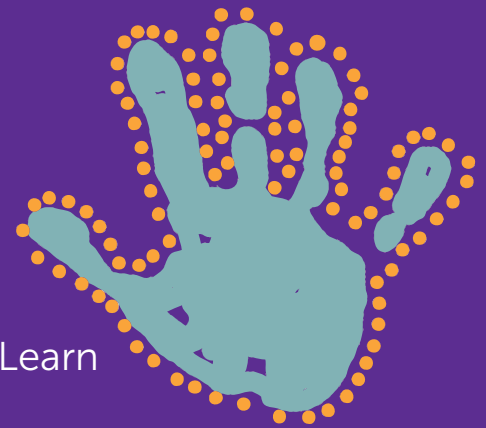




each

# Aboriginal Small Grants Project Stories



Through understanding and listening, We Grow and Learn

EACH Health Promotion





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# Acknowledgement of Country:

We would like to respectfully and open-heartedly acknowledge the traditional custodians of this land on which we live, work and play, the Wurundjeri and Boon Wurrung People, past, present and future, speakers of the Woi Wurrung and Boon Wurrung language groups and members of the Kulin Nation. It's upon their ancestral lands that the Early Years and Schools are situated within the City of Knox and Maroondah, who have been beneficiaries of the Aboriginal Small Grants Project.

The Wurundjeri and Boon Wurrung people of Kulin Nation are the traditional custodians of the land and waterways of this region. They have engaged in a traditional way of life in ceremonies, storytelling, art, dance and celebrations, along with hunting and gathering.

They have lived for many thousands years and continue to apply these cultural practices to this present today.

We would also like to acknowledge, recognise, and pay respect to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as the traditional custodians of Australia. In their belonging caretakers to the land, the skies and waterways and as the oldest living culture in the world. To their ancestors, elders, youth and children, past, present and those of the future, as the knowledge-holders, we want to honour their ongoing and spiritual connections to this country.



Colin Hunter Wurundjeri Elder and Vanessa Murdoch "Welcome to Country" ceremony part of 50th year anniversary celebration at Alexander Magit Preschool .

# Acknowledgements and Thanks:

The EACH Health Promotion Team would sincerely like to thank the first participants of the Aboriginal Small Grants Project 2017 -2018, as this initiative would not have been possible without you. It is your determination and commitment that has made this project such a success. Well done to everyone involved. This includes the Staff, Community, Aboriginal Businesses and the Graphic Designer who supported and contributed to the development of this story book and project:

- Alexander Magit Preschool – Leanne Kapetanovski
- Bena Angliss – Tracy Smith
- Birchfield Crescent Children and Family Centre – Sandra Mardell and Cristina Gargiso
- Haering Road Preschool – Anne Chapman
- Rowville Childrens and Family Centre – Michelle-Anne Males
- Rowville Preschool – (Allan Clayton Wing) – Janneke King
- Rowville Preschool – (Bernie Seebeck Wing) – Vanessa Payne
- Talaskia Children and Family Centre - Leanne Piper
- The Fields Preschool – Gisella Benetti, Amanda Oakley and Sally Kemp
- Boronia Heights Primary School – Sarah McIntosh
- Croydon Community School – Bianca Merkel and Tahlia MacNab
- Options at Bayswater – Danielle Baillie and Sacha Barry
- St. Jude the Apostle Primary School – Becky Breen
- Upper Ferntree Gully Primary School – Tabitha O'Brien
- Wurundjeri Tribal Land Council – Colin Hunter, Gail Smith and Mandy Nicholson
- Monica Whyman – Cultural Infusion
- Leah Sandow – Aboriginal Artist – LSDesigns
- Colin Atkinson – Wolithga Wares
- Amanda Wright – Aboriginal Artist
- Mitchell Pearce – Aboriginal Artist
- Robert Young – Aboriginal Artist – RobertYoungArt





# Forewords:



**Vanessa Murdoch**  
*Aboriginal Health Promotion Officer*

As the Aboriginal Health Promotion Officer at EACH, and proud Kullilli woman I have taken the lead in the Aboriginal Small Grants Project which has been a great triumph. I've enjoyed seeing the enthusiasm of the educators and wellbeing coordinators, their passion to enhance their knowledge and learning of Indigenous culture. I have thoroughly enjoyed working alongside them to integrate cultural practices, initiatives, artwork, and songs into their current environments in order to make their centres and schools more culturally welcoming, safe and inclusive. Promoting Aboriginal culture within early years, schools, workplaces and the local community is an essential component in building cultural strength and improving health outcomes for Aboriginal children and youth as this supports their cultural, social, emotional, physical, and overall health wellbeing.

It's vital that we implement health promotion strategies within these settings to assist an approach that facilitates cultural inclusion, by creating the awareness and importance of embedding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture and practices in respectful ways. For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians a strong sense of identity is key, especially in the very earliest years of life as our culture is a fundamental building block of identity and sense of belonging. The Aboriginal Small Grants Project is a great starting point for all services and schools to support them on their own cultural journey. I've appreciated working with everyone and seeing the amazing outcomes achieved.



**Catherine Delaney**  
*Health Promotion Officer*

The EACH Health Promotion Team supports local early childhood services and schools to successfully embed health and wellbeing practices into their everyday school/service culture by adapting their physical and social environments to create a more empowering and inclusive environment within their school/service. For me personally, the Aboriginal Small Grants Project was about giving early childhood educators and teachers the confidence and support to successfully embed Aboriginal culturally inclusive practices into their everyday curriculum rather than just hosting tokenistic events throughout the year. By sharing information and linking schools and services to local Aboriginal community members it opened up an opportunity for schools and services to create a real sense of belonging and inclusion for Indigenous children and their families. The Aboriginal Small Grants Project was a significant success and it was a real privilege to be part of such an influential and important project. Hearing everyone's stories, it was inspiring to be part of their journeys. These often started with adapting their physical environment to showcase Aboriginal Culture through things like art murals, paintings, signage, posters and then led to integrated changes such as having a bush tucker garden and incorporating the plants into their everyday cooking.

# EACH Health Promotion:

The Health Promotion team works across Knox and Maroondah to support and strengthen health promotion principles and practices. The team works in partnership with community members, government, early years, schools, businesses and other organisations to enable people to increase control over their health and its social determinants, and thereby improve their health and lifestyles. The Health Promotion Team focuses on the groups in society with the greatest health inequities.

# Aboriginal Health Promotion:

Aboriginal health promotion can be described as a holistic approach for Aboriginal families and communities. This entails families self-managing, living healthy lifestyles and participating in Aboriginal culture.

Aboriginal community and families are unique and the fulfilment of Aboriginal health promotion is to achieve community wellbeing by working in a way that acknowledges their aspirations and the central role that community has.

Integral to working with Aboriginal health promotion is understanding Aboriginal viewpoints on health encompassing elements of social emotional, spiritual and physical wellbeing.

Aboriginal health promotion is an important part of setting the foundations for healthy futures.



“Aboriginal health” means not just the physical well-being of an individual but refers to the social, emotional and cultural well-being of the whole Community in which each individual is able to achieve their full potential as a human being thereby bringing about the total well-being of their Community.

NATIONAL ABORIGINAL COMMUNITY CONTROLLED ORGANISATION (NACCHO) POLICY STATEMENT

# Introduction to Aboriginal Small Grants Project:

The Aboriginal Small Grants Project is an initiative of the EACH Heath Promotion Team. This initiative gives the team the opportunity to work with early years and schools in Knox and Maroondah to support and provide assistance to create culturally inclusive and safe environments.

## How the grant works.

Early years centre and schools in the City of Knox were invited to apply for a grant. Each grant is worth \$1000 and enables early years and schools to start or build on their work around cultural inclusion within their services in various formats. The Aboriginal Small Grants Project aims to enlighten and raise the awareness of what Aboriginal cultural inclusion work is, and the benefits and effects it will have in the future. It also helps to foster a sense of pride and belonging that is a fundamental not only to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children but for all children. Furthermore, this project aims to increase staff capability to ensure their service/school environment is a place that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families feel safe, strong and connected. This project opens up opportunities for services and schools to form meaningful connections and relationships with local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities as well as access to resources to assist them in implementing indigenous culture and practices.

Services and schools were instructed that the funding available through this project, had to be practical and meet specific requirements to align with the projects aims and objectives. One-on-one support was provided to each individual service and school to give them the knowledge and expertise to successfully guide them in embedding Aboriginal culture and practices into their everyday service/school environment. The Aboriginal Small Grant

project increases staff knowledge and awareness of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture through improving the cultural inclusivity of physical environments e.g.:

- signage
- murals,
- gardens

Increasing student and community knowledge and understanding of the rich cultural history through:

- engagement in cultural workshops
- dance
- artwork
- storytelling
- Indigenous Foods / Plants
- celebrating significant days relevant to Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander culture
- Professional development training

Services and schools that apply to participate in this project demonstrate that they have a true passion and commitment to actively change their environments to integrate Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander cultural practices within their service.

# What is Aboriginal Cultural Inclusion? Why it is important!

Aboriginal cultural Inclusion promotes practices that ensure **cultural** participation, access, and the right of Aboriginal people to express and interpret **culture**.

The starting point is building awareness of the issues, of your service or school and asking how we can enhance the importance of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives within organisation.

## What is culture?

Culture is more than a person's way of life. Culture is your language, customs, beliefs, knowledge, values, stories, practices and traditions, attitudes, kinship, dance, art, lore, connection to country, identity, sense of belonging and so much more.

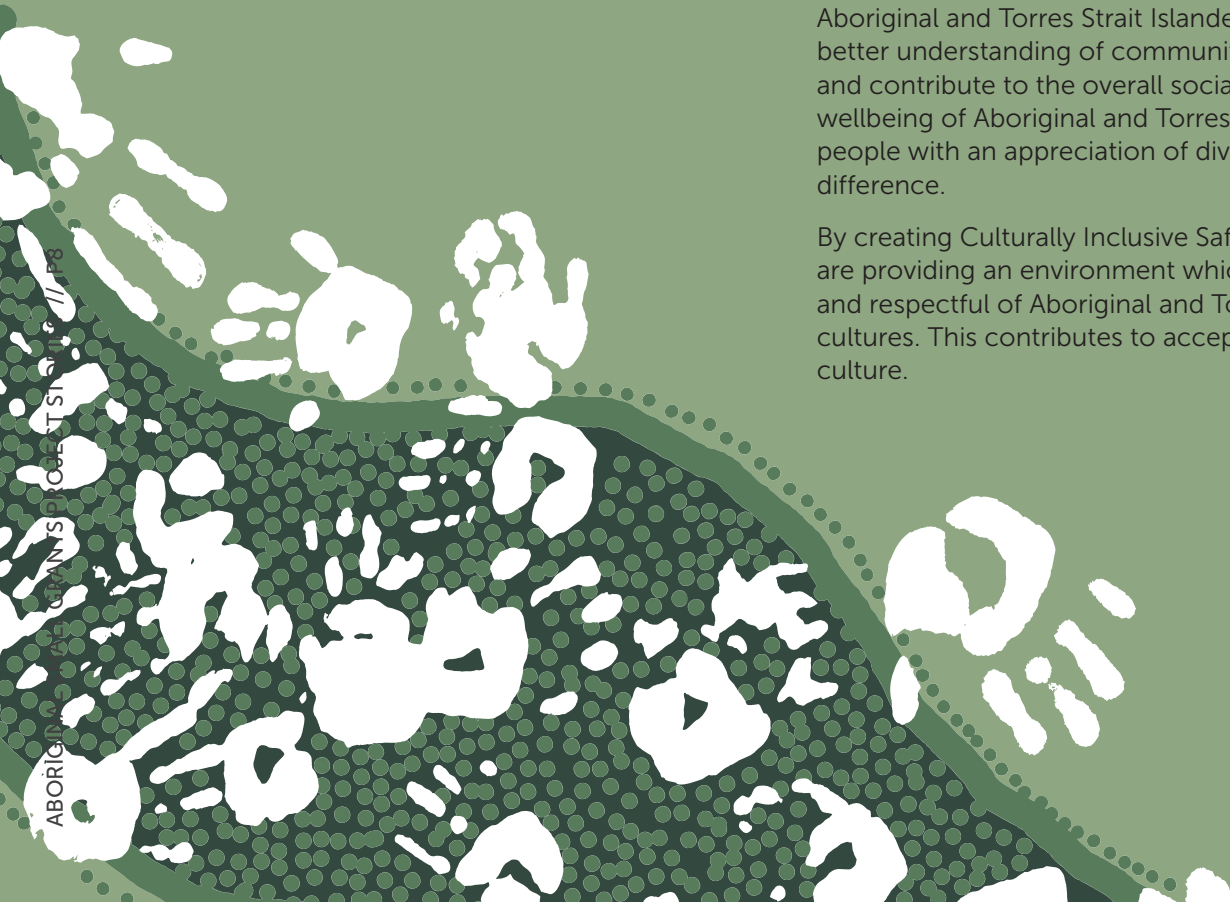
For that reason our culture is extremely important in educating not only young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and youth, but all children to keep the traditional practices thriving. This is all associated with our emotional, mental, physical and spiritual wellbeing and influences our way of thinking, doing and making decisions in life.

## Why create a culturally safe environment?

Within the Cities of Knox and Maroondah according to the 2016 Census there are 1320 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People living in the area. Communicating the importance of identity and cultural safety, within an inclusive environment, plays a major role in closing the gap of health and wellbeing outcomes for Indigenous children and their families.

Schools and services that promote awareness of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture, gain a better understanding of community connectedness and contribute to the overall social and emotional wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with an appreciation of diversity and difference.

By creating Culturally Inclusive Safe Environments you are providing an environment which is welcoming and respectful of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures. This contributes to acceptance of Aboriginal culture.





# What changes did we find?

This booklet shares the stories from all the schools and early years which took part in the first round of the Aboriginal Small Grants Project. The stories were gathered as part of an evaluation that involved interviews with educators or other staff from each of the settings, followed by the interviews being transcribed and analysed to identify key changes, enablers and challenges and the stories emerging from the settings. The following outlines the changes identified by this research:



## Schools and Early Years increased their acknowledgement and celebration of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australia through their environment and events

There were fifteen educational services that participated in the first round of the Aboriginal Small Grants project.

### EVIDENCE:

- 14 out of 15 educational services improved their physical environment by planting a garden, hanging cultural wall hangings, art work or installing outdoor sculptures.
- One educational service used the money to install three new flag poles on which to fly the Aboriginal, Australian and Torres Strait Islander flags.
- All physical changes were documented extensively through photos. Some are included in this document
- Nine ran cultural activities and events, for example Welcome to Country, Smoking Ceremony and cultural incursions where a member of community came to share with the students/children.
- All fifteen educational services received a grant starter pack which had a variety of cultural resources to use at the services. All fifteen services utilised these resources.

Here are some quotes in regards to the difference the environmental changes have made to assist Aboriginal families feel included within the educational setting.

"Children have been actively engaged in the making of the mural, which stimulated lots of discussion with the children about what was represented in each canvas (each canvas has a different story)..."

The children's artwork was placed in the main foyer entry, which has generated regular commentary/ongoing discussion about aboriginal culture and history"

BENA ANGLISS

"One of the aboriginal girls who started with us last year...she has walked into my classroom this year and saw that I have the aboriginal flag hanging up on the wall and she's said...'I actually feel like this is a classroom for me'... because the teacher has the flag up and staff said, yes, that's what it's for."

OPTIONS@BAYSWATER



Schools and Early Years are strengthening the education about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australia by including it in their everyday work practices and service delivery.

#### EVIDENCE:

- Eleven educational services have introduced Acknowledgement of Country
- Eight have embedded education about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community into curriculum, annual plans, or other policy/procedures relevant to education.
- Six utilised their grants to source and integrate resources such as books, equipment, educational resources, posters, toys etc. which raise understanding about Aboriginal Australia into the resources

Quote regarding the importance of Acknowledgement of Country:

"I guess the biggest feedback we've got from families is the children's level of understanding about the acknowledgement [of country]... they're going home and they're talking about it, and can recite it...which is pretty good...but also understand why they say it. So they're actually educating their families as well. The families have been very impressed by that too."

ROWVILLE PRESCHOOL – BERNIE SEEBECK WING



School and early years are becoming more capable and confident in leading, teaching and promoting awareness about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australia and are committed to professional learning over time.

#### EVIDENCE:

- Twelve services reported an increase in confidence and capability in regards to implementing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives within their curriculum.

"It's created a confidence within the staff, and increased their knowledge: They are now not afraid to display Aboriginal symbols. We say the Acknowledgment every morning."

BIRCHFIELD CRESCENT CHILDREN'S CENTRE

"The additional resources have been very helpful. Working with Vanessa has given us confidence to try new ideas. We could bounce questions off her e.g.: is this tokenistic, where do we get resources from, she is good to chat to. The program has given the staff confidence to go ahead."

ROWVILLE PRESCHOOL



Schools and Early Years are noticing that their Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students are reporting feeling more included and welcomed while school communities are gaining understanding and awareness

"During the Welcome to Country and the smoking ceremony, we actually sat down and had a chat, we were sitting there in a large group talking about our thoughts and feelings and we actually had a student who had never before disclosed that he's aboriginal disclose that to us as a group. That was amazing, that obviously he felt so comfortable."

OPTIONS @BAYSWATER

# Aboriginal Small Grants Project – Stories

Through the small changes, you can make a difference in the understanding and importance of embracing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture to your everyday learning and practices.

VANESSA MURDOCH



Vanessa Murdoch with participants learning about Aboriginal art symbols in the Aboriginal Small Grants Project introduction session.



# Alexander Magit Preschool

## INTERVIEW WITH TEACHER EDUCATOR



Alexander Magit Preschool is a small standalone preschool in Ferntree Gully, Victoria. During 2017 there were two groups of children aged 3 – 5 years attending from the surrounding area. The service has taught Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island children in the past and although there were no children of this background in the past year, an educator still took the opportunity to apply for The Aboriginal Small Grant funding so they could explore the Aboriginal culture further.

During 2017, Alexander Magit Preschool celebrated 50 years of operation in Ferntree Gully. The preschool celebrated with a big party and we wanted an Aboriginal Elder to conduct a 'Welcome to Country' and 'Smoking Ceremony'. This allowed the preschool (with support from Vanessa Murdoch, Aboriginal Health Promotion Officer, EACH) to teach the children the importance of these ceremonies and to hear and observe first hand why these ceremonies take place. The Preschool also unveiled an 'Acknowledgment of Country' plaque on the day to continue to show our respect to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island communities.

Our involvement in the Aboriginal Small Grants Project has taught not only the children and educators of the service, but also our families and local community the importance of learning and understanding more about Australia's history. We are grateful for the opportunity to be involved in this project.

### What did your service decide to spend your funds on?

"The service was celebrating their 50 year anniversary and we wanted to have an Acknowledgement of Country as part of the day. After talking to Vanessa and Catherine that changed to a Welcome to Country and smoking ceremony. We weren't really sure how to go about it, so they were able to give us more information..."

### Looking back over the grant project, can you tell us what was the most significant change for your school /or early years' service?

Our Staff became confident that they could provide cultural inclusion with an understanding of cultural sensitivities, ensuring they wouldn't be offending anyone.

## Can you tell us some of the learnings gained as a result of being involved with Aboriginal Small Grants Project?

Some staff had never seen a Welcome to Country and Smoking Ceremony before and found this a very special and interesting learning experience. Some of our families provided the same feedback as staff, about how wonderful it was to see this cultural practice.

## What are your plans for continuing on your cultural inclusion journey?

We would like to work with an Elder or an Aboriginal community member who can assist in implementing an acknowledgement of country script. This will be displayed and used on daily/regular basis. This needs to be something that the children will understand and feel comfortable with.





# Bena Angliss Kindergarten

## INTERVIEW WITH PRE-SCHOOL TEACHER



Bena Angliss Kindergarten has a rich history of community connection and strong support from parents, families and local people. We have a special relationship with the Sir William Angliss Trust which supports the preschool each year. The original funds to buy the land were largely donated by Sir William Angliss with the understanding that the name would be Bena Angliss Kindergarten after his wife Lady Jacobena Angliss.

Over the last three years Bena Angliss Kindergarten has been working with Vanessa Murdoch, the Aboriginal Health Promotion Officer from EACH, to build our knowledge and skills to incorporate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders culture into our preschool program and philosophy.

By participating in the Aboriginal Small Grants Project we were able to engage a local Aboriginal artist, Amanda Wright to paint a

mural on several canvases each incorporating Aboriginal art as well as linking the preschool community and environment. During the consultation we had with Amanda, she advised us that our kinder holds a special place in her heart and expressed to me how she felt really honoured to be given this opportunity to do the artwork mural. The reason is that her father attended the preschool when he was young, which made doing this mural very significant to her. The preschool children were able to be a part of the mural and were invited by Amanda to put their handprints onto the canvases. The completed art murals are located in our main entrance area to the preschool, which are on display for all to see and read our story captured through Aboriginal culture at Bena Angliss to be admired for many years to come.

**The aim of the Aboriginal Small Grants Program is to create culturally inclusive and safe environments. Was your school /or service doing any Aboriginal cultural inclusion work prior to Grants Project (however big or small)?**

Prior to THE grant project, our kindergarten was working closely with Vanessa, doing music incursions, storytelling, and educating staff. Vanessa worked closely with educators to support professional development around cultural inclusion, going through cultural audit checklist.

Through help and assistance of from Vanessa, we applied for permission through the Wurundjeri council to use aboriginal names for post-school groups.





## Can you summarise the benefits you have seen at your service, since participating in the Aboriginal Small Grants Project?

Our mural reflects indigenous culture, kindergarten culture and the environment.

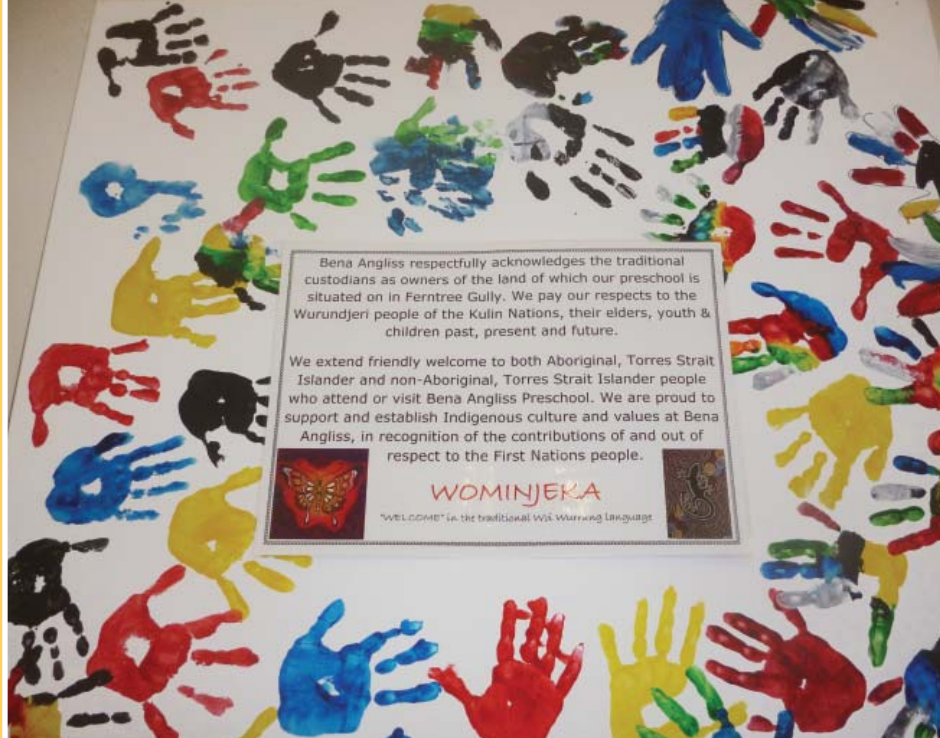
"It's been nice seeing children explaining [the mural] to the parents...taking that active role". Children have been actively engaged in the making of the mural, which stimulated lots of discussion with the children about what was represented in each canvas (each canvas has a different story). The artwork was placed in the main foyer entry, which has generated regular commentary/ongoing discussion about aboriginal culture and history."

## Looking back over the grant project, can you tell us what was the most significant change for your school /or early years' service?

The mural has been the most successful in terms of engaging the community in culturally inclusive dialogue. The mural is a visual reminder to the school to champion cultural inclusiveness

## What are your plans for continuing on your cultural inclusion journey?

To build existing knowledge of an understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture(s) and include/reflect this respect/ understanding at the site in some way. Along with endorsing our Reconciliation Action Plan at our kindergarten.



# Birchfield Crescent Children's Centre

## INTERVIEW WITH EDUCATOR



Looking back over the grant project, can you tell us what was the most significant change for your school /or early years' service?

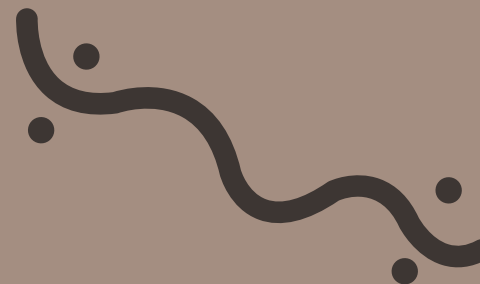
"Working with Vanessa... she's very supportive and just encourages you...everything that you might mention to her- she makes it happen and directs you to the areas that you need to look into. It's become part of our curriculum now." Our Acknowledgement of Country is shared every morning. All the children know it by heart and remind staff if they forget to do it. It is wonderful to see the acceptance and learning of this cultural protocol we have at early years centre.

Birchfield Crescent Children's Centre is situated in Wantirna. We are a small childcare centre owned and run by Knox City Council. We have a dedicated and passionate team of 10 staff who care for and educate the children from 55 families. These families come from a wide range of different cultures which are acknowledged and respected through the children's learning and education. Since 2016 we at Birchfield Crescent Children's Centre have become dedicated to embedding a respectful and meaningful Aboriginal Education program into our daily service practice.

We first met with Vanessa Murdoch from EACH to ask for her assistance to teach the children an Aboriginal song in readiness for our end of year Christmas celebration. Vanessa was very knowledgeable in sharing her ideas, providing encouragement and teaching the children and educators about her culture and practices. When we

received the invitation to apply for the Aboriginal Small Grant we all agreed this would be the perfect opportunity to further our knowledge and resources of Aboriginal Culture and history. We were very fortunate to have received a \$1000 grant, which we used to purchase a variety of puzzles and games portraying Aboriginal culture and artwork. The children were also part of an Aboriginal Art and Storytelling incursion that taught us some Indigenous language and symbols for storytelling.

We have \$300 left over which we are planning to spend on an Indigenous Language pack and having a "Wominjeka" sign painted for display in our foyer. We were very fortunate to have Vanessa Murdoch by our side every phase of the way walking us through the journey step by step. The passion and dedication has grown among our staff who now feel confident to embed a meaningful and respectful Aboriginal curriculum into their program. This is only the beginning.





**What were any barriers or challenges you came across, and the changes you planned to make?**

Initially a lack of confidence among staff was a barrier. This soon shifted once staff realised that cultural inclusion and cultural safety content is something that can be easily learned and integrated.

**What are your plans for continuing on your cultural inclusion journey?**

Hoping to have a Wominjeka plaque made up with artwork done by local artists and that these plaques can be displayed in all the new centres and rooms.





# Boronia Heights Primary School

## INTERVIEW WITH SCHOOL CHAPLAIN AND WELLBEING COORDINATOR



Boronia Heights Primary School (BHPS) is in Knox Council Area, in Boronia. There are currently four Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (ATSI) families in our school community, with five students. At this stage, there will be at least one additional ATSI student in 2019. We are committed to further implementing first nation's peoples' culture and practices into our everyday school curriculum and practise in order to reflect Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders' culture in our school philosophy and values.

Having the opportunity to be part of the Aboriginal Small Grants Project, has helped us develop and grow knowledge and expertise in Aboriginal culture and practices into our school activities. The funding directly provided for the purchase of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander flags as well as flagpoles, which are now on permanent display in the front office and can be moved to be displayed during Friday assemblies or other school

events. In addition, a number of Aboriginal dreamtime story books were purchased for use by Grade 3 teaching staff in the delivery of Aboriginal Celebrations and Commemorations curriculum. As a result of being part of the Aboriginal Small Grants project it has opened up several pathways to connect to the Aboriginal community including Vanessa Murdoch, Aboriginal Health Promotion Officer, and Catherine Delaney, Health Promotion Officer EACH. Vanessa's knowledge and skills around Aboriginal culture were essential in guiding us in our professional development learning. Vanessa provided much needed ideas, contacts to webpages, organisations and individuals. Her enthusiasm spurred us on to seek to improve our students' connection to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island culture and grow our awareness. We have improved connection with our Aboriginal families, and have increased our awareness to reach out and support them. Grade 3 staff, in

particular, were able to steer their students towards additional Aboriginal information not provided for through the grant, such as through their visit to CERES where they learnt about bush tucker, and which led to displays about this information being displayed in school hallways, for all students to see. There was increased connection and sharing of ideas between staff, for example when Grade 4 also did Aboriginal cultural studies. If further funding becomes available we would also like to, paint an Aboriginal mural, with the assistance of one of our Aboriginal parents. Being part of this project has been such an enjoyable experience. We plan to continue to further promote a welcoming school environment for Aboriginal children and their families. We hope to continue our relationship with the Health Promotion Officer at EACH into 2019.

### What did your service decided to spend your funds on?

We used the funds on cultural resources purchasing flags, books. In addition as part of studies in learning about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Culture, we took Grade 3 and 4 on cultural excursions.

**Can you summarise the benefits you have seen at your service, since participating in the Aboriginal Small Grants Project?**

"I just think it's brought Aboriginal culture more to the forefront of... particularly staff's minds I think there's more work that can be done... but I think small steps are better than no steps. I think there's been a greater awareness of the Aboriginal families that we have at the school...just an acknowledgement of the need to further develop our understanding of Aboriginal culture here within the school."

**What were any barriers or challenges you came across, and the changes you planned to make?**

Finding ways to incorporate cultural inclusion content/ activities into the existing curriculum, as to what is the best way the teachers and schools can integrate cultural inclusion content, in an appropriate and culturally sensitive way.

**What are your plans for continuing on your cultural inclusion journey?**

- Including a dedicated bush tucker section in the planned onsite school gardens
- Buying new school resources (e.g. books)
- Planning workshops for students (e.g. art workshops)





# Croydon Community School

## INTERVIEW WITH TEACHER



After receiving feedback from a father of one of Croydon Community Schools (CCS) that he was disappointed that the school did not have an Aboriginal flag, the school set about trying to organise new flag poles so they could have the Australian, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island flags raised at the school. While the school had an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island flag in the entrance of the school reception it was not visible from outside. Members of the school community saw this as important in recognising Australia's history as well as providing a respectful and positive environment for the CCS students.

The Indigenous students at the school have formed a group to organise a flag raising ceremony. This project has given the Indigenous students at the school the opportunity to join together, work together and to achieve a project they believe is important.

It has also ensured that the school is working towards following protocols around flag bearing and also around acknowledging Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, history and culture.

This has been an important project for the school and we believe this is a strong step forward in creating an Indigenous student action group as well as having an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island flag flown at the school permanently. It has already engaged students across the school in why flying the flags are important.

The aim of the Aboriginal Small Grants Program is to create culturally inclusive and safe environments. Was your school /or service was doing any Aboriginal cultural inclusion work prior to Grants Project (however big or small)?

Before the grant, the school identified a weakness in the area of "Indigenous education knowledge". This prompted the school to convert what was previously a "students free day" into a "cultural learning and understanding" day.

**Can you summarise the benefits you have seen at your service, since participating in the Aboriginal Small Grants Project?**

"The grant has come at a really good time because the journey has started and we have been able to facilitate some of the things that have come out of that journey we need to continue to build on this to create better inclusion." Thus the conversations about the idea of a flag raising ceremony, about cultural inclusion more broadly and students' and parents' various perspectives on these topics were seen as a benefit. The cultural inclusion work of the school has catalysed important discussions around inclusion and wanting to do more.



**Looking back over the grant project, can you tell us what was the most significant change for your school /or early years' service?**

The most significant change was the flag raising and having both Indigenous flags (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander) and Australian flag visibly displayed next to each other was seen as a major benefit enabled by the funding. To see the inclusive impact of displaying the Indigenous flags on Indigenous students, parents and families and to see the sense of belonging that it created was very significant.

**Can you tell us some of the learnings gained as a result of being involved with Aboriginal Small Grants Project?**

We learnt about the flag protocol associated with flag raising the Aboriginal flag.

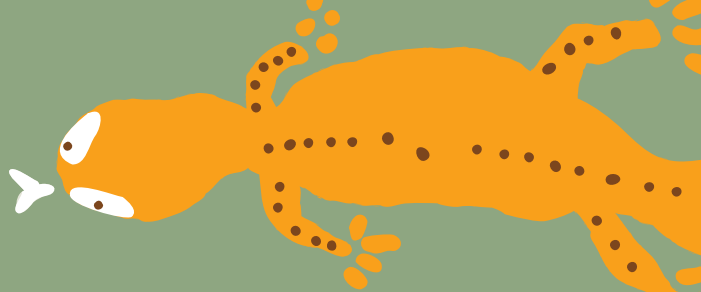
We learnt a lot from listening and seeking feedback from Indigenous parents, learning about the Mullum Mullum Indigenous Gathering Place.





# Haering Preschool

## INTERVIEW WITH PRE-SCHOOL TEACHER



your face but something that was a natural part of the yard and if Aboriginal (Indigenous) families came to our centre, they could identify it as 'this is a safe place for me', and that's what we were aiming for."

### Can you summarise the benefits you have seen at your service, since participating in the Aboriginal Small Grants Project?

The parents were very engaged with the idea of the carving of Bunjil. The project was already going to go ahead, and parents were committed to raising funds for it (irrespective of the grant being awarded or not) but the grant made this process much easier. It was nice to be able to share the story of the tree carving to parents during preschool tours. Through the carving, we have been able to engage with visitors and demonstrate the importance of cultural inclusion. "It was nice to be able to follow on from that project. Nearby we started to create a little meeting place, which gave a bit more meaning to the tree and we had five tree stumps that were painted with the totem of the five local mobs from the area, from the Kulin nation, so that was beautiful to have."

### Looking back over the grant project, can you tell us what was the most significant change for your school /or early years' service?

"The fact that it's including indigenous culture in an everyday natural way. It's not a tourist approach that you do Aboriginal things once a year. It's just a part of the being at the centre, it's a part of the belonging. It shows

Haering Road Preschool is in Boronia Melbourne and can cater for up to 60 preschool children in two groups. The preschool was established in 1975 as a result of fundraising by local families in the community. It has a large playground which includes some of the original trees prior to subdivision. The playground has a very natural bush feel. Some of the trees were being felled due to becoming unstable. We wanted to use a 2m stump from one tree to create a sculpture to reflect the original inhabitants of the area, the Wurundjeri people, and to include some Torres Strait Islander children we had attending.

The committee was very excited by the project and 3 animals were chosen to be carved into the tree stump. We included Bunjil (Eagle) as the creator and protector of the local area, and a possum and tawny frogmouth to represent the wildlife resident in the playground. The carving has become a focal point of the playground, with 5 decorated stumps featuring the local totems being added as

a meeting place, and another collection of stumps decorated by the children as a campsite. The grant helped us to pay for the local artist and to contribute to the carving costs. Vanessa Murdoch's help with the project was so supportive and helped us to dream bigger.

### What did your service decide to spend your funds on?

#### Carving of Bunjil Wood Sculpture

- Carving of tree stump, 2m high, in the shape of Bunjil the eagle. Also included tawny frogmouth birds and possums which are common in the local area
- Had approached indigenous families to try to make the carving of a totem, but this did not work out
- Tried to employ an indigenous carver but were not able to secure this arrangement so employed a non-Indigenous carver

"We wanted it to be a feature that was not so much straight in



that the Aboriginal families are welcome... and that they belong there."

The more people are exposed to stories from cultures different to their own, the more they think about their own culture, and in turn become more open to other cultures.

### Can you tell us some of the learnings gained as a result of being involved with Aboriginal Small Grants Project?

When given the chance, people can become more open. It's not "hard" to do cultural inclusion work. With a little thought and planning, it's possible to do meaningful work.

### Are there any stories you'd like to share around cultural inclusion at your school or service?

"Quite often to create change, you have to start with the youngest, to get in before they've formed opinions. Many years ago I had a child who said 'I don't like Aboriginal people'...and I said 'Why? Do you know any?' He said, 'No.' I said, 'So, you don't like people you've never met? Why would you not like them? He said, 'My Daddy doesn't'. I said, 'If you're friendly to people, to anybody, they'll probably be friendly back to you. You might find that you really enjoy their company.' 'Oh! He said. So he changed his mind and maybe that little boy spoke up to his Dad."

*"It's a beautiful culture, and we should be celebrating it much more than we do."*

QUOTE BY PRESCHOOL EDUCATOR /  
TEACHER - ANNE CHAPMAN



Before



After





# OPTIONS@Bayswater

## INTERVIEW WITH TEACHER



OPTIONS@Bayswater is an alternative educational setting for students between the ages of twelve and seventeen that have become disengaged with their education for various reasons. OPTIONS@Bayswater was established in 2015, we currently have 8 staff members and over 40 young people enrolled. We service the local and wider community by working with young people, their families and carers, as well as outside agencies to ensure all young people have an opportunity to attend school. Our program is designed to suit the individual; with all young people being on a modified timetable as well being given the opportunity for individual interest based learning. Over the past four years we have had a significant number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people and families come to work with us. We strongly believe in educating all young people about the culture and practices of our nation's first peoples and ensuring our school is an open and accepting place for all young people to attend and learn.

Having the opportunity to be a part of the Aboriginal Small Grants Project (ASG) has helped us further develop the knowledge and expertise to confidently embed Aboriginal culture and practices into our school community. Throughout the year we have arranged a number of small group activities and excursions for our young people to participate in. These have included an Aboriginal Heritage Walk in the Melbourne Botanical Gardens, a Smoking Ceremony and Welcome to Country, an Aboriginal art workshop and a bush tucker lesson. As a result of being part of the ASG project we have broadened the knowledge and understanding of our young people and had the opportunity to connect with other members of the Aboriginal community, including Vanessa Murdoch, Aboriginal Health Promotion Officer, EACH. Vanessa has been instrumental in working with our staff to increase their knowledge and skills around Aboriginal culture and was pivotal to the success of this project within our

school. We are very proud of the knowledge and cultural awareness that our young people have achieved, and even more proud of the new disclosers young people are making about their Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander heritages. Being a part of this program has truly been an amazing opportunity and one we plan to continue in the future in order to further increase our knowledge and ability to teach our young people about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and histories.

### What did your service decide to spend your funds on?

We organised a cultural celebration day. Robert Young (Aboriginal artist) came out and did an art workshop with students and staff. We also had professional development for staff and students by Koorie Engagement Support Officer Coordinator for Outer East Region. We went on an excursion to Royal Botanic Gardens and partook in a cultural walk. There was a young Aboriginal girl who attended and shared at the end that she had learned some things she didn't previously know about her own culture.

### Can you summarise the benefits you have seen at your service, since participating in the Aboriginal Small Grants Project?

We, the staff feel more confident in teaching people about Aboriginal cultural inclusion. Students in general have gained a wider knowledge of culture. In particular Aboriginal students have benefited from the efforts being made in terms of cultural inclusion. This has resulted in seeing positive effects on students and families.



Looking back over the grant project, can you tell us what was the most significant change for your school /or early years' service?

That young indigenous people feel included and accepted.

Can you tell us some of the learnings gained as a result of being involved with Aboriginal Small Grants Project?

It's okay to have a go at teaching and implementing cultural inclusion to curriculum and service. "We aren't going to be getting it right 100% of the time, but it's probably better that we try than not try."



# Rowville Children and Family Centre

## INTERVIEW WITH CENTRE COOK



Rowville Children and Family Centre, is an early years Centre, long day care.

Our Centre is based in Rowville, we are a very humble Centre, of 6 Staff and on average around 20 children at this current time.

Next year, our humble centre will be relocating to a brand new early years Hub, which will be located in Wantirna South. We then will have, 52 Staff and 117 children in the long day care area. That's not including, play group children and occasional care children.

We are very proud to include Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Culture in our service, not just for the children we have with us as present, but for the children, families and staff of the future. We are wanting to provide a welcoming place for Indigenous Families and for them to feel a sense of belonging and Trust and to feel valued.

Being a part of this grant has helped us in understanding the culture, and respect of what our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander friends have lived with for all these years, and to educate our children, staff and families to reflect and make a change for the better for the future.

Without this program and the support of Vanessa Murdoch, Aboriginal Health Promotion Officer, and the team at EACH, we wouldn't have been able to do these cultural experiences, not because we didn't want to, it's the lack of understanding on our behalf, and not wanting to teach the wrong information. Now we have Vanessa Murdoch to guide us, we have put in our Centre Curriculum, Cultural awareness.

For Example:

We are saying Welcome to Country, every day. We also have resources, such as books, toys and picture's, music and even herbs to cook with, and artworks, displayed in our centre. Our small grant, has changed our centre by educating

us as a whole, and showing the public with our rock art piece, that we are culturally aware. This art piece will be forever enjoyed by families in the Knox area.

Having this artwork, is our centre's way of showing welcoming, belonging, trust, and that this is our philosophy. At present we don't have any Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander Families at our Centre, but this art piece may change that for the Future.

Thank you for the opportunity to be part of this fantastic cultural learning experiences.

### What did your service decided to spend your funds on?

As a service, we wanted to show the community that we welcome our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander friends and families to our centre. As an amazing gesture, dreamt of having a welcoming art piece in our garden that was a large statement, of our commitment to welcoming indigenous people to our service. It would show everyone, that we are learning more about their culture and displaying this as everyday practise within our Centre.

So, we bought a very large Rock, with our grant money, not just any Rock, a Devil's Marble Rock. The Devil's Marble Rock comes from Uluru, in the outback of Australia, so it was very fitting to our project. Part of our plan was to get an indigenous artist to paint a story about our Centre and the land of where we are at the moment, and our future journey as a Centre and to welcome our Indigenous friends to join our journey with us.

We also have purchased bush tucker herbs that we have used in our cooking here at the centre.





## Can you summarise the benefits you have seen at your service, since participating in the Aboriginal Small Grants Project?

There are so many benefits, we had after receiving our Centre's Grant.

We now say Acknowledgement to Country with our children every day. The children understand why we say it, and in turn go home and educate their families.

As staff we now have a better understanding of the way Aboriginal people lived and what resources they found in natural bush. Along with understanding of the different tribes and that they all speak very different languages, and the difference between an Elder and an Auntie and Uncle.

We didn't know any of this before having Vanessa Murdoch come in our lives. The benefits are amazing, and we feel a lot more culturally aware, and comfortable in being about to ask questions, to learn more.

## Looking back over the grant project, can you tell us what was the most significant change for your school /or early years' service?

The most significant for us, is our beautiful welcoming art piece, which is our pride and joy.

When we first got the rock delivered to the centre, the children climbed and played on the rock, but as soon as it got painted, the attitude to the rock changed, the children now treat the rock with respect, and they all have the understanding of what the rock replicates.

That's amazing for children of this age group, to have that understanding and respect. This makes us very proud.

## What were any barriers or challenges you came across, and the changes you planned to make?

I guess the challenges were, that we have a lot of different cultures in our centre i.e. (Chinese and Indian), who didn't have any understanding of why educating our young generation about Indigenous culture is so important. However we have overcome that, and now have families of diverse culture interested in learning more.

We can see the difference in wanting to be part of our experiences. The families now feel better informed about our Australian back ground.

## What are your plans for continuing on your cultural inclusion journey?

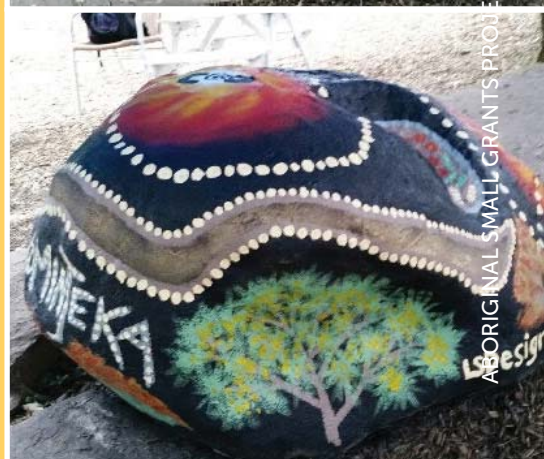
I have learnt, that we are all equal, and that we all should be treated the same, with respect.

We are hoping to be able to take our cultural art piece with us to our new location, at the Wantirna Hub. We will continue to do to Acknowledgement to Country, with the kinder children, and have Indigenous activities, on display for everyone to be part of.

We have an amazing Aboriginal Australia map, which will also be on display with our flags, hopefully at the front of the new centre.

I also have lots of bush tucker ideas for the future.

We have some great resources like books, dolls, animals for children to access.



# Rowville Preschool - Alan Clayton Wing

## INTERVIEW WITH PRE-SCHOOL TEACHER



Rowville Preschool-Alan Clayton Wing is located in the community of Knox. We provide early education to a group of 19 students ranging from 4-5 years old children.

We have 4 staff who are all eager to promote and raise the profile of Aboriginal Culture with families and children in our service. We believe children should be exposed to the benefits of Aboriginal culture from an early age. In the last 3 years my team have worked hard to weave various aspects of Aboriginal Culture into our program. Some of these changes include:

- Wominjeka greetings are routinely used each morning with the children
- Teaching children how to write stories using Aboriginal symbolism
- Using the Equinox Potty fund raising event to paint pots in Aboriginal colours

- Pasting images of "Bunjil", spirit creator by Nathan Patterson, with wording such as Celebrating Australia's Indigenous with Future Generations. These pots, are then sold to families to promote culture.

As part of our program we also wanted to do more cooking with the children and decided to enhance our knowledge in Aboriginal Bush-Tucker foods and plants.

Through this interest in Bush-Tucker we were fortunate to successfully apply for the Aboriginal Small Grant, to supply our preschool with bush-tucker plants and learn about them through a cultural incursion day facilitated by an indigenous cultural consultant Colin Atkinson.

Colin was fantastic in sharing his knowledge of bush-tucker plants. He taught the children how to plant them and what they need to survive. He also shared some

Aboriginal artefacts, teaching children and staff about their uses and the vital role artefacts have in Aboriginal culture. Our educator's perspectives and children's program have been enriched by the experience.

**The aim of the Aboriginal Small Grants Program is to create culturally inclusive and safe environments. Was your school / or service was doing any Aboriginal cultural inclusion work prior to Grants Project (however big or small)?**

- Focusing on the Aboriginal flag
- Using the Wominjeka greeting every day
- Acknowledgement of country artwork in the foyer
- One of our educators handmade some Aboriginal dolls

**What did your service decided to spend your funds on?**

Commissioning Colin Atkinson to deliver a talk on Aboriginal artefacts, advice on the development of a bush tucker garden, and develop some indigenous resources to include as part of a cultural inclusion kit.

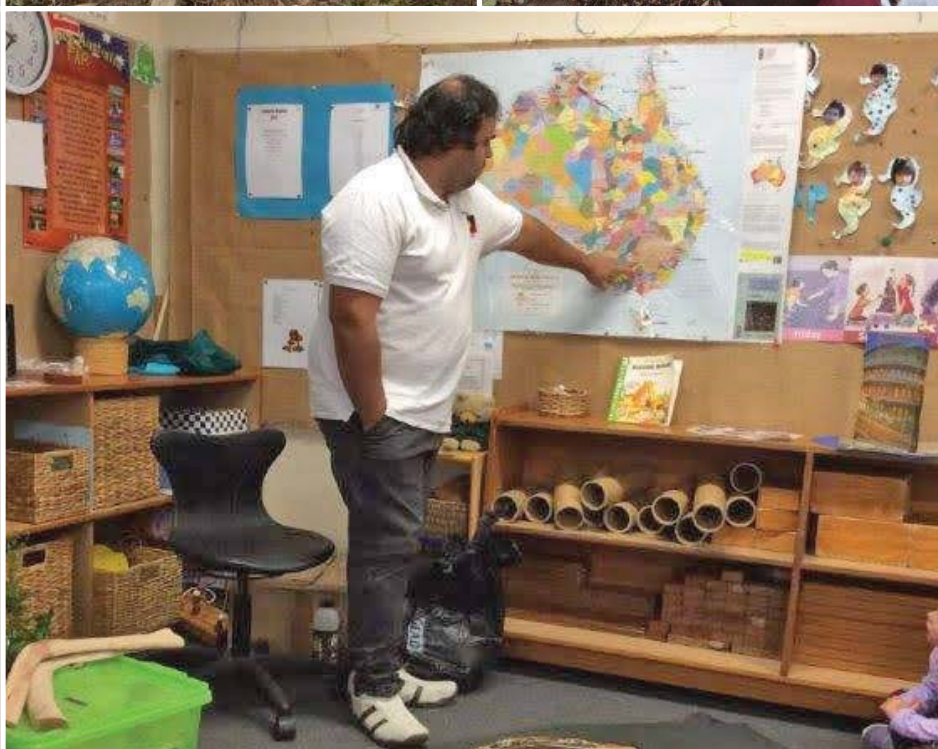
**What are your plans are for continuing on your cultural inclusion journey?**

Cultural inclusion is included in professional development plans. We would like to commission other indigenous business, consultants or workers to come to the site to provide and share in cultural activities and resources.



Are there any stories you'd like to share around cultural inclusion at your school or service?

"On our incursion day with Colin, we had a relief teacher who had no idea about Aboriginal culture, and she was thrilled to listen and ask Colin questions. Our lunch break relief teacher also enthusiastically absorbed Colin's knowledge. I was just so very grateful that Colin came out to see us and meet with us to share with us, and the grant helped to do that. We wouldn't have been able to do it otherwise."





# Rowville Preschool – Bernie Seebeck Wing

## INTERVIEW WITH PRE-SCHOOL TEACHER



Rowville preschool is a sessional preschool, cluster managed by Knox City Council. We are set within a community that strives to learn and play in our natural environment. Educators within our service are passionate about learning and embedding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture in our service and program.

Having the opportunity to be part of the Aboriginal Small Grant Project has helped us to source some incredible resources for the children and engage them in Aboriginal Culture. We have focused our resources on language and stories. These resources gave the children an opportunity to listen to traditional language, relate it to pictures and engage in story-telling through symbols. As a result of being part of the Aboriginal Small Grant Project we were fortunate to have worked with Vanessa Murdoch, Aboriginal Health Promotion Officer at EACH. Vanessa shared

her extensive knowledge on what resources would meet our aim of participating in this project. Vanessa helped us to develop an 'Acknowledgement to Country' that the children are very eager to lead each morning. We are so thankful to Vanessa for being so approachable and helpful to deliver this project, we know these resources will continue to help and build our learning and understanding of Aboriginal culture.

### **Can you summarise the benefits you have seen at your service, since participating in the Aboriginal Small Grants Project?**

We would like to express our gratitude for the opportunity to work with Vanessa. We felt comfortable to ask Vanessa questions about how best to approach cultural inclusion. Her feedback was considered invaluable, and gave the preschool staff confidence to approach cultural inclusion work.

### **Looking back over the grant project, can you tell us what was the most significant change for your school /or early years' service?**

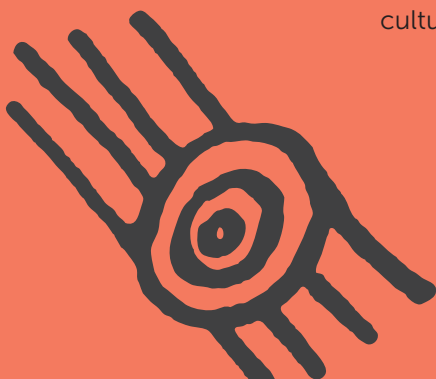
Cultural inclusion is now part of the preschool's learning areas, embedded "in little facets everywhere"

### **What were any barriers or challenges you came across, and the changes you planned to make?**

We experienced barriers in knowing where to access accurate information. Vanessa broke this barrier by directing the preschool to the best available resources.

### **Are there any stories or reflections you'd like to share around cultural inclusion at your school or service?**

"It's been a really worthwhile process and journey for us. It's been a positive experience and Vanessa has been fantastic helping us with embracing more cultural inclusion. It's really set us on a good path."









# St Jude the Apostle Primary School

## INTERVIEW WITH RELIGIOUS EDUCATION AND STUDENT WELLBEING LEADER



St Jude the Apostle Primary School is a Catholic school in Scoresby. We are a school of approximately 300 students. As a school we teach our students about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture and history within our school curriculum. We fly the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander flags and do Acknowledgement of Country at school assemblies and staff meetings.

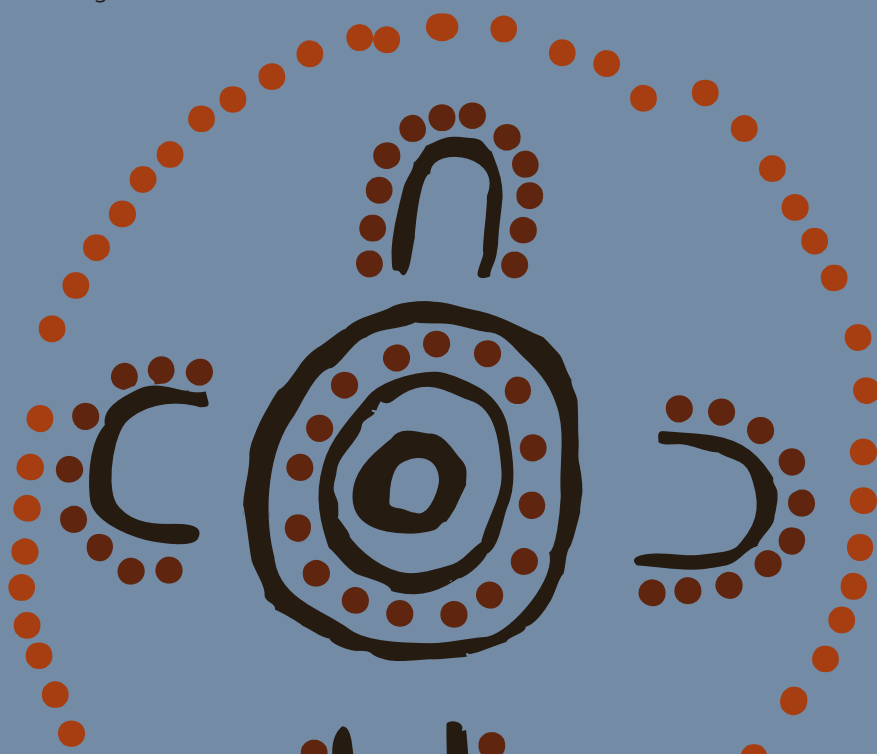
The Aboriginal Small Grants Project has enabled us to join with the Aboriginal Catholic Ministry program Fire Carriers. As part of the Fire Carriers program we have Year 6 student leaders who commit to raising awareness about the three core values of reconciliation: practical reconciliation and justice, spirituality and cultural recognition and awareness.

We used our grant to create 'Proud Race Bollards'. Every class learnt about an Aboriginal individual who has had a significant impact upon others, whether that was through sport, political background, art, performing art, religion, etc. Students then came together to design and paint a bollard to represent this person to display to our community. Students and our local community are able to explore our proud race by reading, learning and understanding the impact these significant Aboriginal people from our past and present have had on shaping history. It is also an important reminder to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and families in our community what can be achieved.

### What did your service decided to spend your funds on?

We spent funds on a:

- Fire Carriers- Action Plan, to raise awareness of indigenous issues and work towards reconciliation. The Fire Carriers involve the writing of a covenant about the actions planned to support cultural inclusion, reconciliation and awareness raising between students and among the school community.
- A plaque displayed denotes that the school is a "Fire Carrier school"
- "Proud race" bollards. These are displayed outside to raise awareness about Indigenous people in communities. Each child chooses an indigenous figure and researches them. This information is displayed on the bollards.





## Can you summarise the benefits you have seen at your service, since participating in the Aboriginal Small Grants Project?

The opportunity to raise awareness of indigenous cultural inclusion among the school community. An information night was held to promote the school's cultural inclusion work

## Looking back over the grant project, can you tell us what was the most significant change for your school /or early years' service?

The conversations and the cultural inclusion work has encouraged among students. These are ongoing conversations. The student's research on key Aboriginal people has really helped their understanding of Indigenous culture

## Can you tell us some of the learnings gained as a result of being involved with Aboriginal Small Grants Project?

The importance of the student's voices and understanding, and how this can result in sharing of cultural inclusion information with friends and families

## What are your plans are for continuing on your cultural inclusion journey?

We have plans for a mural, as well as other general plans to make cultural inclusion more "visible" at the school. We are also considering including symbolic Indigenous representation in garden re-design plans (yet to form specific ideas).



# Talaskia Community Child Care

## INTERVIEW WITH THE CENTRE TEAM LEADER

Talaskia Community Child Care is a Long Day Care Centre owned and operated by Knox City Council. We are nestled between the foothills of the Dandenong Ranges and the wetlands of the Dandenong Creek Valley. Our centre is staffed by 10 dedicated Educators who look after children up to the age of five. We often conduct activities that are inclusive of different ethnic groups and cultures and try to involve families in these. Although we currently do not have any Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islanders utilising our service, we felt that it was important to apply for the Aboriginal Small Grants Project so that we could use this grant as an opportunity to teach our children about the people who lived here before us and to introduce the idea that there are many cultures in the world which are different from ours that have different practices and beliefs.

We helped the children to design an 'Acknowledgement to Country' which the children take turns in saying each morning. Much of our grant was spent on resources which reflect and demonstrate Aboriginal culture. These resources include books which include Aboriginal children and animals, and dolls which reflect the different physical aspects of Aboriginal people (hair, skin colour, etc.). We display prints created by Aboriginal artists which depict Australian native flora and fauna. We use fabric with Aboriginal designs, use Clap Sticks, CD's and other items used in Indigenous songs and dance. All Educators have been, and are, involved in celebrating ethnic and cultural diversity and we feel that by utilising the Aboriginal Small

Grants Project we have succeeded in instilling some knowledge of the people who have inhabited our country for so long and demonstrated what a rich culture they have.

### **Can you summarise the benefits you have seen at your service, since participating in the Aboriginal Small Grants Project?**

"The non-Indigenous-children are more culturally aware and showing more respect. As a whole, we all are."

- The children particularly loved Vanessa coming out do cultural incursion session
- Staff are far more confident in covering culturally inclusive content now

### **Looking back over the grant project, can you tell us what was the most significant change for your school /or early years' service?**

Books purchased, including "Sorry Sorry" written and illustrated by Anne Kerr which is in a format that children can relate to and understand. This book informs young children of a significant aspect of Australian history, an introduction to understanding the journey of reconciliation with Australia's First Peoples.

### **Can you tell us some of the learnings gained as a result of being involved with Aboriginal Small Grants Project?**

"Just to have a go...I didn't want to be culturally disrespectful in any way, so you sort of sit back and you think about it but she [Vanessa] just said 'Go for it, everything you're doing is right'."

- Attaining more resources- a mat with indigenous designs, puppets, and similar
- Working on social and emotional development, using books to cultivate cultural kindness and respect
- Staff plan to do more research and attain more resources

Are there any stories you'd like to share around cultural inclusion at your school or service?

"We had primary school children come for a visit, and they said 'What language are you learning?' And the children started talking about how we do our acknowledgement to country, and a student said, 'We do it to respect the elders, and say thanks to the Aboriginal people for their land.' She was telling all the grade 5 and 6 children. She's five."





We at Talaskia acknowledge that we are on the traditional land of Wurundjeri and Bunurong people and pay our respects to elders both past and present.  
At Talaskia we promise that we will look after the land, the plants, the animals, the birds and the people. We will be kind to each other.





# The Basin Primary School

INTERVIEW WITH ART TEACHER.



**What did your service decided to spend your funds on?**

We are spending half of the money on murals and the other half on garden sculptures.

**Can you summarise in brief, the benefits you have seen at your service, since participating in the Aboriginal Small Grants Project?**

Having an Aboriginal artist coming to the school on a regular basis has enabled all students involved in the mural project to develop a better understanding of what it means to be of Aboriginal descent today. Involving the students with Aboriginal heritage in the project has been particularly beneficial in that it has given them a greater sense of their identity and allowed the other students to acknowledge that heritage.

**Looking back over the last 6-8 months, what do you think, out of the benefits you have already described, was the most significant?**

Seeing the pride develop in the two Aboriginal students involved in the mural and the connection they have made with Amanda Wright, our artist, has been really beneficial.

**What barriers or challenges did you come across, in the changes you planned to make?**

We took some time getting the whole project up and running because of major renovation work going on at the school.



**Can you tell me one thing that you have learnt, as a result of being involved with this project?**

I've learnt that students with Aboriginal heritage benefit from having that difference highlighted and acknowledged as special and something to be proud of.

**Can you tell me what your plans are for continuing on your cultural inclusion journey?**

We would like to develop our connections with local Aboriginal adults by having guest speakers, artists, musicians and elders come to the school and share their culture with all students.

We also want identify every student with Aboriginal heritage and with their permission allow them to be directly involved in any cultural activities the school may participate in.



# The Fields Preschool

## INTERVIEW WITH TEACHER/EDUCATOR



The Fields Preschool community in Rowville, recognized a need to incorporate, acknowledge, and promote Aboriginal cultural inclusion in the curriculum.

Whilst our service has not had many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children enroll, we wanted to incorporate our First Nations Peoples culture. Our first step was in 2017 when we changed the group names. We proudly introduced the Dan Dan, Rosella Group and the Gurrng Gurrng Kookaburra Group to the community of Rowville.

Being a part of this opportunity has increased our community's awareness and knowledge. The guidance given by Vanessa Murdoch, has established a relationship that has assisted the educators' professional development. She has also enhanced our confidence in incorporating cultural stories, songs, and language into the curriculum.

**The aim of the Aboriginal Small Grants Program is to create culturally inclusive and safe environments. Was your school / or service was doing any Aboriginal cultural inclusion work prior to Grants Project (however big or small)?**

We looked into broadening our resources that we had in the pre-school just on a daily basis. We tried to have the Aboriginal themed toys out every day, so the children can have access to them.

**What did your service decided to spend your funds on?**

We changed our centres group names. We have two children's groups within the pre-school, The Kookaburra group and The Rosella group and we wanted the children to learn the Aboriginal language name for those groups. We changed the names to Gurrng Gurrng Kookaburra and Dan Dan Rosella group. To officially have our group names changed we needed to seek permission to use these words from Wurundjeri tribal Council.

To enhance the physical environment, we displayed a plaque in our foyer acknowledging that we've been given permission to name our groups in the local traditional language of Woi Wurrung. An artist worked with the children to create a canvas mural.

**Can you summarise the benefits you have seen at your service, since participating in the Aboriginal Small Grants Project?**

I think it's important to share this knowledge with the children and families about Aboriginal culture and for this to become part of our environment. "For Aboriginal culture not to be an unfamiliar element within our pre-school and community". Having not had any families who identify as being Aboriginal attend our service it was a significant learning journey for all staff.



Aboriginal culture has not it has not been a part of my education. I'm happy that I'm gaining more awareness and appreciation of the Indigenous community, and the knowledge that they have to teach us. The children don't make a big thing out of it. They are now familiar with the resources so, for them saying Wominjeka in the morning has become routine. They now see Aboriginal culture as a part of their normal day to day experience.

**Looking back over the grant project, can you tell us what was the most significant change for your school /or early years' service?**

This has become a part of the multi-cultural environment that we have here, we value all people and respect differences. Vanessa from EACH, has been that link to the information.

**What are your plans are for continuing on your cultural inclusion journey?**

We will continue to share stories with the children so that they can see how people used to live, in different environments in different communities. We will continue to learn about the languages, and the Indigenous people, so the children can acknowledge that the Aboriginal people were here first and that we have come to share the land in a positive way.

We will pass on the understanding that communication and story sharing can be oral and that people have different ways of passing information on. A good way to share this with them will be in the outside environment in the sharing circle.



# Upper Ferntree Gully Primary School

## INTERVIEW WITH THE SCHOOL PRINCIPAL



**The aim of the Aboriginal Small Grants Program is to create culturally inclusive and safe environments. Was your school /or service doing any Aboriginal cultural inclusion work prior to Grants Project (however big or small)?**

The school was involved in the Healthy Together Achievement Program and had many policies and activities to support this. However the only cultural inclusion we were doing before receiving the Aboriginal Small Grants Project was some small elements of Aboriginal cultural activities including Smoking Ceremony and Acknowledgement of Country at assemblies.

**What did your service decided to spend your funds on?**

We used the money to engage an artist who installed a piece of artwork mural at the front of our school. We had been wanting to express a more welcoming environment to visitors and the local Indigenous community and to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children who attend our school. We wanted to acknowledge the importance of cultural inclusion and sense of belonging.

Set in a beautiful and serene environment, nestled at the foot of the mountains, Upper Ferntree Gully Primary School has 115 students and 22 staff. We enjoy the bushy environment and take great care in ensuring that we respect our surroundings. Our students enjoy rich learning environments, spacious classrooms and working spaces that promote flexibility and creativity.

Upper Ferntree Gully Primary School is a school where the community supports one another. Together staff, parents and students are committed to providing a learning community that ensures all students have the best opportunities to reach their potential. We pride ourselves on getting to know our students as individuals to assist them to develop in their learning and their wellbeing.

Our school values of Teamwork, Respect, Integrity and Resilience underpin all that we do. Over the 102 years of the school operation we have had students from a range of cultures including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander. While at present we do not have any Indigenous students we feel that it is important to acknowledge and learn about the first peoples of Australia. The grant has given us the ability to highlight this belief and supported us to look further at how this can be incorporated into our curriculum and school environment. We pride ourselves on offering a safe and inclusive learning environment. It has been great to be able to access the small grant to enhance our surroundings and promote this to the community.





Looking back over the grant project, can you tell us what was the most significant change for your school /or early years' service?

It has raised the awareness of the importance of inclusion and creating safe spaces. There has been some good conversations that have been happened as a result. Our main learning from the project is how something small can have a significant impact.



# Where to next! Future of Aboriginal Small Grants Project



We are delighted that Aboriginal Small Grants Project, is being rolled out again for round 2 intake with increased numbers of participants.

We identified that we would like to target the Maroondah region. We have received huge interest with many educational settings applying and being a part of the project. We are very happy with the response and have listed below the new successful partakers in the Aboriginal Small Grants Project 2018 – 2019. We are looking forward to seeing the new creative ideas, activities and stories around cultural inclusion to be implemented in the early years and schools.

- Bayswater North Kindergarten
- Bayswater North Primary School
- Brentwood Park Kindergarten
- Bright Horizons Aust. Child Care
- Croydon Gums Kindergarten
- Croydon Primary School
- Dorset Early Learning Kindergarten
- EACH Child
- Great Ryrie Primary School
- Heathmont College
- Holy Trinity Primary School
- Knaith Road Child Care Centre
- Kurboroo Kindergarten
- Milestone Child Care and Kindergarten
- Mullum Primary School
- Pooh Bears House Child Care
- Ringwood Uniting Church Preschool
- Swinburne Children's Centre Croydon
- Swinburne Children's Centre Wantirna
- Swinburne Children's View St Croydon
- Tarralla Kindergarten
- Warranwood Primary School



# Further Information and resources:

- Wurundjeri Tribal Land Council
- Koorie Heritage Trust – [www.koorieheritagetrust.com](http://www.koorieheritagetrust.com)
- Victorian Aboriginal Education Association (VAEI) – <http://www.vaeai.org.au/>
- Marrung (Department of Education and Training, Victoria)  
– <https://www.education.vic.gov.au/about/programs/Pages/marrung.aspx>
- Reconciliation Action Plan – <https://www.narragunnawali.org.au/raps/what-is-a-rap>
- Reconciliation Victoria – [www.reconciliationvic.org.au](http://www.reconciliationvic.org.au)
- Victorian Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation Inc – <https://www.vaccho.org.au/>
- Victorian Aboriginal Health Service (VAHS) – <https://www.vahs.org.au/>
- Mullum Indigenous Gathering Place – <https://www.mmigp.org.au/>
- Healesville Indigenous Community Services Association – <https://www.hicsa.org/>
- Yarn Strong Sista – [www.yarnstrongsista.com](http://www.yarnstrongsista.com)
- Magabala Books – [www.magabala.com](http://www.magabala.com)
- Koori Curriculum – <https://kooricurriculum.com/>
- Bunjilaka Aboriginal Cultural Centre – Melbourne Museums  
<https://www.visitvictoria.com/things-to-do/aboriginal-victoria>
- ANTar – [www.antar.org.au](http://www.antar.org.au)
- Secretariat of National of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Care – [www.snaicc.asn.au](http://www.snaicc.asn.au)
- Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders Studies – [www.aiatsis.gov.au](http://www.aiatsis.gov.au)
- Our Languages – [www.ourlanguages.net.au](http://www.ourlanguages.net.au)
- True Culture – <http://www.trueculture.com.au/> Cultural Educators and Cultural workshops
- Yarn Bark – <https://yarnbark.com.au> - Cultural Educators and Cultural workshops
- Wild Blak Arts – Indigenous Artist and Cultural Educator – Cassie Leatham
- Winyarra Dreaming – Cultural Educators and Cultural workshops – Bernadette Atkinson
- LSDesigns - Indigenous Artist – Leah Sandow
- Wolithga Wares – Native Plants and Bush Tucker Foods. [catkinson1986@gmail.com](mailto:catkinson1986@gmail.com)
- Thomas Harrison - SCP Consulting – [www.scpconsulting.com.au](http://www.scpconsulting.com.au)
- Wanyara Cultural Incursion activities – [wanyara.com.au](http://wanyara.com.au)
- Cultural Infusion – Cultural education and activities, <https://culturalinfusion.org.au/>
- AmandaWrightsArt – (facebook page). [Rivliraode@hotmail.com](mailto:Rivliraode@hotmail.com)
- Simone Thomson Art – [simonethomsonart@gmail.com](mailto:simonethomsonart@gmail.com)

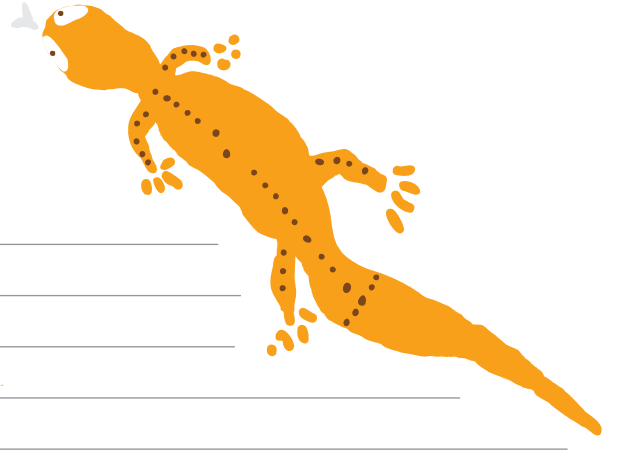
Further information and enquires about this Project or Aboriginal Health Promotion Work from EACH Health Promotion Team, please contact us on details below:

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| ● <b>Vanessa Murdoch</b><br>Aboriginal Health Promotion Officer<br>Health Promotion<br>1063 Burwood Highway, Ferntree Gully, Vic, 3156<br>(03) 9757 6254<br><a href="mailto:Vanessa.Murdoch@each.com.au">Vanessa.Murdoch@each.com.au</a> | ● <b>Catherine Delaney</b><br>Health Promotion Officer<br>Health Promotion<br>1063 Burwood Highway, Ferntree Gully, Vic, 3156<br>(03) 9757 6278<br><a href="mailto:Catherine.Delaney@each.com.au">Catherine.Delaney@each.com.au</a> |
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This image shows a full page of blank, lined paper. It features approximately 20 evenly spaced horizontal grey lines across its entire width, providing a template for writing or drawing. The margins are consistent on all sides.







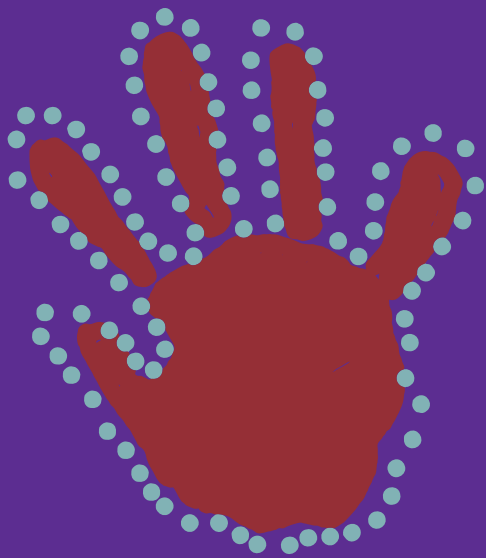












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