



Information Sheet

Early Years Networks working alongside Aboriginal families

Introduction

The Western Australian Government proudly acknowledges the traditional custodians of this country and recognises their continuing connection to land, waters and communities. We pay our respects to Aboriginal¹ cultures and to elders past and present.

The Department of Communities acknowledges the ongoing trauma and impact experienced by Aboriginal people resulting from past government policies and practices and commits to working in genuine partnership with Aboriginal peoples to improve outcomes for Aboriginal children, people, families and communities.

As the Traditional Custodians of Western Australia, Aboriginal families, children and communities are an important partner for Early Years Networks, to inform the design and delivery of services to Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal families and children and to understand the cultural context in which these services are provided. It is important that Early Years Networks (EYN) engage with Aboriginal families, young children and Aboriginal communities in meaningful, respectful, and culturally responsive ways. This includes acknowledging and celebrating Aboriginal cultures, languages, Country, knowledge and protocols.

Aboriginal people and communities are diverse. No 'one voice' represents all Aboriginal people. The experiences of Aboriginal people can vary throughout Western Australia and between communities. It is critical that the EYN engage with many different Aboriginal stakeholders from the community, including service providers, Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations (ACCO), Elders and local community members.

Establishing genuine partnerships with Aboriginal service providers and community groups is essential to delivering culturally safe and appropriate services to Aboriginal families and communities. Building strong relationships is also important for a successful Network.

¹ The term 'Aboriginal people' is inclusive of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and recognises that Aboriginal people are the Traditional Custodians of Western Australia.

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Organisations working with Aboriginal people must offer services that are culturally informed and demonstrate cultural capability. This should be informed by ongoing cultural awareness training, based on the needs of the organisation. Training needs can be identified through information resources provided by [Reconciliation Australia](#) and in building relationships with local Aboriginal stakeholders. Training includes learning about the impact of past laws and practices on Aboriginal peoples and their experiences, truth telling, local Aboriginal culture and ways of working with Aboriginal people and communities.

The EYN must work towards developing communications and resources that reflect cultural awareness and capability in collaboration with local Aboriginal people, organisations or consultants to ensure that they are culturally safe and appropriate.

To support shared decision making, it is critical the EYN include members from the Aboriginal community to work collaboratively on the Networks projects. This process must begin by engaging with local ACCO, Elders or other Aboriginal representatives to form mutual relationships by:

- Identifying representatives of the local Aboriginal community (establish whether there are any ACCO in your community and meet with them to find out more about the local Aboriginal Elders and who has local cultural authority).
- Building rapport with representatives of the local Aboriginal community (begin by finding out more about the local Aboriginal community, their cultural protocols and values, Aboriginal families and the preferred ways to engage with Aboriginal people in their community, as well as the Aboriginal services available in the community).
- Understanding how the local Aboriginal community would like to engage with the EYN (e.g. What the local Aboriginal cultural protocols are, how the EYN will address cultural considerations, whether regular meetings, email/phone updates or attending EYN meetings are the best ways to engage etc).
- Co-designing what engagement might look like (e.g. explore opportunities for the local Aboriginal community to provide training to EYN members. What are the priorities for the local Aboriginal community and do these align with EYN priorities?)

How can EYN work alongside Aboriginal families?

- Protocols for welcoming visitors to Country have always been a part of Aboriginal culture so incorporating Acknowledgement of Country at informal meetings and seeking the appropriate Aboriginal cultural authority to provide a Welcome to Country at the beginning of formal meetings, gatherings and events, demonstrates respect by upholding Aboriginal cultural protocols.
- Display Aboriginal flags and maps which include Aboriginal place names.
- Have Aboriginal story books, puzzles, dolls and other toys available where there are children visiting.
- Build and maintain the cultural competency of EYN staff at all levels to build the cultural capability of the EYN through ongoing training incorporating a range of cultural learning and immersion activities to gain an understanding of Aboriginal culture and experiences.
- Include posters and communications in the local Aboriginal language.
- Have 'National Agreement on Closing the Gap' and/or 'Reconciliation' as an agenda item on EYN meetings and explore how your organisation is enabling better outcomes for Aboriginal children, families and communities.
- Contact local Aboriginal community members and explore ways to engage and build meaningful relationships with them.
- Remember that many Aboriginal people will prefer face-to-face contact.
- Offer morning/afternoon tea if appropriate.

To find out more about the National Agreement on [Closing the Gap](#), please view the information on the website.

More information

To find out more about Early Years Networks, please visit our website or contact:

- **Web:** www.communities.wa.gov.au
- **Email:** EY@communities.wa.gov.au
- **Phone:** 0478 962 339 or 0481 061 924

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