

Abstract Template

TITLE: Embedding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Perspectives in Early Childhood Education Curricula

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Abstract

A national commitment to recognising the histories and cultures of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in early childhood education is evident in policies including the *Early Years Learning Framework*, the *National Quality Standard* and the *Australian Curriculum*. Many early years centres demonstrate commitment to this work, with ongoing efforts by educators to move beyond tokenistic representations, a one-off approach, and the simplistic idea that recognition is only important when Indigenous children are enrolled. Concerns about causing offence, a perceived lack of time and resources, and the notion that the work is too political for early childhood education remain prevalent. However, exemplars showing educators making positive changes within the curriculum and building partnerships with Indigenous people and organisations continue to emerge. As exemplars surface, there is a need to continue to challenge curriculum choices and to ask questions about how equity can be supported in interactions between non-Indigenous and Indigenous people. This session reports on a doctoral study that examined non-Indigenous educators' work around embedding Indigenous perspectives in two urban childcare centres in Queensland. Rather than reporting examples of 'good' early childhood education practice, the study aimed to identify how racism and whiteness were present in the educators' work, even when it was seen to be high quality. While this is discomforting, labelling racism and whiteness enables a depth of understanding about how racialising practices are mobilised in professional practice and personal standpoint. This can occur even when the approach employed aligns with recommendations for practice outlined in early childhood education policy. This session contributes to a deeper level of reflection about practices that recognise the histories and cultures of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. It supports discussion about ways to identify and lessen the impacts of racism within these practices and interactions.