

Building belonging

A toolkit for early childhood educators
on cultural diversity and responding to
prejudice

Educator Guide



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► Introduction

Australia is a vibrant, multicultural country. We are home to the world's oldest continuous cultures - Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures - as well as people who identify with more than 270 ancestries.¹ This cultural diversity is central to our national identity.

It is important that young children in Australia today grow up with an appreciation and respect for the diversity of cultures, races and ethnicities that surround them.

Early childhood education provides the ideal setting for children to learn about different cultures and form friendships with people from a wide range of backgrounds.

By promoting understanding of difference and diversity, early childhood educators can assist children and their families to build positive relationships with their local communities.

In doing this, educators are fulfilling the requirements under the Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF) to cultivate 'respect for diversity' and exercise 'cultural competency'.²



'Diversity contributes to the richness of our society and provides a valid evidence base about ways of knowing... When early childhood educators respect the diversity of families and communities, and the aspirations they hold for children, they are able to foster children's motivation to learn and reinforce their sense of themselves as competent learners.'

The Early Years Learning Framework³

This Educator Guide serves as an introduction to the 'Building Belonging' toolkit of resources created by the Australian Human Rights Commission, which supports early childhood educators in teaching children about cultural diversity and addressing prejudice in early childhood settings.

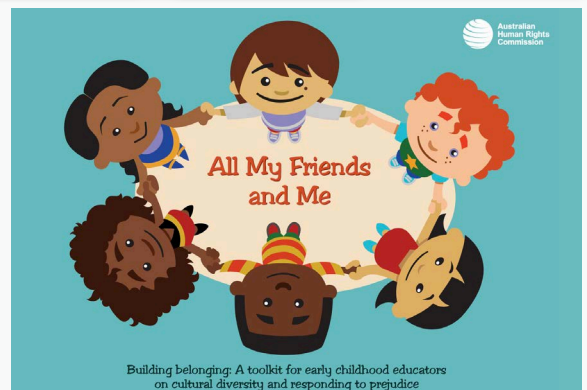
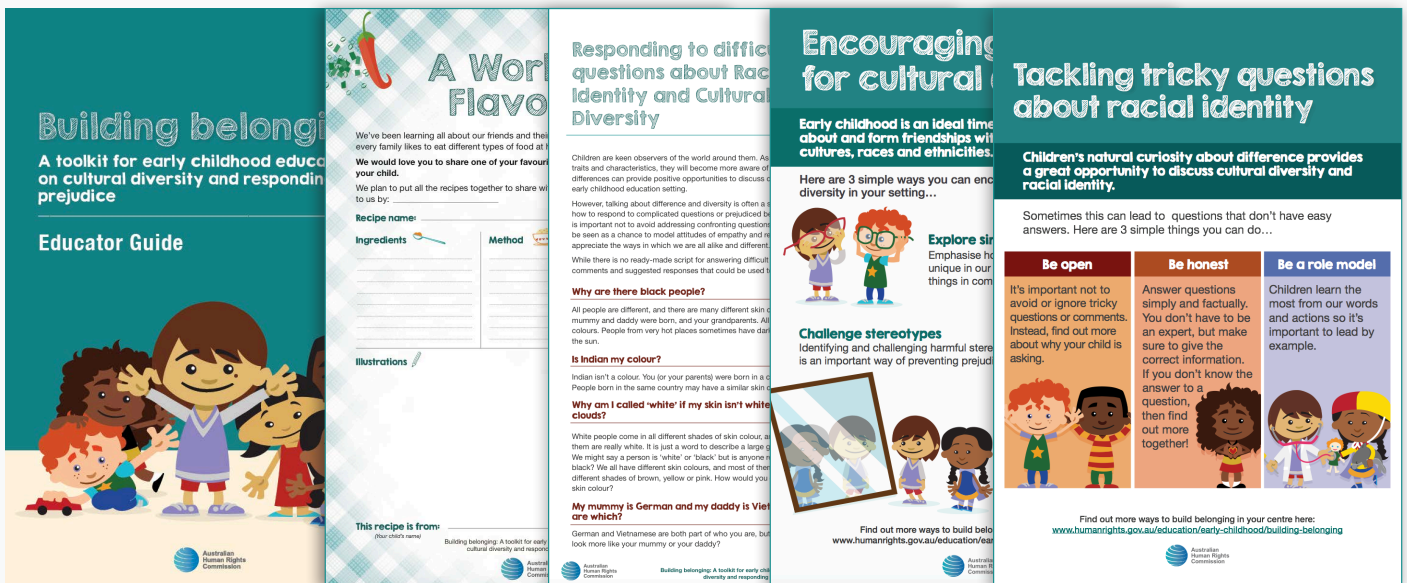


► **The materials in the ‘Building Belonging’ toolkit include:**

- The ‘Building Belonging’ Educator Guide
- **Three lesson plans** (linked to the [Early Years Learning Framework](#) and the [Australian Curriculum](#)), with accompanying lesson materials
- **Three posters** to display in your setting/staff room
- An educator information sheet on ‘**Responding to comments and questions about Cultural Diversity and Racial Identity**’
- ‘**All my friends and me**’ e-book, which can be printed out, or displayed on a computer or smart device.
- ‘**Colours of Australia**’ song with accompanying action sheet, which can be played on a computer or downloaded and played using a portable music device.
- ‘**Discussing cultural diversity with your child**’ information sheet for parents and carers
- ‘**A World of Flavours**’ activity sheet for children to complete with their families

These resources can all be downloaded from:

www.humanrights.gov.au/education/early-childhood/building-belonging



► Why educate about cultural diversity and prejudice?

All children have a right to feel accepted and respected. This is a principle set out in the United Nations' [Convention on the Rights of the Child](#), the international human rights treaty on the rights of children.⁴

The Convention emphasises the importance of children developing connections to culture and community as a means of fostering a strong sense of personal identity and belonging.⁵ This idea is reflected in the Early Years Learning Framework and the National Quality Standard.⁶



'Culture is the fundamental building block of identity and the development of a strong cultural identity is essential to children's healthy sense of who they are and where they belong.'

Educators' Guide to the Early Years Learning Framework for Australia⁷

By teaching respect for cultural diversity, educators will assist children to:

- learn about their cultural background and develop a strong sense of self identity
- learn about and appreciate cultures and traditions other than their own
- learn to enjoy and respect differences and recognise universal characteristics we all share
- learn about racial prejudice and understand why it should be challenged.

► How to use these resources in your early childhood setting

The 'Building Belonging' resources have been designed to cater to a range of settings, including preschools, kindergartens, long day care centres, family day care, and primary schools.

The resources aim to support the existing work of early childhood educators around Australia to teach respect for cultural diversity and difference.

It's recommended that the 'Building Belonging' resources be used to support existing policies, practices and programs. For a holistic approach, other resources - such as books and play materials illustrating and celebrating diversity and difference - should be incorporated into day-to-day activities. Suggestions on where to find further materials can be found in the **Additional Resources** section of this Educator Guide (page 24).

All of the 'Building Belonging' resources have been designed to support the achievement of learning outcomes under the [Early Years Learning Framework](#) and the [Australian Curriculum](#). These resources satisfy requirements of the [National Quality Standard](#) and also linked to the [Australian Professional Standards for Teachers](#). Additionally, these resources support the fulfillment of children's rights principles outlined in Early Childhood Australia's Statement of Intent '[Supporting young children's rights](#)'. Full details of the educational outcomes and standards relating to these resources can be found in the **Links to educational frameworks and standards** section on page 20 of this Educator Guide.

▶ Educating about cultural diversity

Children benefit from exposure to the multitude of cultures that make up Australia's social fabric. This includes the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures which are integral to Australia's heritage and identity.

However, knowing how to effectively teach about the wide array of different cultures present in Australian society can seem like a daunting exercise.



▶ Challenges in educating about cultural diversity

In a survey of early childhood educators conducted by the Australian Human Rights Commission in 2015, the majority of respondents indicated that educating about cultural diversity and responding to prejudice are significant issues in their early childhood setting. Significantly, 72% of respondents reported facing challenges in educating about cultural diversity.⁸

The key challenges identified by educators include:

- **lack of knowledge** about different cultures
- **confidence in teaching** about cultural diversity (particularly in settings in which fewer cultures were represented)
- **ability to incorporate** teaching about cultures without being inauthentic or tokenistic.

'In a centre with little cultural diversity among children and staff, it is difficult to educate the staff on the importance of teaching children about different cultures...they don't see the need to widen their perspectives and...the children's exposure to different cultures.'

'Having such a large diverse cultural background represented in our centre it can be challenging for educators to gain enough knowledge about each background and include it in a non-tokenistic manner.'

What are the challenges to educating about cultural diversity?

'[Having] knowledge of others' culture: how do we get it? Where do we get it from? How much is enough?'

'In a service which is less culturally diverse family and staff-wise, the challenge is how to promote cultural competency amongst educators, family and children in a non-tokenistic way, as it requires adults (especially) and children to embrace difference, increase awareness and be open to it in the first place.'

Responses from the Australian Human Rights Commission's *Early Childhood Educators survey: Addressing Cultural Diversity and Prejudice in Early Childhood* (2015).

The teaching resources that accompany this Educator Guide have been designed to assist early childhood educators to address and overcome these barriers to educating about cultural diversity.

While there is no simple one-size-fits all solution for overcoming these challenges, two important strategies for handling these concerns are:

- **encouraging cultural competency in your early childhood setting**
- **collaborating with families and communities.**

These two key strategies are addressed in more detail in the following sections.

► Encouraging cultural competency in your early childhood setting

Developing cultural competence is a clear expectation within the Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF). The EYLF describes cultural competence as being ‘much more than awareness of cultural differences. It is the ability to understand, communicate with, and effectively interact with people across cultures.’⁹

Cultural competence encompasses:

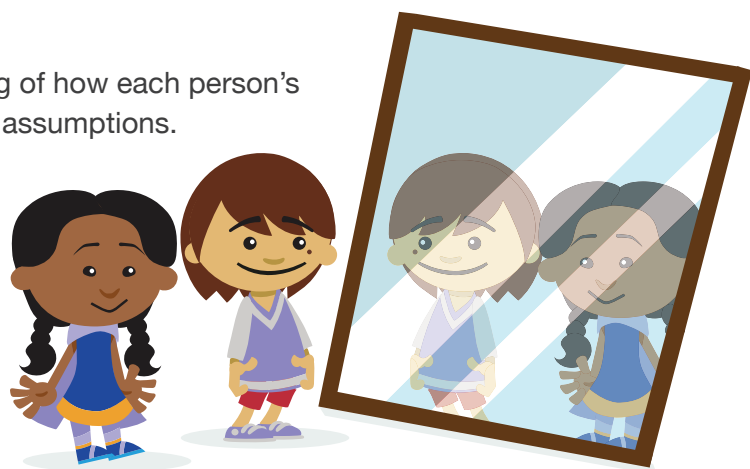
- being aware of one’s own world view
- developing positive attitudes towards cultural differences
- gaining knowledge of different cultural practices and world views
- developing skills for communication and interaction across cultures.¹⁰

Developing cultural competency

Cultural competence involves fostering an understanding of how each person’s culture shapes their values, behaviour, beliefs and basic assumptions.

This means recognising that everyone is shaped by their cultural background. This inevitably influences how we interpret the world around us, perceive ourselves and relate to other people.

For these reasons it is important to develop an awareness of how your own cultural norms and practices impact on your work and find out more about the cultures and ethnicities represented in your setting.



‘Being culturally competent doesn’t mean denying our own culture or having to know everything about all cultures. Rather, it is about being willing to find out more about the cultural identities of the children and families in our community and using this knowledge to develop trusting relationships, respectful interactions, understandings of alternate world views, meaningful learning experiences, appropriate assessments, and firm affirmation of each child and their family.’

Educators’ Guide to the Early Years Learning Framework for Australia¹¹

▶ Reflecting on policies and programs in your setting



A great place to start building belonging is with a reflection on how you currently handle issues of cultural diversity and prejudice in your setting. This can be done either independently or collectively (for example, during a staff meeting).

Some questions to consider include:

- What different cultures and ethnicities are represented within your setting (in terms of both staff and families)?
- What policies and programs exist within your setting? (For example, is there a policy or statement on cultural diversity or a Reconciliation Action Plan?)
- What experiences have you / other staff members had in regard to issues of cultural diversity and racial prejudice?
- Can you or other staff members recall conversations or questions from children or parents about these issues, and how were they addressed?
- Is there intentional teaching about cultural diversity and addressing prejudice taking place, or are issues addressed as they occur?
- Do staff feel confident to address the issues with parents? If not, what can be done to give them greater confidence?
- Do you / other staff feel more could be done to promote respect for difference and cultural diversity? If so, what could this look like?



Viewing Activity: Consider viewing this short video from Early Childhood Australia on [Putting cultural competency into practice](#). The video outlines key points to consider when examining cultural competency in your setting.

Developing a cultural diversity policy or Reconciliation Action Plan

Policies and strategies to promote cultural diversity are key to preventing and responding to discrimination and promoting respect for diversity in your setting.



If your setting doesn't currently have a cultural diversity policy, explore opportunities for developing one. A useful starting point is Early Childhood Australia's [Code of Ethics](#). This Code of Ethics provides a valuable framework for reflecting on the ethical responsibilities of early childhood professionals, including the central principles of 'inclusivity' and 'social and cultural responsiveness'. For an example of a diversity policy, view the Australian Human Rights Commission's [Diversity Strategy](#).

Reconciliation Action Plans

A Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) outlines the practical actions that your organisation commits to undertake to build strong relationships and enhance respect between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and other Australians.

Through their [Narragunnawali](#) program, Reconciliation Australia provides an education-based model which allows early childhood settings to develop their own RAPs.

Once you have reflected on the policies and practices currently in place in your setting, consider what further steps you can take to enhance respect for difference and cultural diversity. Here are some suggestions to consider:

Including cultural diversity in your setting's practices

- Ensure staff have access to professional learning about cultural diversity and cultural competency. (See the **Additional Resources** section in this guide)
- Conduct an audit of the resources within your centre to ensure they represent a wide variety of cultures and are representative of the children within the setting.
- Engage with local community through cultural celebrations, visits from community representatives and excursions.

Including cultural diversity in your day-to-day practices

- Share stories from a range of cultures, for example stories from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures or other cultures represented within your setting. (See the **Additional Resources** section in this guide)
- Explore a variety of cultural methods of creating art, such as exploring colour, techniques and different mediums. For example, create clay candle holders for Diwali.
- Play music from a variety of different cultures and learn the lyrics to songs in other languages.
- Involve children and families in planning and celebrating cultural events, particularly when relevant to their own culture.

Celebrating different cultures

Celebrating different cultural events and traditions gives children and families the opportunity to see their culture reflected in their early childhood education setting and learn about cultures other than their own.

There are a wide variety of different cultural events that occur throughout the year that you may wish to consider celebrating as part of your setting's program. Some examples include: New Year traditions (such as Chinese, Greek, Vietnamese), Easter, Orthodox Holy Week, Eid ul Fitr, NAIDOC week, Reconciliation Week, Holi, National Aboriginal and Islander Children's Day celebrations, Diwali, Thanksgiving, Hanukkah, Ramadan and Harmony Day.

A comprehensive list of cultural and religious events – and the significance behind them – is provided on the Australian Government's website, a [Calendar of Cultural and Religious Dates](#). You should preferably focus on the cultural events relevant to the families represented in your setting and actively involve families in planning and contributing to these events. If there is limited cultural diversity in your setting, you may wish to examine diversity more broadly in your local or regional communities.





'Participation in cultural and artistic activities are necessary for building children's understanding, not only of their own culture, but other cultures, as it provides opportunities to broaden their horizons and learn from other cultural and artistic traditions, thus contributing towards mutual understanding and appreciation of diversity.'

UN Committee on the Rights of the Child¹²

Avoiding cultural tokenism

Cultural tokenism occurs when aspects of cultures are acknowledged superficially or because we have to. Even when well-intentioned, cultural tokenism oversimplifies cultural differences and at its worst can exacerbate existing stereotypes and prejudices about certain cultural groups. Some things to be aware of, include:

- Placing cultural artefacts on display without knowing or providing children with information about the item's heritage or significance. For example, displaying an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander cultural artefact that doesn't represent the cultures of the Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander people within your local area, or using this item to represent *all* Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures.
- Celebrating a cultural event in a superficial fashion or using the event as the *only* form of exposure to that culture. For example, celebrating Chinese New Year for one day and not exploring other aspects of Chinese culture in day-to-day practices.
- Using cultural attire or traditional foods as the *only* way of teaching about cultural diversity. While exploring different types of food is a useful starting point for teaching about diversity, respect for cultural differences should extend beyond an appreciation of different foods. It's also important to be cautious when using different forms of cultural dress, as wearing traditional attire as a 'costume' can be offensive to people who wear it as part of their cultural identity.



One way of avoiding cultural tokenism is to adopt a holistic approach to cultural diversity. Culture is all around us and there are many opportunities to incorporate different cultural traditions and perspectives into your day-to-day activities. Being aware of these opportunities is an important first step.

For more resources on how to cultivate cultural competency within your early childhood setting, refer to the **Additional Resources** section of this guide.



What if I don't know the answers or don't have enough information?

It can often be challenging to respond to questions about racial and cultural difference, but it's not necessary to have all the answers. Simply be open and honest. This can be a great opportunity to share in a learning experience. For example, if a child asks, 'Where is Malawi?', you can reply, 'I don't know the answer to that question. Why don't we look it up on a map together?'

► Collaborating with families and communities

Partnerships between families and educators are a vital component in fostering children's experiences of belonging within early childhood settings. Parents and carers are a child's first and most influential teachers. By respecting the home life, cultures and traditions of all families within a setting, early childhood educators provide children with a more meaningful and engaging learning environment.¹³



Genuine partnerships with families involve building a shared understanding of expectations and values, and a mutual respect for each other's knowledge and expertise.¹⁴

Talking with families is a great way to discover more about the cultural identities of the children within your setting. Families are usually happy to share information about their home life and traditions with others who are interested, and may even be able to contribute useful learning resources and materials to your setting (such as photos and books).

Here are some practical strategies for meaningfully engaging with families:

During the enrolment process

Inform families about your organisation's policies relating to cultural diversity and complaints processes.

Include questions during the enrolment process to get to know more about families. For example:

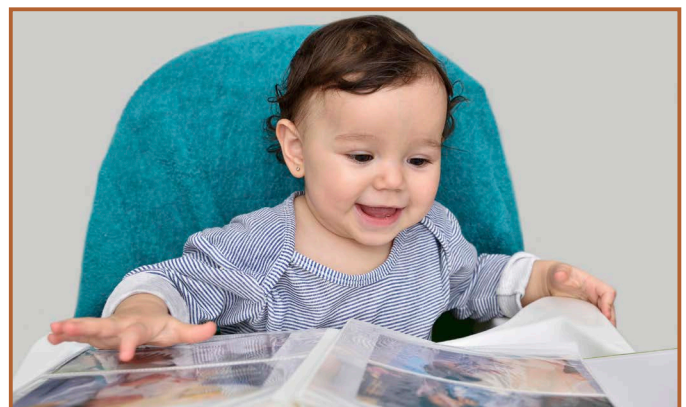
- What languages does your child speak? What languages are most commonly spoken at home?
- Does your immediate or extended family take part in special celebrations or other cultural events throughout the year? (For example, Christmas, Hanukkah, Diwali, Ramadan, Eid ul Fitr, New Year traditions)
- Would you be interested in being involved with activities and events at the centre?
- Is there any additional information about your family or your child that you would like us to know?

In your centre's activities

Ask families to provide items from home such as photographs of family members. (These could be displayed on the walls in the centre or gathered in a photo album that children can access.)

Invite families and local community members to spend time at the centre and / or to talk to the children about their culture. This provides a great opportunity for children to ask questions and learn more about their peers' histories and traditions.

Hold family events, such as picnics, barbeques or working bees. Families and educators can get to know one another better and enjoy contributing to the centre.



Activity idea - 'A World of Flavours' Recipe Book



Create a recipe book featuring recipes from the families in your setting, with illustrations by their children. Included in the 'Building Belonging' resource pack is the '**A World of Flavours' activity sheet** which can be used as a template for families to provide their recipes. This can then be compiled into a recipe book and electronically emailed to families, or printed for a small cost. The recipe book could even be used as an item for a fundraiser.

Overcoming language barriers

Nearly 20% of Australians speak a language other than English at home, and about 2% don't speak English at home at all.¹⁵

When working with families from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, ensure they are supported to use their preferred language. For example, when enrolling a child whose first language isn't English, have an accredited interpreter available to assist staff and family members to communicate important information and accurately complete enrolment details. While there may sometimes be a family member or friend who is willing to translate, this is not advisable as it creates issues of potential miscommunication and breaches of privacy.

Budgeting for language services is essential to ensure that your service can access appropriate language services when needed.

Information on translating and interpreting services and links to some of the key government language services are provided in the **Additional Resources** section.



Supporting children to use their first language plays an important role in assisting children to develop a positive sense of cultural identity and wellbeing, and helps establish belonging and connections with family, community and culture.¹⁶

The Australian Curriculum offers useful guidance on assisting children for whom [English is an additional language or dialect](#) (EAL/D). In particular, the [EAL/D Learning Progression](#) resource is designed to assist educators to assess children's English language abilities and deliver content in a way that recognises children's evolving language skills.

Further resources on addressing language barriers are provided in the **Additional Resources** section.



Where can I get support to overcome barriers to inclusion?

The Australian Government's [Inclusion Support Programme](#) is designed to assist early childhood services to include children with additional needs in their setting, through tailored inclusion advice and services. This includes supporting children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.¹⁷

As part of the **Inclusion Support Programme**, early childhood services may access:

- funding to purchase translating and interpreting services and/or bilingual workers to engage with parents and/or settle a child from a culturally and linguistically diverse background
- funding to purchase services from cultural experts, such as, bicultural support workers.

In order to access these services, early education settings must submit a proposal to the programme's Inclusion Development Fund Manager. For more information about how to do this see the **Inclusion Support Programme Guidelines**.

Another Australian Government initiative, the **Early Learning Languages Australia (ELLA) program**, is designed to encourage language learning in schools. The program was trialled in 41 preschools in 2015 and from 2017 will be available to all preschools in Australia. Through ELLA, languages are taught through a series of interactive digital applications designed for preschool aged children. For information about eligibility and requirements see the **Participation Guidelines**.

► Understanding and addressing prejudice

All children have the right to be treated fairly and without discrimination, regardless of their colour, sex, language, religion, nationality, ethnic or social origin, disability, or other status.¹⁸ Unfortunately, some children in Australia still experience racism, prejudice and discrimination.

In the Australian Human Rights Commission's survey of early childhood educators, many respondents identified racial prejudice as a problem that occurred within their settings. 43% of respondents said that there are challenges to addressing prejudice when they encountered it in children, families and other educators.¹⁹



'I think the main difficulty is that many people feel uncomfortable addressing prejudice. So if a child makes a comment, educators aren't confident in talking about the issue and instead give an answer about how it's not nice to say those things or we're all friends in preschool.'

Survey Respondent²⁰

Talking about difference and diversity is often a sensitive subject. Responding to prejudiced or discriminatory attitudes and behaviours can be particularly confronting. However, it's important to deal with these issues when they arise.

This section of the guide offers some strategies for understanding and dealing with racial prejudice and discrimination. An information sheet on '**Responding to comments and questions about Cultural Diversity and Racial Identity**' is also provided as part of this toolkit.

Reflecting on personal bias

Before critiquing the attitudes and perspectives of others, it is important to first reflect on our own personal attitudes and cultural standpoint.

We are all influenced by our own cultural identities and personal experiences, and while we may not always realise it, this can lead us to make certain assumptions about other cultures.

Understanding our own assumptions and personal beliefs can help us be more self-aware and effective in responding to prejudice and discrimination. Reflect on the following questions:



- How might your culture, or the way you see and understand other cultures, affect the relationships you have with children and their families?
- How might this advantage some children and families, yet disadvantage others?
- What are the cultures within your setting that you might need to learn more about because they differ to yours?
- What are the challenges and dilemmas you face in learning about cultures different to your own?



Viewing Activity: Consider viewing the Early Childhood Australia professional learning video **How do we understand culture identity?** This video provides a range of questions to provoke reflection on cultural identity and how it informs early childhood practices.

► Children's Development - self-awareness and prejudice

In the first five years of life, a child's brain develops faster than at any other time. Consequently, early childhood experiences have a significant impact in laying the foundations for learning, behaviour, values and health.

As children become more aware of their own physical traits and characteristics, they become more aware of the differences between themselves and others (for example, the differences between family members, the differences between boys and girls). Depending on their experiences, children can form both positive and negative ideas and attitudes about difference.

In the Australian Human Rights Commission's survey of early childhood educators, 77% of respondents indicated that a child had asked a question about their own or another person's racial, cultural or ethnic background.²¹



'We had a child of African descent and the children were fascinated by her dark skin and curly hair, they asked many questions about where she was from, why her skin was so dark, often comparing their own features.'

Survey Respondent²²

Children’s curiosity about differences can provide useful opportunities to discuss cultural diversity and racial identity. However, if left unchecked, early negative attitudes and behaviours can turn into prejudice. In the Australian Human Rights Commission’s survey, 43% of respondents indicated that a child had said something negative about another person’s racial, cultural or ethnic background.²³



‘A 5-year-old refused to play with an Aboriginal child, stating that she doesn’t “play with people like her”. She was encouraged that the other child will be fun to play with, with no mention of any skin colour. She then turned to the educator, saying, “I don’t like people like you, with black skin”.’

Survey Respondent²⁴

Racial prejudice can have a profound impact on those who experience it, with consequences that can span a lifetime. Research has found significant links between experiences of racism and discrimination and poor physical and mental health, lower productivity and reduced life expectancy.²⁵

Children and young people are particularly vulnerable to the harmful impact of racism and discrimination.²⁶ Research highlights the ‘strong and consistent relationship between race-based discrimination and negative child health and wellbeing outcomes such as anxieties, depression and psychological distress.’²⁷



‘A little boy from India came to school one day and he was really sad, I asked what was wrong and he said “I just can’t wash the brown dirt off my skin”.’

Survey Respondent²⁸

‘A child saying she didn’t want her colour skin because no-one liked it and it was yucky.’

Survey Respondent²⁹

This evidence illustrates how early childhood is a crucial time to equip children with pride in their own racial and cultural identity and an appreciation of other people’s racial and cultural identities.

By teaching children about the importance of treating others equally and celebrating different cultures, educators can make a significant impact on how children’s attitudes mature and develop.



Strategies for responding to prejudice

There are a number of actions you can take if you see a child demonstrating prejudiced attitudes or behaviour in your centre.

- **Act immediately.** The child will have a better understanding of the response if it is given straight away. Never ignore a comment that seems prejudicial or discriminatory.
- **Respond clearly and honestly.** Try not to use complicated language, instead use honest answers and correct information. Ensure you are engaging with the child rather than giving 'lectures'.
- **Find out more.** If a child is exhibiting prejudiced attitudes or behaviours, ask questions to find out where this stems from and sensitively challenge assumptions or stereotypes.
- **Support children who have experienced discrimination or prejudice.** Listen carefully to what they have to say and comfort them. Encourage them to talk about how they feel and be positive about their culture and identity.
- **Talk about your own experiences.** Share a story of a time you felt excluded, how you responded and what you learned from it.
- **Model inclusive behaviour.** Children learn through observing adults' behaviours. Be conscious of your words and actions when you interact with others.
- **Encourage children to reflect on the effects of discrimination.** Encourage empathy by asking children to imagine how they would feel. Find examples they can relate to, such as in books and personal experiences in their own lives.
- **Build respect.** Encourage children to act and challenge discrimination when they see it.



For examples of how to respond to prejudiced attitudes or behaviour from children, see the information sheet '[Responding to comments and questions about Cultural Diversity](#)'.

► Responding to parental attitudes

Another common concern to emerge from the Australian Human Rights Commission's survey of early childhood educators was how to speak to parents with negative views of cultural diversity and racial difference. 49% of respondents indicated that they had heard or witnessed a parent saying something negative about another person's racial, cultural or ethnic background.³⁰

Educators gave examples of parents criticising their childcare service for accommodating or celebrating cultural diversity. Others gave examples of parents encouraging negative attitudes towards children of different racial, cultural or ethnic backgrounds:



‘One child said “I don’t play with black kids cos my dad told me so” and the dad confirmed he didn’t want his child playing with the Aboriginal children at the service.’

Survey Respondent³¹

This reinforces the need for early childhood educators to model inclusive practices which counter prejudicial messages that children may have received elsewhere.

It also highlights the benefit of having a strong stance on cultural diversity within your setting’s programs or policies. This way educators have an instant response to any concerning comments they may hear.

Some example responses might include:

- *‘Our philosophy supports cultural diversity so we encourage all of the children to play together, regardless of race, religion or ethnicity.’*
- *‘I’m sorry to hear that that’s your view, but if you look at our centre’s philosophy, we strongly encourage children to learn about lots of different cultures so they have a wide knowledge of their world.’*

More suggestions on how to respond to prejudicial attitudes from parents can be found in the information sheet **‘Responding to comments and questions about Cultural Diversity’**.



Making a racial discrimination complaint



If you believe you have experienced discrimination, you may wish to make a complaint to the Australian Human Rights Commission. If you witness something that you think is discrimination you can also tell the person that they can make a complaint. The Commission can investigate and try to resolve complaints of racial discrimination in many areas of public life including in employment, education, sport, accommodation and the provision of goods and services. The complaints process is free and confidential. For more information about what you can complain about and how to make a complaint, visit the Commission’s [Complaints](#) page.



► Conclusion

Australia today is a multicultural society. Encouraging children to understand and appreciate different cultures will assist them to build positive relationships and connections with their community.

While it is not without challenges, there are many things early childhood educators can do to promote respect for cultural diversity and difference and address racial prejudice.

In doing this, educators can assist children to develop empathy and respect for others.

What can I do next?

Drawing on the information in this Educator Guide, start a conversation in your setting about ways of respecting cultural diversity and responding to prejudice.

Access the other resources in the '**Building Belonging**' toolkit from the Australian Human Rights Commission's website: www.humanrights.gov.au/education/early-childhood/building-belonging



- Put the **three posters** provided in this toolkit on display in your setting and staffroom.
- Use the **three accompanying lesson plans** to incorporate learning about cultural diversity into your day-to-day practices. The lesson plans contain a range of learning activities and resources, and feature the '**Colours of Australia**' song and '**All my friends and me**' e-book included in this toolkit.
- Engage with parents and carers on the topic of cultural diversity by distributing the '**Discussing cultural diversity with your child**' information sheet and '**A World of Flavours**' activity sheet to children to take home to their families.
- Explore some of the **Additional Resources** listed on page 24 of this resource.



► Links to educational frameworks and standards

The Early Years Learning Framework

The resources in this toolkit have been closely aligned to the [Early Years Learning Framework's](#) key principles of 'respect for diversity' and 'secure, respectful and reciprocal relationships' and the following learning outcomes:

EYLF Learning Outcomes:

Outcome 1: Children have a strong sense of identity

- 1.1. Children feel safe, secure and supported
- 1.3. Children develop knowledgeable and confident self identities
- 1.4. Children learn to interact in relation to others with care, empathy and respect

Outcome 2: Children are connected with and contribute to their world

- 2.2. Children respond to diversity with respect
- 2.3. Children become aware of fairness

Outcome 3: Children have a strong sense of wellbeing

- 3.1. Children become strong in their social and emotional wellbeing

Outcome 4: Children are confident and involved learners

- 4.1. Children develop dispositions for learning such as curiosity, cooperation, confidence, creativity, commitment, enthusiasm, persistence, imagination and reflexivity

Outcome 5: Children are effective communicators

- 5.1. Children interact verbally and non-verbally with others for a range of purposes
- 5.2. Children engage with a range of texts and gain meaning from these texts
- 5.4. Children begin to understand how symbols and pattern systems work

The Australian Curriculum (Foundation year level)

The three lesson plans included in this toolkit have been aligned to the [Australian Curriculum](#) (Foundation level) to deliver the following content:

Curriculum Learning Area

English: Language

([ACELA1426](#)) Understand that English is one of many languages spoken in Australia and that different languages may be spoken by family, classmates and community

English: Literature

([ACELT1783](#)) Share feelings and thoughts about the events and characters in texts

English: Literacy

([ACELY1784](#)) Use interaction skills including listening while others speak, using appropriate voice levels, articulation and body language, gestures and eye contact

([ACELT1579](#)) Replicate the rhythms and sound patterns in stories, rhymes, songs and poems from a range of cultures

Humanities and Social Sciences: History

([ACHASSK011](#)) Who the people in their family are, where they were born and how they are related to each other

Health and Physical Activity: Personal, Social and Community Health

(ACPPS001) Identify personal strengths

(ACPPS005) Identify and describe emotional responses people may experience in different situations

Visual Arts

(ACAVAM108) Create and display artworks to communicate ideas to an audience

The National Quality Standard

The areas of the [National Quality Standard](#) (NQS) that can be addressed using this toolkit are outlined in the following table. The resources can also be used to support the setting's Quality Improvement Plan and assist directors and management in identifying current strengths and weaknesses when tackling the issues of cultural diversity and prejudice within the service.

NQS Quality Area

1. Educational program and practice

Standard 1.1

An approved learning framework informs the development of a curriculum that enhances each child's learning and development

Element 1.1.1 | Element 1.1.2 | Element 1.1.5 | Element 1.1.6

Standard 1.2

Educators and co-ordinators are focused, active and reflective in designing and delivering the program for each child

Element 1.2.1 | Element 1.2.2

3. Physical environment

Standard 3.1

The design and location of the premises is appropriate for the operation of a service

Element 3.1.3

Standard 3.2

The environment is inclusive, promotes competence, independent exploration and learning through play

Element 3.2.1

4. Staffing arrangements

Standard 4.2

Educators, co-ordinators and staff members are respectful and ethical

Element 4.2.2 | Element 4.2.3

5. Relationships with children

Standard 5.1

Respectful and equitable relationships are developed and maintained with each child

Element 5.1.1 | Element 5.1.2 | Element 5.1.3

Standard 5.2

Each child is supported to build and maintain sensitive and responsive relationships with other children and adults

Element 5.2.1 | Element 5.2.3

6. Collaborative partnerships with families and communities

Standard 6.1

Respectful and supportive relationships with families are developed and maintained

Element 6.1.1

Standard 6.2

Families are supported in their parenting role and their values and beliefs about childrearing are respected

Element 6.2.1

Standard 6.3

The service collaborates with other organisations and service providers to enhance children's learning and wellbeing

Element 6.3.4

7. Leadership and service management

Standard 7.2

There is a commitment to continuous improvement

Element 7.2.1

The Australian Professional Standards for Teachers (Proficient level)

These resources can be linked to the [Australian Professional Standards for Teachers](#) (at the proficient level). These resources will assist educators to develop cultural competency, address prejudice and strengthen other key professional skills.

Standard 1: Know students and how they learn

1.3 Students with diverse linguistic, cultural, religious and socioeconomic backgrounds

Design and implement teaching strategies that are responsive to the learning strengths and needs of students from diverse linguistic, cultural, religious and socioeconomic backgrounds

1.4 Strategies for teaching Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students

Design and implement effective teaching strategies that are responsive to the local community and cultural setting, linguistic background and histories of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students

Standard 2: Know the content and how to teach it

2.4 Understand and respect Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to promote reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians

Provide opportunities for students to develop understanding of and respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories, cultures and languages

Standard 3: Plan for and implement effective teaching and learning

3.7 Engage parents/carers in the educative process

Plan for appropriate and contextually relevant opportunities for parents/ carers to be involved in their children's learning

Standard 4: Create and maintain positive and safe learning environments

4.1 Support student participation

Establish and implement inclusive and positive interactions to engage and support all students in classroom activities

4.4 Maintain student safety

Ensure students' wellbeing and safety within school by implementing school and/ or system, curriculum and legislative requirements

Standard 7: Engage professionally with colleagues, parents/carers and the community

7.1 Meet professional ethics and responsibilities

Meet codes of ethics and conduct established by regulatory authorities, systems and schools

7.2 Comply with legislative, administrative and organisational requirements

Understand the implications of and comply with relevant legislative, administrative, organisational and professional requirements, policies and processes

7.3 Engage with the parents/carers

Establish and maintain respectful collaborative relationships with parents/ carers regarding their children's learning and wellbeing

7.4 Engage with professional teaching networks and broader communities

Participate in professional and community networks and forums to broaden knowledge and improve practice

► Additional Resources

For further information relating to teaching about cultural diversity and responding to prejudice in early childhood education, consider the following recommended resources and materials:

Children's picture books

Alphabet Kids, [The Alphabet Kids Book Series](#).

Derolf, Shane, *The Crayon Box that Talked* (Random House Childrens Books, 1998).

Dunstan, Kylie, *Same, but a Little Bit Diff'rent* (Windy Hollow Books, 2012).

Fogarty, Renee, *Fair Skin, Black Fella* (Magabala Books, 2010).

Formby, Caroline, *Come And Eat With Us* (Childs Play, 1995).

Fox, Mem and Leslie Staub, *Whoever You Are* (Reading Rainbow Books, 2006).

Fox, Mem and Helen Oxenbury, *Ten Little Fingers and Ten Little Toes* (Penguin Australia, 2009).

Gainer Cindy and Miki Sakamoto, *I'm Like You, You're Like Me* (Free Spirit Publishing, 2011).

Global Kids Oz, [Multicultural Books](#).

Harris, Robie H, and Nadine Bernard Westcott, *Who's in my family? All About Our Families* (Candlewick Press, 2012).

Katz, Karen, *The Colors of Us* (Square Fish, 2002).

Kelly Paul, Kev Carmody and Peter Hudson, *From Little Things, Big Things Grow - Songbook* (One Day Hill, 2011).

Lionni, Leo, *Little Blue and Little Yellow* (Harper Collins Publishers, 1995).

Marsden, John and Shaun Tan, *The Rabbits* (Hachette Australia, 2010).

Pinkwater Daniel, and D. Manus Pinkwater, *The Big Orange Splot* (Scholastic, 1993).

Richardson, Ella and Lydia Monks, *The Bear and the Bees* (Pan Macmillan, 2012).

Roach, Archie, Ruby Hunter and Peter Hudson, *Took the Children Away - Songbook* (One Day Hill, 2010).

Sarzin, Lisa Miranda, *Stories for Simon* (Trafalgar Square Books, 2015).

Thompson, Michael, *The Other Bears* (Freemantle Press, 2010).

Tyler, Michael and David Lee Csicsko, *The Skin You Live In* (Chicago Children's Museum, 2005).

Valent Jacalyn, *Stinky the Bulldog* (Authorhouse, 2005).

Children's videos

Fun English, [Hello To All The Children Of The World](#) (2014).

Fun English, [We All Sing In The Same Voice](#) (2014).

Little Sikhs, [Being Different is Beautiful](#) (2015).

Master Communications, [If the World Were a Village of 100 People: A Story About the World's People](#) (2009).

Sesame Street, [I Love My Hair](#) (2010).

Sesame Street, [Color of Me Song](#) (2014).

Seven Dimensions, [Finding My Magic](#) (2010).

Ethnic Community Services Co-operative, [Acknowledgement of Country](#) (2015).

Language support and translating and interpreting services

- Australian Government, Department of Social Services, [Multicultural Language Services Guidelines](#) (2013).
- Australian Government, Department of Social Services, [Help with English](#) (2015).
- AUSIT (Australian Institute of Interpreters and Translators), [Frequently Asked Questions for the Public](#).
- Government of South Australia, [Interpreting and Translating Centre](#).
- National Accreditation Authority for Translators and Interpreters, [Online Directory](#), (2012).
- New South Wales Government, Multicultural NSW, [Interpreting and Translation](#).
- Northern Territory Government, [Aboriginal Interpreter Service](#).
- Northern Territory Government, [Interpreting and Translating Service NT](#).
- TIS (Translating and Interpreting Service) National, [Help using TIS National services](#).
- Victorian Government, Department of Education and Training, [Early Childhood Interpreter Service](#) (2014).
- Victorian Government, Department of Education and Training, [English as an Additional Language](#).
- Victorian Government, Department of Education and Training, [No English – Don't Panic](#), (2014).
- Victorian Interpreting and Translating Service, [About VITS](#).
- Western Australian Government, Department of Education, [Interpreting and Translation Services](#) (2014).

Useful websites and resources

Building cultural competency

- Australian Government, Department of Social Services, [Calendar of Cultural and Religious Dates](#).
- Australian Government, Department of Social Services, [Harmony Day - Early Childhood](#).
- Child Australia, [Cultural Connections Booklet - Professional Support Coordinator](#) (2012).
- Community Child Care Victoria, [Exploring Celebrations in Children's Services - Self-Guided Learning Package](#) (2011).
- Early Childhood Australia, [Understanding cultural competence](#), *EYLF Professional Learning Project – Newsletter No. 7*, (2011).
- Early Childhood Australia, [Becoming culturally competent](#), *NQS Professional Learning Project – Newsletter No. 65*, (2013).
- Ethnic Community Services Co-operative, [Resources for early childhood services](#).
- Ethnic Community Services Co-operative, [Bicultural Support Resources](#).
- Ethnic Community Services Co-operative, [Training and Professional Development](#).
- Global Kids Oz, [Early Learning Resources](#).
- Kids Helpline, [Celebrating our Cultural Differences: An overview for parents](#).
- KidsMatter, [Why culture matters for children's development and wellbeing](#).
- PBS Learning Media, [Arthur's World Neighborhood](#).
- Raise Learning, [Promoting Diversity, Equity and Cultural Competence in the Early Years](#), (2012).

National Childcare Accreditation Council (NCAC), [Genuine Celebrations: Including cultural experiences in the program](#), *Putting Children First*, Issue 33 (March 2010), 17 – 19.

National Quality Standard Professional Learning Program, [Cultural competency](#) (2012).

New South Wales Government, Department of Education and Communities, [Prejudice. No way!](#) (2012).

Oxfam (UK), [Your World, My World](#).

Southern Poverty Law Centre, [Teaching Tolerance - Classroom Resources](#).

Together For Humanity, [For Primary School Teachers](#).

Understanding Prejudice, [Tips for Elementary School Teachers](#).

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and histories

Australian Human Rights Commission, [Bringing them home: The 'Stolen Children' report](#) (Australian Human Rights Commission, 1997).

Early Childhood Australia, [Building bridges: Literacy development in young Indigenous children](#).

Magabala Books, [Children's Picture Books](#).

NAIDOC, [About NAIDOC Week](#).

National Quality Standard Professional Learning Program, [Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures in early childhood education and care](#).

National Quality Standard Professional Learning Program, [Exploring Reconciliation in early childhood practice](#) (2013).

Ngroo, [Our Programs](#).

Reconciliation Australia, [Narragunnawali: Reconciliation in Schools and Early Learning](#).

SNAICC (Secretariat of National Aboriginal and Islander Child Care), [National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children's Day](#).

SNAICC (Secretariat of National Aboriginal and Islander Child Care), [Tools and Resources](#).

Additional reading on belonging and inclusion

Connolly, P, [Fairplay: Talking With Children About Prejudice and Discrimination](#), (Save the Children and Barnardo's, Northern Ireland, 2002).

Dau, Elizabeth (ed.), [The Anti-Bias Approach in Early Childhood](#), (Pearson Education Australia, 2001).

Derman-Sparks, Louise and Julie Olsen Edwards, [Anti-bias education for young children and ourselves](#), (National Association for the Education of Young Children, 2010).

Dolby, R, [Secure Transitions: Supporting children to feel secure, confident and included](#), (Early Childhood Australia, 2013).

Early Childhood Australia, [Supporting young children's rights statement of intent \(2015 – 2018\)](#) (Early Childhood Australia, 2015).

- Gibbs, Leanne, *Fair play - anti bias in action*, (Lady Gowrie Child Centre, 1997).
- Guigni, Miriam, [*Exploring Multiculturalism, Anti-Bias and Social Justice In Children's Services*](#) (Children's Services Central, 2015).
- Guigni, Miriam, [*Rethinking Images of Inclusion: A picture book for children's services*](#), (ACT Professional Support Coordinator,).
- Hood, M, *Partnerships: Working together in early childhood settings*, (Early Childhood Australia, 2012).
- Linke, P, *Everyday learning about feelings*. (Early Childhood Australia, 2011).
- Olsen Edwards, Julie and Louise Derman-Sparkes, *Anti Bias Education for Young Children and Ourselves* (National Association for the Education of Young Children, 2012).
- Richardson, C, *Belonging: At the heart of relating to others*. (Early Childhood Australia, 2015).
- Robinson, K and C Jones Diaz, *Diversity and Difference in Early Childhood Education: Issues for theory and practice*, (Open University Press, 2006).
- Stonehouse, A. and A Kennedy, *Learning positive behaviour through educator – child relationships*, (Early Childhood Australia, 2013).

Additional reading on the impacts of racism and discrimination

- Ferdinand, A, Y Paradies and M Kelaher, [*Mental Health Impacts of Racial Discrimination in Victorian Aboriginal Communities: The Localities Embracing and Accepting Diversity \(LEAD\) Experiences of Racism Survey*](#). (The Lowitja Institute, 2012).
- Fethi Mansouri et al, [*The impact of racism upon the health and wellbeing of young Australians*](#). (The Foundation for Young Australians, Melbourne, 2009).
- N Priest et al, 'A systematic review of studies examining the relationship between reported racism and health and wellbeing for children and young people' (2013), 95, *Social Science & Medicine*.
- Nelson, Jacqueline, Kevin Dunn and Yin Paradies, 'Australian racism and anti-racism: links to morbidity and belonging' in Fethi Mansouri and Michele Lobo (eds), *Migration, citizenship and intercultural relations: looking through the lens of social inclusion?* (Ashgate, 2011).
- Paradies, Yin, 'A systematic review of empirical research on self-reported racism and health' (2006) 35(4) *International Journal of Epidemiology*.
- VicHealth, [*Mental health impacts of racial discrimination in Victorian culturally and linguistically diverse communities. Experiences of Racism survey: a summary*](#), (Victorian Health Promotion Foundation, 2012).
- VicHealth, [*Racism and its links to the health of children and young people: Research highlights*](#) (Victorian Health Promotion Foundation, 2013).

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- ¹ Australian Bureau of Statistics, '[Australia's Cultural and Linguistic Diversity](#)', *Year Book Australia - 2009–10* (2010), Cat no. 1301.0, ABS Canberra.
- ² Australian Government, Department of Education, Employment and Workplace, [Being, Belonging and Becoming: the Early Years Learning Framework for Australia](#) (2009), 13, 16.
- ³ Australian Government, Department of Education, Employment and Workplace, [Being, Belonging and Becoming: the Early Years Learning Framework for Australia](#) (2009), 13.
- ⁴ [Convention on the Rights of the Child](#), opened for signature 20 November 1989, 1577 UNTS 3 (entered into force 2 September 1990).
- ⁵ United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child, [General Comment No 17: on the right of the child to rest, leisure, play, recreational activities, cultural life and the arts \(Article 31\)](#), 62nd sess, UN DOC CRC/C/GC/17 (17 April 2013) 5 [11].
- ⁶ Australian Government, Department of Education, Employment and Workplace, [Being, Belonging and Becoming: the Early Years Learning Framework for Australia](#) (2009), 13; Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority, '[Quality Area 1 - Educational program and practice](#)', *The National Quality Standard* (2012).
- ⁷ Australian Government, Department of Education, Employment and Workplace, [Educators' Guide to the Early Years Learning Framework for Australia](#) (2010) 21-22.
- ⁸ Australian Human Rights Commission, *Early Childhood Educators survey: Addressing Cultural Diversity and Prejudice in Early Childhood* (2015), question 9.
- ⁹ Australian Government, Department of Education, Employment and Workplace, [Being, Belonging and Becoming: the Early Years Learning Framework for Australia](#) (2009), 16.
- ¹⁰ Australian Government, Department of Education, Employment and Workplace, [Being, Belonging and Becoming: the Early Years Learning Framework for Australia](#) (2009), 16.
- ¹¹ Australian Government, Department of Education, Employment and Workplace, [Educators' Guide to the Early Years Learning Framework for Australia](#) (2010) 24.
- ¹² United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child, [General Comment No 17: on the right of the child to rest, leisure, play, recreational activities, cultural life and the arts \(Article 31\)](#), 62nd sess, UN DOC CRC/C/GC/17 (17 April 2013) 5 [12].
- ¹³ Australian Government, Department of Education, Employment and Workplace, [Being, Belonging and Becoming: the Early Years Learning Framework for Australia](#) (2009), 11.
- ¹⁴ Australian Government, Department of Education, Employment and Workplace, [Being, Belonging and Becoming: the Early Years Learning Framework for Australia](#) (2009), 12; Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority, '[Quality Area 6 - Collaborative partnerships with families and communities](#)', *The National Quality Standard* (2012).
- ¹⁵ Australian Bureau of Statistics, '[The "Average" Australian](#)', *Australian Social Trends* (April 2013), Cat no. 4102.0, ABS Canberra; Australian Bureau of Statistics, '[Cultural Diversity in Australia - Reflecting a Nation: Stories from the 2011 Census](#)', *Australian Social Trends* (June 2012), Cat no. 2071.0, ABS Canberra.
- ¹⁶ There is evidence to show that bilingualism has positive benefits on cognitive and executive functioning, academic performance and both individual and community socioeconomic outcomes. Studies suggest that those who speak more than one language perform better at a range of functions including retaining information, problem solving and multitasking.
- See for example: Ellen Bialystok, Fergus I.M. Craik and Gigi Luk, 'Bilingualism: Consequences for Mind and Brain' (2012) 16(4) *Trends in Cognitive Sciences* 240; Olusola O. Adesope, Tracy Lavin, Terri Thompson and Charles Ungerleider, 'A Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis of the Cognitive Correlates of Bilingualism' (2010) 80(2) *Review of Educational Research* 207-245; Rubén G. Rumbaut, 'English Plus: Exploring the Socioeconomic Benefits of Bilingualism in Southern California' in R.M. Callahan and P.C. Gándara (eds) *The Bilingual Advantage: Language,*

Literacy, and the Labor Market. Multilingual Matters (Clevedon, UK, 2014).

¹⁷ Australian Government, Department of Education and Training, [Inclusion Support Programme Guidelines](#) (2015) 6, 41.

¹⁸ *Convention on the Rights of the Child*, opened for signature 20 November 1989, 1577 UNTS 3 (entered into force 2 September 1990) Article 2.

¹⁹ Australian Human Rights Commission, *Early Childhood Educators survey: Addressing Cultural Diversity and Prejudice in Early Childhood* (2015), question 9.

²⁰ Australian Human Rights Commission, *Early Childhood Educators survey: Addressing Cultural Diversity and Prejudice in Early Childhood* (2015), survey respondent 31, question 10.

²¹ Australian Human Rights Commission, *Early Childhood Educators survey: Addressing Cultural Diversity and Prejudice in Early Childhood* (2015), question 11.

²² Australian Human Rights Commission, *Early Childhood Educators survey: Addressing Cultural Diversity and Prejudice in Early Childhood* (2015), survey respondent 99, question 12.

²³ Australian Human Rights Commission, *Early Childhood Educators survey: Addressing Cultural Diversity and Prejudice in Early Childhood* (2015), question 11.

²⁴ Australian Human Rights Commission, *Early Childhood Educators survey: Addressing Cultural Diversity and Prejudice in Early Childhood* (2015), survey respondent 104, question 12.

²⁵ Yin Paradies, 'A systematic review of empirical research on self-reported racism and health' (2006) 35(4) *International Journal of Epidemiology* 888; Jacqueline Nelson, Kevin Dunn and Yin Paradies, 'Australian racism and anti-racism: links to morbidity and belonging' in Fethi Mansouri and Michele Lobo (eds), *Migration, citizenship and intercultural relations: looking through the lens of social inclusion?* (Ashgate, UK, 2011); A Ferdinand, Y Paradies and M Kelaher, *Mental Health Impacts of Racial Discrimination in Victorian Aboriginal Communities: The Localities Embracing and Accepting Diversity (LEAD) Experiences of Racism Survey*, (The Lowitja Institute, Melbourne, 2012); VicHealth, *Mental health impacts of racial discrimination in Victorian culturally and linguistically diverse communities. Experiences of Racism survey: a summary*, (Victorian Health Promotion Foundation, Carlton, 2012); N Priest et al, 'A systematic review of studies examining the relationship between reported racism and health and wellbeing for children and young people' (2013), 95, *Social Science & Medicine* 115.

²⁶ N Priest et al, 'A systematic review of studies examining the relationship between reported racism and health and wellbeing for children and young people' (2013) 95, *Social Science & Medicine* 115; Fethi Mansouri et al, *The impact of racism upon the health and wellbeing of young Australians* (The Foundation for Young Australians, Melbourne, 2009)13-19.

²⁷ VicHealth, [Racism and its links to the health of children and young people: Research highlights](#) (Victorian Health Promotion Foundation, Carlton, 2013).

²⁸ Australian Human Rights Commission, *Early Childhood Educators survey: Addressing Cultural Diversity and Prejudice in Early Childhood* (2015), survey respondent 188, question 12.

²⁹ Australian Human Rights Commission, *Early Childhood Educators survey: Addressing Cultural Diversity and Prejudice in Early Childhood* (2015), survey respondent 277, question 12.

³⁰ Australian Human Rights Commission, *Early Childhood Educators survey: Addressing Cultural Diversity and Prejudice in Early Childhood* (2015), question 11.

³¹ Australian Human Rights Commission, *Early Childhood Educators survey: Addressing Cultural Diversity and Prejudice in Early Childhood* (2015), survey respondent 372, question 12.

