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⑥ Culture in Family Day Care.

# What is cultural competence?

When you think about “doing culture” in Family Day Care, what do you think about? Is it a range of resources from “other” cultures? Is it about introducing Aboriginal culture to children?

Or is it about ‘respect for diversity’ and ‘cultural competency’? These are key aspects of the National Quality Standard, the *Early Years Learning Framework* (EYLF) and *My Time, Our Place*.

All of these things have a role in Family Day Care, but one of the major subjects we are going to look at is cultural competency.

- ▶ **Cultural competence** is the ability to participate in personal and professional intercultural settings.
- ▶ **Cultural competence** requires being aware of your own cultural values and views and how they help or don't help you in working across cultural boundaries.
- ▶ **Cultural competence** is also about valuing diversity for the richness and creativity it brings to our great society.

In Family Day Care, building cultural competence is an ongoing process that requires Family Day Care educators and co-ordinators to:

- ▶ be aware of our own personal culture, values and beliefs
- ▶ acknowledge both similarities and differences
- ▶ have positive attitudes to differences
- ▶ gain knowledge of different cultural practices and perspectives
- ▶ develop cross-cultural communication skills
- ▶ understand that culture relates to many things
- ▶ deliver a curriculum that respects the cultural identity, language and values of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Our learning frameworks – the *Early Years Learning Framework* (EYLF) and *Framework for School Aged Care* tell us that **“Cultural competence is much more than awareness of cultural differences. It is the ability to understand, communicate with, and effectively interact with people across cultures.”**



# Why is it important to think about cultural competence in FDC?

There are many reasons to think about cultural competence in Family Day Care and for all of us to act to become as culturally competent as possible.

Some of these include:

- ▶ **We are educating and caring in a multicultural community.** According to the 2016 census, roughly 26% of Australian residents were born overseas and 49% had at least one parent born overseas. Acquiring the skills to operate effectively in multicultural environments is crucial for all of us.
- ▶ **The country in which we educate and care has a history of cultural incompetence.** The colonisation of Australia was an invasion from an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspective. The White Australia policy, in place from 1901 to 1973 aimed to restrict numbers of non-white migrants to Australia and to “deport ‘undesirable’ migrants who were already in the country”.<sup>1</sup>
- ▶ **The National Quality Framework requires it.** Of the six guiding principles of the Framework, two reference issues of culture:
  - “equity, inclusion and diversity underpin the Framework”
  - “Australia’s Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures are valued”.
- ▶ **We need to demonstrate it when we are assessed and rated.** Cultural competence is required in the majority of the National Quality Standards.
- ▶ **It underpins our learning frameworks.** Both of our learning frameworks outline cultural competence as an underpinning principle, a key practice and an outcome we wish to see for children.
- ▶ **As educators we need to teach respect for diversity.** A key component of cultural competence is respect for diversity – and we need to teach this to children as well as teaching them to value Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures.

<sup>1</sup> [www.nma.gov.au/defining-moments/resources/end-of-white-australia-policy](http://www.nma.gov.au/defining-moments/resources/end-of-white-australia-policy)

- ▶ **Children cannot learn unless they feel safe.** It is hard to feel safe if one's home culture is not valued.
- ▶ **Family Day Care is a culturally diverse sector.** Family Day Care educators are as culturally diverse as our general population.
- ▶ **It will help us raise more tolerant adults.** By helping children to become cultural competent, to respect diversity and to be intolerant to racism and aware of the dangers of gender stereotypes, Family Day Care educators can become part of building a better Australia.
- ▶ **Critical reflection is important in all education and care.** Reflecting about our own cultural background has influenced our belief systems and how we view the world is a key part of our critical reflection.



# What does cultural competence look like in FDC?

Some examples of cultural competency in Family Day Care are when educators and children are:

- ▶ learning to recognise and question their own “worldviews”<sup>2</sup>
- ▶ developing positive attitudes towards cultural differences
- ▶ gaining knowledge of different cultural practices and worldviews
- ▶ developing skills to communicate and interact across cultures.

Cultural competency in Family Day Care is more than being aware of cultural differences in the families and children we care for and is more than knowledge of the customs and values of those different from our own. It goes beyond being respectful of the cultures represented in our Family Day Care service or in the community where our services are.

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<sup>2</sup> Worldview is a word that you will come across in the learning frameworks and in discussions about cultural competency. It means the total of our attitudes, values, stories and expectations about the world around us, which inform our thoughts and action and which come from our cultural backgrounds and exposure to other cultures.

A culturally competent Family Day Care is one where:

- ▶ there is trust
- ▶ there is respect for diversity, equity, fairness, and social justice
- ▶ children learn about different cultures
- ▶ children learn about racism and cultural stereotyping
- ▶ children are allowed and encouraged to have a strong cultural identity
- ▶ families are not required to change their cultural identity to fit in
- ▶ different beliefs about child rearing practice are discussed
- ▶ educators are allowed to be proud of their own cultural background
- ▶ children and educators learn about Aboriginal culture
- ▶ everybody is on a journey of cultural competence



- ▶ each child’s cultural identity is respected and supported
- ▶ each child’s cultural background is incorporated into the program
- ▶ relationships are prized as the basis of all cultural competence.

A Family Day Care educator who was working on cultural competence would not have a “cultural corner” or an “Aboriginal set up”. They would be embedding cultural differences in all learning, practices, policies and procedures.

# Cultural competence is not just about race!

Although we often talk and think about cultural competence in relation to race, culture is much wider than racial background. Culture is made up of:

- ▶ attitudes
- ▶ habits
- ▶ norms
- ▶ beliefs
- ▶ behaviours
- ▶ customs
- ▶ rituals
- ▶ styles (expression of belonging, e.g. through dress)
- ▶ artefacts (distinctive items used by that culture, such as a boomerang or chopsticks).

People of different:

- ▶ genders
- ▶ sexual orientations
- ▶ socio economic backgrounds
- ▶ subcultures (e.g. surfers, hippies, the gay and lesbian community)

can all have strong cultural backgrounds and cultural beliefs.

**Being culturally competent means having the will and taking the actions to build understanding between people, to be respectful and open to different cultural perspectives, and work towards equality in opportunity for all people regardless of differences in gender, sexual orientation or race.**





## “Australian” culture

Sometimes those of us who were born in Australia and are Caucasian might think that cultural competence is about learning how to deal with people from Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) backgrounds. It can be easier to forget, when one comes from the dominant culture of a country, the one that is reflected in television, in newspapers, in advertisements, in movies, that theirs is just another culture. And that growing up in this culture has meant learning attitudes, beliefs, and ways of being that are just as culturally bound as other beliefs.

Do you believe that:

- ▶ Children should look at you when they talk to you?
- ▶ We shouldn't tell on our mates?
- ▶ everyone should have the same rights regardless of their social class?
- ▶ Children should start having solids around 6 months of age?

All of these are cultural beliefs. Not everybody has been brought up believing these things. We are all born

**Sometimes the first step in cultural competence is challenging your own beliefs.**

belonging to a culture, which is not only influenced by traditional practices, heritage and knowledge, but also by the experiences, values and beliefs of individual families and communities. Be aware that these things are just cultural beliefs – not absolute truths.

It is only once you can question your own beliefs and see your culture as just another culture, that you can start to see the similarities and differences between your beliefs and others. And start to value difference.

You don't have to avoid celebrating ANZAC day to 'prove' you are culturally competent – just an understanding that for some people, other celebrations are just as important as ANZAC day or Melbourne Cup Day might be to you.

All Family Day Care educators must avoid using their own group as the standard by which to assess how others live, raise children, or celebrate.

# Cultural competence around Aboriginal issues

In a survey of early childhood educators conducted by the Australian Human Rights Commission in 2015, 72% reported that they find it hard to educate about cultural diversity.

Educators said they:

- ▶ lack knowledge about different cultures
- ▶ aren't confident in teaching about cultural diversity
- ▶ worry about how to incorporate teaching about cultures without being inauthentic or tokenistic.

This seems to be something that educators especially fear when teaching about Aboriginal culture. Those of us that grew up in Australia often find we have to unlearn what we know about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures. Those of us that grew up in other countries often feel even more at a disadvantage in knowing how to teach about Aboriginal issues.

But even though it is something we are concerned about how to do, we must do it.

ACECQA says that:

“Fostering children’s understanding and respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, and challenging biases can impact on children’s future attitudes towards cultural diversity. All educators have the potential to make a significant and positive difference in National Reconciliation.”<sup>3</sup>

ACECQA suggests the following as the first steps for services:

- ▶ Form respectful relationships with the local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Traditional Owners and Corporations/ Cooperatives in your area.
- ▶ Attend community events and build respectful relationships to show that you are genuinely interested in getting to know more.

<sup>3</sup> [www.acecqa.gov.au/sites/default/files/2019-08/QA1\\_BePartOfReconciliation\\_0.pdf](http://www.acecqa.gov.au/sites/default/files/2019-08/QA1_BePartOfReconciliation_0.pdf)



- ▶ Look up Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander training or support providers in your area.
- ▶ Be aware of cultural protocols. Protocols will vary in different areas. If you are going to be working with people from traditional and remote communities you can seek out locally based training or advice.
- ▶ Explore the rich array of resources available from organisations such as SNAICC and Reconciliation Australia.

We would also suggest checking out [www.commonground.org.au](http://www.commonground.org.au) – an easy website to help you start to learn about Aboriginal culture and history.

# The learning frameworks and cultural competence

Did you know that the words **culture** and **cultural** appear in the *Early Years Learning Framework* and the *Framework for School Aged Learning* almost 60 times?

## Cultural competence exists in the principles of the learning frameworks

The fourth principle is RESPECT FOR DIVERSITY.

“There are many ways of living, being and of knowing. Children are born belonging to a culture, which is not only influenced by traditional practices, heritage and ancestral knowledge, but also by the experiences, values and beliefs of individual families and communities. Respecting diversity means within the curriculum valuing and reflecting the practices, values and beliefs of families. Educators honour the histories, cultures, languages, traditions, child rearing practices and lifestyle choices of families. They value children’s different capacities and abilities and respect differences in families’ home lives.”

Cultural competence is one of the Practices of the Learning Frameworks.

The *Early Years Learning Framework* tells us that:

“Cultural competence is much more than awareness of cultural differences. It is the ability to understand, communicate with, and effectively interact with people across cultures.

## Cultural competence encompasses:

- ▶ being aware of one’s own world view
- ▶ developing positive attitudes towards cultural differences
- ▶ gaining knowledge of different cultural practices and world views
- ▶ developing skills for communication and interaction across cultures“.

## Cultural competence and the outcomes of the learning frameworks

The outcomes of the learning frameworks also include culture. For example for:

### **Outcome 1 – Children to have a strong sense of identity**

we are told about the importance of children having knowledgeable and confident self-identities by:

- ▶ “sharing aspects of their culture with the other children and educators
- ▶ using their home language to construct meaning
- ▶ developing strong foundations in both the culture and language/s of their family and of the broader community without compromising their cultural identities
- ▶ developing their social and cultural heritage through engagement with Elders and community members”

### **Outcome 2– Children are connected with and contribute to their world**

we are told about the importance of children responding to diversity with respect by:

- ▶ “beginning to show concern for others
- ▶ exploring the diversity of culture, heritage, background and tradition and that diversity presents opportunities for choices and new understandings

- ▶ becoming aware of connections, similarities and differences between people
- ▶ listening to others’ ideas and respect different ways of being and doing
- ▶ practising inclusive ways of achieving coexistence
- ▶ noticing and reacting in positive ways to similarities and differences among people”

**“Cultural competence is much more than awareness of cultural differences. It is the ability to understand, communicate with, and effectively interact with people across cultures.”**

**Early Years Learning Framework**

# Talking to children about racism

Children are not born racist. They learn that in our world some races are more privileged than others. They learn that the colour of their skin and the cultural backgrounds that they come from either advantages or disadvantages them. They begin to show preferences for playing and being with children who look and have similar cultural backgrounds to their own.

And sometimes they begin to be racist, where they have a preference for one race over other races, and disliking a particular race or races.

Educators need to both help children learn that racism is wrong and to identify where racism and racial stereotyping is present in their world.

Sometimes people think that children are too young to learn about racism, to learn about hate crimes and to learn about the horrible things some humans do other humans of different races. But did you know that:

- ▶ by around 3 months old children have learned to prefer faces from their own racial background?

- ▶ by around 18 months they have begun to absorb their parents attitudes to race and culture?
- ▶ many children in Australia have to learn about racism and prejudice early because they and their families are constantly subject to it – especially Aboriginal families?

How can you teach children to be allergic to racism?

## 1. Become a great role model

If you want the children you care for to become anti-racist, you need to ensure you become as anti-racist as possible.

**Children don't naturally discriminate and hate. We need to ensure they become allergic to hatred and racism.**

## 2. Encourage children to share what they see and be curious (respectfully) about race

Don't try and stop children noting differences in skin colour or differences in cultural approaches. Help them by framing these differences as a positive thing.

## 3. Encourage children to notice racism and gender stereotyping and discuss it with them

Encourage children to become racism detectives by noticing where it appears in the books you read, the attitudes they encounter, the way people are treated.

## 4. Help children to learn about a variety of cultures, especially Australia's first cultures

Children need to learn about the many cultures that exist in Australia, especially Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures. It doesn't matter if you don't know a lot about cultures other than your own – you can explore and learn with the children!

## 5. Ensure children and families coming to your home are not exposed to racism or are not allowed to express racist attitudes or beliefs

Standing up for yourself if you are subject to racism is important for children to see. And ensuring children are not exposed to racism in your home is also important.





# Sharing your culture

Appreciating cultural diversity is central to cultural competence.

For many years cultural competence in the education and care sector was around ensuring educators and teachers who were mostly white and Anglo were culturally competent around the children and families they were teaching, who often came from diverse cultural backgrounds. Educators and teachers also needed to unlearn a lot of what they had been taught in school about Aboriginal culture and learn anew about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture.

There are no statistics that tell us how many educators and teachers are now from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds but we know anecdotally that there are a lot, especially in Family Day Care. Our workforce is as diverse as our country is – perhaps even more so.

Over 300 different languages are spoken in Australia. 21% of all people in Australia speak a non-English language at home.

**Did you know that according to the 2016 Census almost half of Australians were either born overseas or had one or both parents who were born overseas?**

There is a good chance that if you are reading this booklet, you are an educator from a background that is not the Anglo background that we sometimes pretend is the dominant background in Australia.

So how do you view your culture, as an educator?

- ▶ Do you experience cultural incompetence from other educators you work with, the families whose children you care for, or from the co-ordinators at the service you work for?

- ▶ Do you experience racism either as an educator or as a community member?
- ▶ Do you discuss the cultural differences in child raising practices between what you are familiar with and what you are perhaps asked to do as an educator?
- ▶ Do you know much about the culture of Australia's first nations people?
- ▶ Is your culture something you share proudly with the children and families you work with, or is it something you try and pretend does not really exist?

Cultural competence in Family Day Care is not only about introducing children to things like diversity, racial stereotypes and racism and teaching them about respect for differing cultural beliefs. It is also about feeling safe to express your own cultural background and sharing that with the children you provide education and care for and their families.

There are many reasons you may not wish to do this. You may

have been persecuted for your religious or cultural beliefs. You may experience or have experienced racism.

But think about how much you can teach children by talking about and embracing your cultural background and beliefs? Think about how much you can model respect for other cultures and acceptance of diversity. These are things you can share with the children you educator and care for, and their families.

How can you do this?

- ▶ talk about the differences and similarities between your culture and the cultures of those around you
- ▶ share food, music, customs from your culture
- ▶ talk about cultural celebrations you enjoy
- ▶ introduce children to your culture at the same time you teach them about other cultures and learn about theirs.



The outcome we want for children of developing “strong foundations in both the culture and language/s of their family and of the broader community without compromising their cultural identities” is also an outcome we should want for all Family Day Care educators.

# Learning about the cultures of the world

**“Educators might display posters, artefacts, artwork, flags and welcome signs with multicultural perspectives, but we need to ask the questions: Why are they there? Are they reflective of educator’s genuine attitudes towards inclusion and equity?”<sup>4</sup>**

How can you teach children about the cultures of the world? One of the most important things that you need to do in the early years is teach children that there are many more cultures than the ones they come from and the one that is dominant in Australia. Often the best way to do this, is to embed this teaching in all your other teaching.

For example:

- ▶ if you are changing a nappy, talk to the other children about the fact that not all cultures dress children in nappies
- ▶ when you are eating with children talk about the different foods different cultures eat
- ▶ when you are talking about the weather or the land, talk about Aboriginal beliefs about weather and their beliefs about country
- ▶ when you are playing music or playing with musical instruments, talk about the different instruments played in different parts of the world.

<sup>4</sup> [www.childaustralia.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/Cultural-Connections.pdf](http://www.childaustralia.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/Cultural-Connections.pdf)

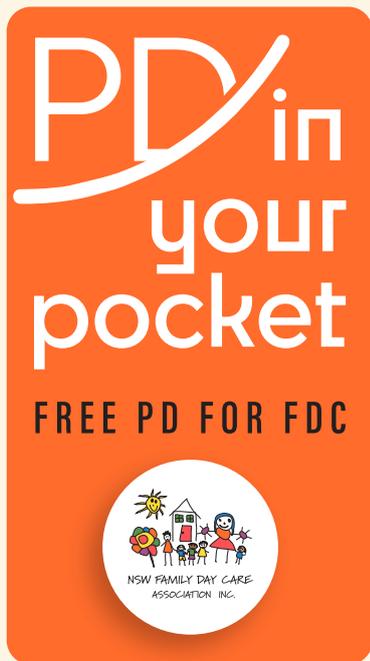
You could:

- ▶ go on excursions to multicultural or Aboriginal events in your community
- ▶ learn how to say hello, goodbye, and I love you in different languages
- ▶ discover the language, indigenous tribe and nation groups in your local community.
- ▶ incorporate multicultural toys and dolls into your resources
- ▶ have musical instruments from different cultures
- ▶ have crayons, paper and writing implements in different skin tones.
- ▶ have maps and globes of the world
- ▶ have cushions and soft furnishings made by people from diverse cultures.



**Children benefit from being exposed to the many cultures that are part of multicultural Australia, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures.**

# This booklet is part of the PD In Your Pocket professional development program.



This program is being conducted over nine months during 2021.

This topic – **Culture in Family Day Care** – has an accompanying webinar and video, both of which can be viewed as videos or listened to as podcasts, as well as a further reading list.

There is also a Facebook Group where you can discuss the learning frameworks' practices with other Family Day Care educators in NSW.

For more information about PD In Your Pocket, go to:

[www.nswfdc.org.au/pdinyourpocket](http://www.nswfdc.org.au/pdinyourpocket)



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“No one is born hating another person because of the colour of his skin, or his background, or his religion. People must learn to hate, and if they can learn to hate, they can be taught to love, for love comes more naturally to the human heart than its opposite.”

Nelson Mandela



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