectancy for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, we acknowledge the life and role in which Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have played within Australia for thousands of years. If you identify as being Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander we will ensure as a service to link you into, or connect you to appropriate Aboriginal services if you choose to and ensure we work with you and your family in a culturally respectful manner.

Then ask the question of their identity.

Q. – Do you, your partner and/or your children identify as being of Aboriginal Decent? Torres Strait Islander decent? If so what Nation do you or your family descend from?

This question could be helpful in healing the person, by supporting the links “back to country” for the person and their family, your service could look at researching cultural resources such as language books, maps and links to services if needed. Back to country is a term in which is used by some Aboriginal people who aren’t living within the borders of their traditional Lands (nation) and is always a way for people to return back to the lands as a way to reconnect with friends, family and land and heal themselves if they are having a tough time.

Your staff members may already be equipped with knowledge on what they have found works and we also recommend that your service consider embedding these practices.

Below is an image of common mistakes in which organisations make when developing their intake, assessment, enrolment forms. This is a major barrier and completely inappropriate and not culturally sensitive to Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples. Our recommendation to prevent the below image being repeated is to consider the layout and placing of questions. It is of high importance to get this right. Trust and relationship building at the first instance is highly important and will either have people engage or disengage straight away.

\*Is your child of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander origin? (please tick)

No, not Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander

Yes, Aboriginal

Yes, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander

Yes, Torres Strait Islander

\*Has your child been connected with Department of Human Services/Child First/Child Protection?  No  Yes (please tick)

Caseworker: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone No(s): \_\_\_\_\_

The following is the reflections of an Aboriginal person on this intake form and similar type of intake forms.

- *The questions I feel is a tick box, so I will not answer it*
- *The question about **Aboriginal identity** has no meaning behind it and could lead to this organisation receive extra funding related to Aboriginal people accessing their service without having done anything for me culturally when asking this question*

- If I did feel I should identify as Aboriginal then the service would call Child Protection on me and my family leading to the removal of my children. (This is a historically horrific factual event with affected all Aboriginal peoples across Australia).
- This service already assumes I have child protection involved with my family as I am Aboriginal.

### Employment for Aboriginal staff

The employment of Aboriginal staff is a key aspect to address participation rates of Aboriginal people into the service. Aboriginal community members can quickly relate to that Aboriginal staff member, this is due to the understanding of one another’s journey and cultural barriers and the community member would not fear a sense of being judged or racially abused.

The implementation of Reconciliation Action Plans will help have clear strategies for the employment of Aboriginal staff, more information is located below.

The link below is for the services looking to make a start on a Reconciliation action plan. This link provides fantastic and useful advice, step by step instructions on developing and implementing a Rap with the service.

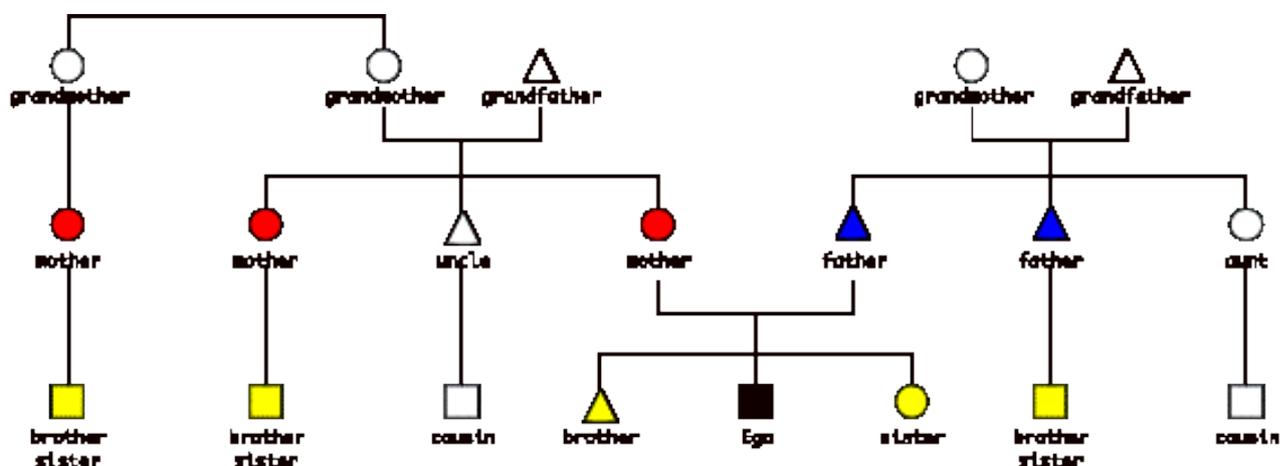
<http://www.reconciliation.org.au/raphub/program/getting-started/#Understandingthe-template>

### Engagement and working groups

The engagement of Aboriginal people within the service is paramount. Aboriginal people need to feel like they have had their voices heard, treated with respect and have a say in how the service responds and works with Aboriginal people.

When engaging with Aboriginal people it is important to remember the following:

- People skills are important. Remembering names and the relationship between people will help you engage, earn trust and be viewed as credible.
- Broaden your concept of family – many Aboriginal people base their decisions on a consensus of extended family and kin (community), rather than just the immediate family group. An example of Aboriginal Kinship:



- *Be empathic without being overly-familiar and accept that unless you are Aboriginal, it may be difficult to fully understand the person's opinions or situation. Ask genuine, but non-intrusive questions about family and culture.*
- *Be patient. Many Aboriginal people understandably mistrust mainstream agencies and it can take time to earn their trust. Ask family members if they would be more comfortable speaking about personal issues with a support person present.*
- *For many Aboriginal people, direct eye contact may be inappropriate.*
- *Recognise that, like other cultures, Aboriginal people often begin with general talk and interaction, before getting down to business.*
- *Respect and understand silence. Silence may mean people are not ready to express an opinion yet or they are listening and reflecting on what has been said.*

With this in mind we have made the following recommendations:

- *Organise a working group or committee, inviting Aboriginal people who access the service to be a part of the working group. The aim of the working group will be to work on the development of strategies through policies, procedures and the RAP's to address participation rates of Aboriginal peoples.*

*Considerations for a working group or committee should be as follows:*

- *Time of the working group meetings – Does the invited participations have work commitments, children to look after or other commitments? Consider allowing the persons family to attend including children while meeting is run. Family is one of the most, if not the most important aspect of the Aboriginal culture.*
- *Consider offering food during the meeting and promote this to the participants.*
- *Acknowledgement to country being done every meeting – This will help make the Aboriginal participant feel more welcome and safe.*

### **Training/professional development**

Training can help support staff and service response in the most safe and culturally considerate way when supporting Aboriginal people. It is vital that the training in which staff are being sent to is highly recommended by other services or the local Aboriginal service. Services may find that even though staff members have attended cultural awareness training, that responses or support to Aboriginal people have not changed. We recommend that self reflection training be compulsory for all staff and part of the probationary period for all newly employed staff and lastly imbedded into the normal workplace practice. An example of cultural self reflection training is the Communities for Children Bendigo Cultural Safety self reflection tool.

- The Communities for Children Bendigo Cultural Safety self reflection tool is being offered free of charge by Communities for Children.

The aim of the Communities for Children tool is to provide individual workers, teams and agencies/organisations with an opportunity to reflect on their own values and beliefs about cultural safety, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture and Australian history. It also provides a series of prompts that can be used to initiate practical changes that, hopefully, will lead to an increase in cultural safety. Completing the tool and making changes based on your learnings will hopefully help promote a greater sense of understanding and openness to self-reflection – this is key to increasing cultural safety.

The tool should be viewed as a starting point, not an end point. Hopefully it will prompt individual workers, teams and organisations/agencies to build on what they are doing well already and make a commitment to continue to make further positive changes. The goal is to ensure that the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people (and the ACCOs) that services work alongside feel safer and more empowered by presence by mainstream services in their lives.

**IMPORTANT** – It is strongly advised that organisations consider training staff to facilitate discussions around cultural safety, as some questions can illicit strong emotional responses. The facilitators of conversations also need to be aware that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people may be participating in these conversations. If the facilitators are not adequately skilled in guiding conversations of this type, there is a chance that discussions can become unproductive and unsafe.

*Communities for Children can facilitate this training if needed. Please contact Naarah Dawes or Sue King-Smith on 5430 1200 if you would like to discuss this further.*

- *Other ways to keep cultural safety on the forefront of staff minds would be to invite and pay for Aboriginal people/educators to regularly attend staff development days or meetings, to provide education around ways to better support Aboriginal people and discuss local cultural beliefs and practices.*
- *Lastly staff to attend cultural awareness training which is recommend by other services and to make it compulsory for all staff again and part of the work plans of all staff, every 12 months.*

### **Events and activities**

The running of events and activities is a good way to build rapport within the local Aboriginal community. Below is an overview of the Aboriginal early year's access project on events that had been run and how services worked collaboratively to explore ways in boosting Aboriginal participation rates in the early year's sector.

- Regular run free community Barbeques,

During this project we conducted two communities BBQ's targeted at the local Aboriginal community. The aim of the community BBQ's was for the local Aboriginal community to attend, enjoy a free feed and also to encourage relationships / engagement to mainstream early year's services.

Community BBQ 1 – we chose the location (Botanical Gardens, White Hills) that was easily accessible for public transport, central location and close to communities residence and a large family friendly environment. The promotion for this event distributed through the local Aboriginal newsletter, word of mouth (Koori Grapevine), support service networks.

It had also been noted that a barrier for attendance could be the organisations branding being present on flyers / posters to promote the event, the branding was removed for this purpose. Lastly the local Aboriginal organisation, 7 other early year services and 81 community members attended this event, to get to know one another, build a relationship with them and not have the intention of the community expectation to engage with the early year's service.

Community BBQ 2 – promotion of the event was with branding, location of this event was run at a local organisation workplace with minimal transport options. The event was significantly lower in attendance in comparison to Community BBQ 1.

NAIDOC CHILDREN'S DAY – this event was lead by the local Aboriginal organisation and had 15 non -Aboriginal organisations supporting and had attended this event. The non -Aboriginal organisations had various activities for the children and gave them an opportunity to engage in a cultural safe environment with no formal process for the day. These services provided financial assistance and shared the responsibility of the event with regular meetings and discussions on the planning of the event. This event would not have been successful without the meaningful and positive relationships between the local Aboriginal organisation and mainstream early years services and having a shared responsibility and achievable outcome for the event.

- 7 of the 15 organisation attended multiple events.
- Mainstream organisations contributed 80% of the event running cost for the NAIDOC Children's Day.
- 433 recorded Aboriginal community members attending

Our recommendations for services to consider when organising / participation in events and activities are as follows:

- Implementing some form or activity relevant to Aboriginal Culture. Ideas for the event should come from previously run cultural activities that are appropriate and well received by the local Aboriginal Community and/ or have been suggested by Aboriginal service users or through your organisations Working Group.
- Advertising the event through known media sources that are used by/ or have access to the local Aboriginal community.
- Acknowledgement to country before the start of the official proceedings.
- If other services/organisations are holding a cultural event, considering requesting to help support the event and participate. Offering financial assistance should also been considered and is recommended.
- Services should look to implement a strategy for events and activities to be held or facilitated relating to the dates of importance listed dates below.

### **Dates of Importance**

It is recommended that these dates be promoted and celebrated within the service or services look to be a part of celebrations in conjunction with events already being organised through external organisations.

Explore what other services are planning and look to join in collaboration with them.

- National Sorry Day – 26 May
- Reconciliation week - (generally the last week of May)
- Mabo Day – 3 June
- NAIDOC Week –( First full week in July)
- National Aboriginal and Islander Children's Day – 4 August

## **Resources**

When Early Years services are considering purchasing resources, it is recommended that services focus on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural designed resources.

An example of purchasing culturally appropriate resources could be in the form of purchasing books. Services should look into dreamtime stories/ stories written by Aboriginal people/ stories relating to Australian nature or wildlife.

Please note that there are lots of resources with Aboriginal designs which have flooded the market and are completely incorrect and culturally insensitive. Research into these items is a must to ensure that the items which are being purchased are culturally correct and come with a certificate of authenticity from the Aboriginal designer/ artist.

There are also plenty of culturally appropriate resources in which can be readily obtained through Government and Aboriginal websites:

[http://creative.vic.gov.au/files/e422e297-85e1-4576-adc9-a37d00c24c2f/creation\\_stories\\_v2\\_-\\_book\\_-\\_fa.pdf](http://creative.vic.gov.au/files/e422e297-85e1-4576-adc9-a37d00c24c2f/creation_stories_v2_-_book_-_fa.pdf).

<http://www.snaicc.org.au/uploads/rsfil/02811.pdf>

## **Organisational wide responses**

The introduction of 'Acknowledgement to Country' to be done before the start of all meetings/ training within the workplace or at events run by the service. The facilitator/organiser of the event/meeting would be expected to do this Acknowledgement.

Please note it is not recommended to pick out the Aboriginal attendee and request they do the acknowledgement.

The suggested wording could be as follows (This is a suggestion and should be review upon use within the service):

"I would like to acknowledge that we are meeting on Jarra country for which the members and elders of the Dja Dja Wurrung community and their forbearers have been custodians. I pay my respects to the Elders past and present and all aboriginal people here today"

Please note that the wording is a guide, the service is expected to research before the meeting on which tradition land they are meeting on and acknowledge that correct land and peoples. The service maybe outside of the Dja Dja Wurrung traditional boundaries.

A link of Aboriginal Boundaries map is located below:

[http://www.abc.net.au/indigenous/map/images/indigi\\_map.png](http://www.abc.net.au/indigenous/map/images/indigi_map.png)

### **Partnerships and/or Memorandum of Understanding**

Partnerships with the local Aboriginal services are again an important element to addressing the rates of participation and can be a great referral and information source.

We would recommend the following when considering a partnership with an Aboriginal service:

- *Consider what your service can offer the local Aboriginal Service and what your service is expecting back in return. Based on the surveys in the top section of this report, services are expecting the local Aboriginal service to provide support and resources for free and services have shown little understanding of what local Aboriginal service provides and is funded to do and also the Aboriginal service receives little or no support and/or resources in return.*
- *Building on a respectful and meaningful relationship with key staff within the local Aboriginal service, meeting in person, again being mindful that relationship building takes time, do not expect an instant result. Mistrust and unfair partnerships and even the tick a box approach have tarnished the potential relationship building process, more work and effort may be required.*
- *Being mindful about dictating or being seen as a controlling or dominating service.*
- *Lastly allowing for the Aboriginal service to take the lead.*

### **Related documents/reports of interest**

We would like to encourage services to research on other ways best to support Aboriginal people. There have been a lot of research and reports to provide evidence to address rates of participation. Below are some interesting reads:

<http://www.earlychildhoodaustralia.org.au/our-publications/australasian-journal-early-childhood/index-abstracts/ajec-vol-37-2-2012/rocket-science-perspectives-indigenous-early-childhood-workers-supporting-engagement-indigenous-families-early-childhood-settings-full-free-text-available/>

[http://www.snaicc.org.au/\\_uploads/rsfil/02811.pdf](http://www.snaicc.org.au/_uploads/rsfil/02811.pdf)

[http://www.himh.org.au/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0018/2772/6-Building-Stronger-Connections-with-Aboriginal-and-Torres-Strait-Islander-Communities.pdf](http://www.himh.org.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0018/2772/6-Building-Stronger-Connections-with-Aboriginal-and-Torres-Strait-Islander-Communities.pdf)

<http://www.aihw.gov.au/uploadedFiles/ClosingTheGap/Content/Publications/2011/ctgc-rs07.pdf>

<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/Documents/childhood/parents/support/supportingatsikinder.pdf>

[http://www.himh.org.au/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0018/2772/6-Building-Stronger-Connections-with-Aboriginal-and-Torres-Strait-Islander-Communities.pdf](http://www.himh.org.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0018/2772/6-Building-Stronger-Connections-with-Aboriginal-and-Torres-Strait-Islander-Communities.pdf)

<http://www.sdn.org.au/downloads/Aboriginal%20Access%20to%20Preschool%20study.pdf>

[http://www.dhs.vic.gov.au/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0011/580934/Aboriginal\\_cultural\\_competence\\_2008.pdf](http://www.dhs.vic.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0011/580934/Aboriginal_cultural_competence_2008.pdf)

<http://www.carersaustralia.com.au/storage/2011Working%20with%20Aboriginal%20People%20and%20Communities.pdf>

<https://www.humanrights.gov.au/our-work/Aboriginal-and-torres-strait-islander-social-justice/projects/close-gap-indigenous-health>

### **Websites**

<http://www.snaicc.org.au/>

<http://www.whatworks.edu.au/dbAction.do?cmd=homePage>

<http://www.vaclang.org.au/>

### **Common Aboriginal Language/jargon document:**

<http://www.vaccho.org.au/assets/01-RESOURCES/TOPIC-AREA/CULTURAL/Koorified-Aboriginal-Communication-and-Well-Being.pdf>

### **Victorian Dreamtime story book:**

[http://creative.vic.gov.au/files/e422e297-85e1-4576-adc9-a37d00c24c2f/creation\\_stories\\_v2\\_-\\_book\\_-\\_fa.pdf](http://creative.vic.gov.au/files/e422e297-85e1-4576-adc9-a37d00c24c2f/creation_stories_v2_-_book_-_fa.pdf).