



Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority

Reconciliation Action Plan for September 2016 – September 2017



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Quality Authority



OUR COMMITMENT TO RECONCILIATION

As the statutory authority that guides the administration of the National Quality Framework (NQF) for children's education and care services, ACECQA is committed to improving opportunities and outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, and in particular, for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children attending education and care services across Australia.

ACECQA recognises and affirms that reconciliation between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and other Australians is the responsibility of all Australians. This *Reflect* Reconciliation Action Plan acknowledges our responsibility and outlines our commitment to reconciliation by working towards a culturally competent working environment – an environment that acknowledges and celebrates the unique place that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures hold in Australia.


OUR BUSINESS

ACECQA's role

ACECQA works with state and territory regulatory authorities and the Australian Government in administering the NQF as a consistent, effective, and efficient system for the regulation and quality assessment of children's education and care services across Australia. Our vision is that children have the best possible start in life.

ACECQA's key functions include:

- promoting and fostering continuous quality improvement in children's education and care services
- delivering nationally consistent training and support to authorised officers¹
- determining and assessing qualifications required by educators working in approved children's education and care services
- assessing applications from approved providers for the 'Excellent' quality rating
- assessing applications from approved providers for 'second tier' quality ratings reviews
- communicating, engaging and informing the sector and families as the public face and voice for the NQF
- managing, supporting and further developing the National Quality Agenda IT System – the national database and online business tool for communication between children's education and care services and regulatory authorities
- providing high level policy advice to governments, and support to regulators to identify and implement nationally agreed operational policy positions
- reporting on the progress of the NQF, both to the COAG Education Council and the public
- maintaining national registers of approved providers and services, and their quality rating
- undertaking national audits of the NQF
- undertaking and promoting research.



While a national authority, ACECQA operates from one office located on Gadigal land at Level 6, 175 Liverpool Street Sydney. As at July 2016, approximately 72 full time equivalent staff are employed by the organisation. ACECQA is in the process of improving its data collection on current and future employees who wish to disclose that they identify as an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander person.

ACECQA's national reach extends predominantly through:

- our extensive communications infrastructure and published guidance material, which targets and supports the sector, families and state and territory regulatory authorities
- our management of three NQF regulatory functions (assessment of qualifications; applications for the Excellent rating; and applications for second tier review)
- national educator workshops, delivered in each Australian state and territory and are designed to support services in meeting the National Quality Standard for children's education and care services. They are open to all educators and providers.
- national training for authorised officers
- a national enquiries service to answer queries from the sector and the public about the operation of the NQF
- our management of the National Quality Agenda IT System, including a national help desk
- our published national reports and research on the operation of the NQF, including analysis and publication of national data.

OUR REFLECT RAP

The purpose of ACECQA's *Reflect* RAP is to formalise and strengthen our commitment to:

- engaging and building national and local partnerships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander groups and stakeholders
- considering and including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives across our work, including published materials
- supporting and contributing to our government counterparts' efforts to improve education and care outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, including through support for providers of education and care services to those children
- embedding a reconciliation perspective of cultural awareness, sensitivity and respect into our consciousness and practices
- encouraging diversity in our employment and among our suppliers.

Our *Reflect* RAP identifies existing and future meaningful, achievable and measurable actions for relationships, respect and opportunities that are specific to ACECQA and our role in promoting quality children's education and care. We commit to completing the actions in this plan over the next 12 months. The predominant focus of our RAP is on building and extending upon relationships, both internally and externally, and achieving a shared understanding and ownership of the RAP across ACECQA.



Our RAP has been developed with reference to:

1. The following guiding principles of the NQF:

- the rights and best interests of the child are paramount
- children are successful, competent and capable learners
- the principles of equity, inclusion and diversity underpin the National Law
- that Australia's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures are valued
- that the role of parents and families is respected and supported
- that best practice is expected in the provision of education and care services.

2. The Council of Australian Governments (COAG) 'Closing the Gap' target for early childhood education – with particular reference to the Education Council's aim to improve outcomes for Indigenous people through all mainstream and Indigenous-specific policy, program and service delivery.

3. The UN Convention on the rights of the Child, including that:

- The education of the child shall be directed to:
 - the development of respect for the child's parents, his or her own cultural identity, language and values, for the national values of the country in which the child is living, the country from which he or she may originate, and for civilizations different from his or her own (Article 29C);

- the preparation of the child for responsible life in a free society, in the spirit of understanding, peace, tolerance, equality of sexes, and friendship among all peoples, ethnic, national and religious groups and persons of indigenous origin (Article 29D)
- In those states in which ethnic, religious or linguistic minorities or persons of indigenous origin exist, a child belonging to such a minority or who is indigenous shall not be denied the right, in community with other members of his or her group, to enjoy his or her own culture, to profess and practise his or her own religion, or to use his or her own language (Article 30).

ACECQA's RAP was developed by a working group comprising staff across all organisational business groups, and was open to input from all staff.

The working group comprised:

- Craig Bennett – Chair (Company Secretary)
- Prue Bedford (Senior Manager, HR)
- Perry Campbell (Deputy National Education Leader)
- Saul Flaxman (Manager, Research & Evaluation)

ACECQA's RAP Champion is CEO, Karen Curtis.



OUR PARTNERSHIPS/CURRENT ACTIVITIES

ACECQA's past and current partnerships and activities of most relevance to our *Reflect* RAP include:

Sector and community partnerships

1. Collaboration with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander educators, Indigenous Professional Support Units and the Indigenous Support Agency to support educators to understand the NQF approved learning frameworks and begin the transition to the NQF
2. National dissemination of fact sheets and resources aimed at promoting cultural competence across the children's education and care sector, including tips for engaging with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities
3. Sponsorship of Early Childhood Australia's Reconciliation Symposium (2015 and 2016) and support for ACECQA staff to attend the Symposium
4. Participating in sector symposiums and action groups to progress COAG's Closing the Gap targets and other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education initiatives
5. Engagement with the Secretariat of National Aboriginal and Islander Child Care (SNAICC), including through the ACECQA Stakeholder Forum and through regular tele links to share information / ideas and explore opportunities to work collaboratively

6. Representation on the Early Childhood Australia RAP Advisory Committee
7. Working with Reconciliation Australia to promote Narragunnawali resources to support educators and services to develop Reconciliation Action Plans.

External activities/initiatives

- Encouraging participation in education and care services by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families by highlighting and celebrating services that display excellence in engaging with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities (such as [Kindamindi Pre-School](#), [John Paul College Outside School Hours Care](#) and [Canberra Grammar School Early Learning Centre](#)).
- Completion of national educator workshops across urban, rural and remote Australia
- Supporting a culturally competent authorised officer workforce – delivering, with input from SNAICC, cultural competence e-learning modules for authorised officers to build their skills in assessing cultural competence in education and care services
- Provision of educator scholarships to attend the 2013 NQF Conference, targeting educators in geographically isolated, rural or remote areas.



Internal activities/initiatives

- Support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees to access paid cultural and ceremonial leave
- Through ACECQA Life – the Authority’s social committee – events held to acknowledge NAIDOC Week; National Close the Gap Day; and National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children's Day, as well as support for the Indigenous Literacy Foundation
- Identified Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander position seconded from the Australian Government to ACECQA (2013-14)
- Following relocation to a new premises at the end of 2015, ACECQA meeting and training rooms named to include four Aboriginal tribal and nation groups from across the Sydney metropolitan area
- Aboriginal art work and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander flags displayed on the ACECQA premises.

Over the next 12 months, our organisation commits to:

I) Relationships

Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
Establish a RAP Working Group	A RAP Working Group is established and guides the development of our RAP, through open consultation with all staff	September 2016	Company Secretary
	Invite Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders to join our RAP Working Group, ensuring consultation about the implementation of deliverables throughout the RAP	February 2017	Company Secretary
Build internal and external relationships	Develop a list of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, organisations and other stakeholders, both within our local area and nationally, that we can approach to assist us in our understanding and our activities	December 2016	Senior Manager, Communications & Engagement; Educational Leadership Group
	Engage with RAP organisations and other like-minded organisations to connect with on our reconciliation journey	September 2017	Deputy National Education Leader
	Further develop our relationship with Reconciliation Australia to promote <i>Narragunnawali: Reconciliation in Schools and Early Learning</i> to staff and external stakeholders	September 2017	Deputy National Education Leader
	Build relationships with the preferred providers of the Inclusion Support Program ² (ISP) for early childhood and child care, which commenced on 1 July 2016	September 2017	General Manager, Strategy, Communications and Consistency; National Education Leader

² The ISP is funded by the Australian Government to assist early childhood and child care services to include children with additional needs by providing tailored inclusion advice and support from contracted inclusion specialists, as well as funding to support more challenging inclusion barriers



I) Relationships

Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
Participate in and celebrate National Reconciliation Week (NRW)	ACECQA Life ³ to organise a NRW event	May 2017	ACECQA Life Chair
	Circulate Reconciliation Australia's NRW resources and reconciliation materials to our staff	May 2017	ACECQA Life Chair
	ACECQA RAP Working Group members to participate in an external event to recognise and celebrate NRW	May 2017	RAP Working Group Chairperson
Raise internal awareness of our RAP	Raise awareness amongst all staff about our RAP commitments	November 2016	RAP Working Group Chairperson Leadership Group
	Inform key internal stakeholders of their responsibilities within our RAP	November 2016	RAP Working Group Chairperson
Strengthen relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders through core business activities	Identify and implement further opportunities to support and engage with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander educators and services	September 2017	Senior Manager, Communications & Engagement; Deputy National Education Leader
	Hold targeted educator workshops in selected remote communities and/or urban areas	September 2017	National Education Leader
	Link with an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artist to design and produce a piece of art or material(s) for use in ACECQA publications and promotions	September 2017	Senior Manager, Communications & Engagement
	ACECQA to become a signatory to the <i>Recognise</i> campaign	September 2016	CEO



II) Respect

Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
Investigate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural learning and development	Capture data and measure our staff's current level of knowledge and understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, histories and achievement	July 2017	Senior Manager, HR
	Identify cultural awareness training needs and opportunities for all ACECQA staff	August 2017	Senior Manager, HR
	Increase awareness of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, histories and achievements within our organisation	September 2017	Senior Manager, HR
Participate in and celebrate NAIDOC Week	Raise awareness and share information amongst our staff of the meaning of NAIDOC Week which includes information about the local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and communities	July 2017	ACECQA Life Chair
	Ensure our RAP Working Group participates in an external NAIDOC Week event	July 2017	RAP Working Group Chairperson
Raise internal understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural protocols	Develop, implement and communicate a cultural protocol document for Welcome to Country and Acknowledgement of Country, which includes information about local Traditional Owners, lands and waters	December 2016	Senior Manager, Communications & Engagement
	Develop a list of key contacts for recognising a Welcome to Country and maintain respectful partnerships	December 2016	Senior Manager, Communications & Engagement



II) Respect

Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
Raise internal understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural protocols	Invite a local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elder to talk to staff about the history of the land upon which ACECQA's office is located	April 2017	Deputy National Education Leader
	Develop staff communications protocol, including on appropriate terminology use in internal and external material	September 2017	Senior Manager, Communications & Engagement
Embed respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and cultures into core business functions	Consider and include Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and perspectives across our work, including in published materials	September 2017	Senior Manager, Communications & Engagement; Educational Leadership Group
	Identify and implement further opportunities to support children's education and care services to be more welcoming, inclusive, culturally sensitive and safe for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families	September 2017	Senior Manager, Communications & Engagement; Deputy National Education Leader

III) Opportunities

Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
Increase Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employment	Review and improve data collection on current and future employees who identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people in order to inform future employment and professional development opportunities	July 2017	Senior Manager, HR
	Develop a plan to encourage Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employment at ACECQA, including through adapting current recruitment procedures, linking with relevant networks, and identifying other new initiatives	September 2017	Senior Manager, HR
	Consider advertising positions in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander media	September 2017	Senior Manager, HR
	All job advertisements to include a statement to encourage Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander applicants	September 2017	Senior Manager, HR
Investigate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander supplier diversity	Consider Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander managed facilities when hiring venues for functions and workshops	September 2017	Senior Manager, Communications & Engagement; Deputy National Education Leader
	Communicate to staff the mutual benefits of procurement from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander businesses and provide a list of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander businesses that can be used to provide goods and services	September 2017	Chief Operating Officer Company Secretary Manager, Facilities



III) Opportunities

Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
Improve education and care outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children	Explore educator scholarships and mentoring opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander educators, including through leveraging other existing external initiatives	September 2017	Educational Leadership Group
	Participate in, and contribute to, our government counterparts' initiatives to better assess and improve education and care outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, including through participation in relevant policy / project work under the auspices of the Early Childhood Policy Group, which reports through to all COAG Education Council Ministers	September 2017	Senior Manager, Research & Qualifications; Senior Manager, Policy
	Facilitate relationships between children's education and care services and education and care based Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations	September 2017	General Manager, Strategy, Communications and Consistency; National Education Leader
Raise awareness of <i>Narragunnawali: Reconciliation in Schools and Early Learning</i> , to promote reconciliation between the wider Australian community and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.	Promote Reconciliation Australia's <i>Narragunnawali: Reconciliation in Schools and Early Learning</i> program, to support children's education and care services to develop environments that foster a higher level of knowledge and pride in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories, cultures and contributions	September 2017	General Manager, Strategy, Communications and Consistency; National Education Leader
	Encourage children's education and care services to subscribe to Narragunnawali News to engage with reconciliation ideas and opportunities in the children's education and care community	September 2017	General Manager, Strategy, Communications and Consistency; National Education Leader



IV) Tracking and Progress

Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
Build support for the RAP	Define resource needs for RAP development and implementation	September 2016	Company Secretary
	Track, measure and report on RAP activities	August 2017	Company Secretary
	Complete the annual RAP Impact Measurement Questionnaire and submit to Reconciliation Australia	30 September 2017	Company Secretary
Review and Refresh RAP	Liaise with Reconciliation Australia to develop a new RAP based on learnings, challenges and achievements	May 2017	RAP Working Group Chairperson
	Submit next draft RAP to Reconciliation Australia for formal review and endorsement	September 2017	RAP Working Group Chairperson

Contact details

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Artist: Adrianna Nangala Egan
Art title: Yarla Jukurrpa (Bush Potato Dreaming) – Cockatoo Creek
Language: Warlpiri



Adrianna Egan Nangala is a Warlpiri artist who currently paints for Warlukurlangu Art Centre in the Northern Territory. Warlukurlangu Artists Aboriginal Corporation of Yuendumu was incorporated in 1986. Warlukurlangu is a not for profit organisation that has more than 600 members, all of whom are Indigenous artists.

The Bush Potato Dreaming story comes from an area close to Yuendumu, called Cockatoo Creek. The Bush Potato is a fibrous tuber that grow beneath a low spreading plant, which is found by looking for cracks in the ground. This edible tuber grows from roots which seek out moisture to sprout new plants.

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