

Things you can do with children

Video 2 and the following *For Reflection Activities* can be used in staff meetings or individually to reflect on how you and your centre support and develop cultural competence in infant / toddler programs.

"I'm a deadly Boorai, safe and free, proud of my culture, so get to know me"

(Save the children Mooroopna)

➤ **Learn about cultural safety, what it is and your responsibility for creating culturally safe early childhood environments.**

This is welcoming for Aboriginal children currently attending your service, in readiness for future participation or for those already attending but not yet identified as indigenous.

<https://ccyp.vic.gov.au/search?q=cultural+safety>

➤ **Get to know the local Aboriginal cultures and languages of the area your service is located to inform your program.** The Aboriginal Victoria website can help with links to cultural and language communities and groups.

<https://www.vic.gov.au/aboriginalvictoria/heritage/aboriginal-cultural-heritage-of-victoria/victorian-aboriginal-heritage-maps.html>

➤ **If you have Aboriginal families attending your centre, get to know what cultural and language groups they are from to inform your program.**

What you discover can often be different to your centre's local Aboriginal culture, due to shifts and forced migrations by governments in the past.

- Get online to learn and discover culture and European contact history to expand your understanding.
- Reach out to local communities and groups through attending events, contacting councils, talking respectfully with families. Enjoy discovering connecting and building your relationships.

"In this land, made for me, I'm strong and proud, I'm safe and free" (Save the Children Mooroopna)

➤ **Do all the infants and toddlers experience Indigenous culture every day in your program?**

E.g. Do they hear key words such as hello in local Aboriginal languages that have been endorsed by local Aboriginal advocates? Do they see authentic images of Aboriginal children and families around them through posters, books, fabrics, dolls, dolls blankets, puzzles, flags, natural materials, local native animals, native plants and bush tucker, art images.

"Acknowledgement of country" (Fifth Avenue Childcare and Kindergarten)

➤ With support of an advocate from your local Aboriginal community **create an acknowledgment to country** to say on a regular basis with the children in your group.

It might be a simple poem of thank you for the earth, the sky, the animals, the plants and the name of your local Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander people. (This is the way that Red Apple Early Learning Centre in Vermont Victoria acknowledge country).

"Reach out"

➤ **Identify incursions you could have for your program.**

You may find some organisations online that you can contact, or book a visit from an Aboriginal advocate who is raising cultural awareness through visits to early childhood centres and schools. This may be your first connection to an Aboriginal advocate leading to further connections and relationship building like Rose Kelly from **Windsor** Community Children's Centre co-op found. Alternatively, it could be as a result of relationships you have already begun to build in your local region.

"Within Victoria our people didn't do dot painting. Our people did more line work, cross hatching, we did rounded shapes"
(Annette Sax, Yarn Strong Sista)

- Consider the **art work you have on display and through the picture books** provided for children. Consider whether these art works are representations of authentic Victorian aboriginal art. Some books may include elements of art using dots which are from other regions of Australia - different clans and tribes in various parts of Australia have their own art styles. While dot painting as an activity represents Aboriginal art, this style of art originates from northern areas of Australia. Balance the art activities you have with local information, resources and styles when planning your art program with infants and toddlers.

"For babies if you make a mobile hang it over the cot or over the change table do it with natural resources that you find outside. You can even take the babies with you... rocks, feathers, shells, sticks, flowers..."
(Andrea Woodward, Save the Children Mooroopna)

➤ **Use natural materials to make mobiles.**

Sourcing natural materials from the outdoor area of your EC centre may be an option or consider taking the babies and toddlers on an excursion along the street or to a park to connect to country by noticing and wondering over aspects of nature together.

"Particularly for our infants 6 months to 2 years there are lots of visuals. So you'll see even over the change bench we've got ribbon mobiles that represent the Torres Strait Islander flag, the Aboriginal flag and the Australian flag. Some things are done at the children's level but other things are actually at a higher level as our children are often held by educators particularly if they want to comfort them or distract them and so it's a great opportunity to look at an image of a great piece of Aboriginal art. Also through sound when the children go to sleep they listen to the same Aboriginal lullabies and music"

(Rose Kelly; Windsor Community Children's Centre Coop)

➤ **How can you add subtle yet powerful resources to your centre that incorporate indigenous elements at floor and higher levels?**

E.g. Books, posters, soft toys, authentic aboriginal art, flag colours.

For Reflection: Video 2 - Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures for all under three's in Victoria

"We try and connect them to nature a lot, acknowledgment to country it's so important to look after the country, how important to look after the land the people, everything"

- Consider creating a **garden for babies and toddlers using indigenous plants**, bush tucker plants and multiple sensory experiences that engage children in digging, exploring and harvesting; seeing, hearing, feeling, tasting and smelling; as their garden grows and changes over time. This can be incorporated into your sustainability program – *NQS Standard 3.2.2 - The service cares for the environment and supports children to become environmentally responsible.*