



# First Steps

Department of Education  
Aboriginal Children's  
Early Childhood Education Strategy  
2021-2025



## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

The NSW Department of Education acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of the lands and waterways where we work and live. We celebrate First Nations Peoples' continuing cultural and spiritual connections to Country and recognise the significance of First Nations voices and cultures. The Department of Education would like to pay respects to Elders, past and present and are committed to nurturing First Nations children who are the Elders of our future.

## SPECIAL THANKS

The NSW Department of Education has worked alongside the Aboriginal Early Childhood Education Advisory Group to ensure First Nations voices are being heard in the decision making for our children and communities in early education. We would like to acknowledge and sincerely thank the following First Nations People who have contributed their invaluable knowledge to support the development of this strategy.

- Emma Beckett Nikinpa Aboriginal Child and Family Centre
- Maurita Cavanough Jarjums Preschool
- Deanne Towney Nanima Preschool
- Sue Freeburn Ngunya Jarjum
- Gisella Wilson KU Children's Services
- Shannon Fusi Menindee Preschool
- Vickie Parry Barang Regional Alliance LDM Group (Central Coast) and NSW Coalition of Aboriginal Regional Alliances
- Tanika Davis The I Am, Movement
- Sue-Anne Hunter Secretariat of National Aboriginal and Islander Child Care (SNAICC)
- George Blacklaws Previously from SNAICC
- Aunty Anne Dennis NSW Aboriginal Education Consultative Group
- Kyara Nean NSW Aboriginal Education Consultative Group

## ABOUT THE ARTIST

Charmaine Mumbulla is a Kaurna and Narungga woman from the Yorke Peninsula, with family ties to the Gumbaynggirr people of the NSW Mid-North Coast. Charmaine is passionate about working on projects that support social justice outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. The artwork developed for the Aboriginal Children's Early Childhood Education Strategy is a celebration of children learning and growing in an early childhood environment.

## OUR VISION



All Aboriginal children in NSW can access quality early childhood education (ECE) and are supported to embrace their culture and identity for a strong start to lifelong learning.

## OUR COMMUNITY



As Aboriginal people are the Traditional Custodians of NSW, this document refers to Aboriginal people. It is important to remember that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures are very different, with their own histories, beliefs and values. It is respectful to recognise their unique identities and cultures. The NSW Department of Education recognises that Torres Strait Islander peoples are First Nation Australians. The Department's Aboriginal programs and services are available, without question, to Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Any reference to Aboriginal families/kinship also recognises the important role of all carers and leaders within an Aboriginal child's life. This includes carers, kin, Elders and community.

## OUR GOALS



### CHILD

All Aboriginal children and their families are supported to enrol in quality culturally inclusive ECE.



### FAMILY & KINSHIP

All Aboriginal families and children feel respected in ECE services as their culture is celebrated and nourished.



### LEARNING

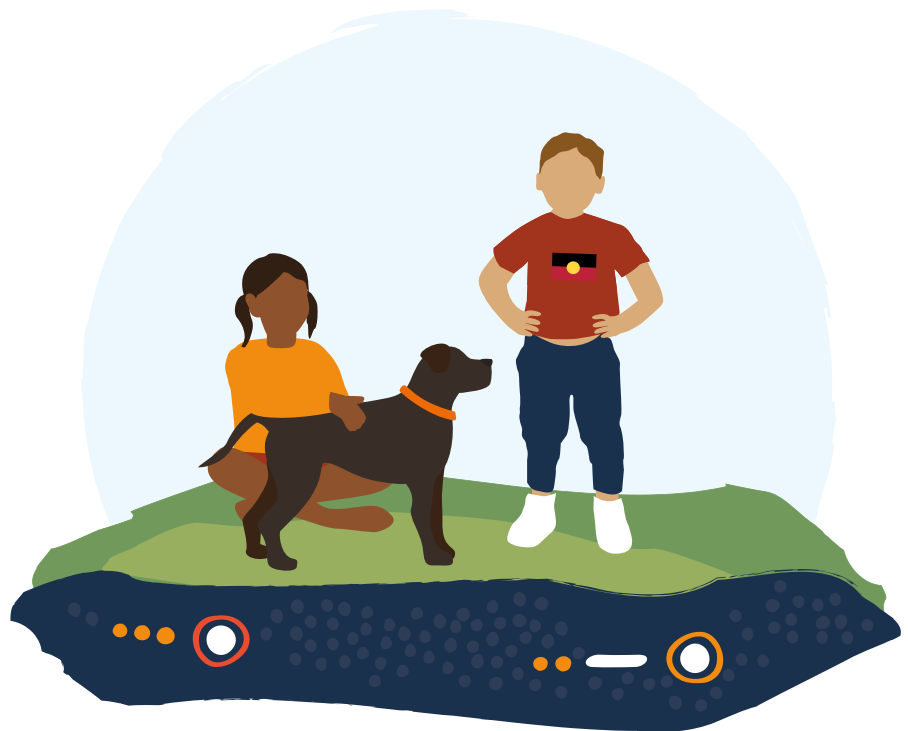
Aboriginal children are provided access to ECE that drives stronger outcomes through strengths-based approaches and all children have a sense of pride in Aboriginal people, cultures and histories in NSW.

## ACHIEVING OUR GOALS

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### CHILD

1. Co-design localised solutions with Aboriginal people and communities to increase access and participation in ECE for Aboriginal children across NSW.
2. Increase the number of Aboriginal operated and managed ECE services and ECE services with strong relationships with Aboriginal communities and support their sustainability.
3. Build the diversity of the workforce and create culturally safe learning environments by ensuring growth in the number of Aboriginal educators and teachers.
4. Ensure our funding models in NSW are best placed to enable quality participation of Aboriginal children.
5. Ensure all children in ECE have the opportunity to learn about Aboriginal languages and cultures in NSW.
6. Support services and communities to deliver a culturally appropriate transition into ECE and primary school programs for Aboriginal children.
7. Ensure Aboriginal children with a disability are able to access culturally appropriate support and have access to the same educational opportunities as all children.



## ACHIEVING OUR GOALS



### FAMILY & KINSHIP

1. Develop resources and provide guidance to support services to become culturally safe and welcoming spaces for Aboriginal families.
2. Ensure our ECE sector has culturally safe services and a culturally competent workforce.
3. Support holistic wraparound services to Aboriginal children and families.
4. Continue to strengthen the relationships and collaborations between the Department, ECE services and Aboriginal families and communities.



## ACHIEVING OUR GOALS



### LEARNING

1. Develop a culturally appropriate and place-based approach to assessing the development of Aboriginal children alongside the support of NSW Health and Aboriginal medical services.
2. Lead the provision of professional learning and networking opportunities for ECE sector staff that is relevant to local Aboriginal communities.
3. Support the attendance and engagement of Aboriginal children in ECE to drive outcomes. This includes ensuring Aboriginal children are fully supported to attend a minimum of 600 hours of ECE in the year before school in all service types.
4. Ensure NSW Department of Education staff are culturally competent and work with services in a culturally safe manner.



## OUR PERFORMANCE MEASURES

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- 1 95%**  
of Aboriginal children  
will be enrolled in the year before school by 2025\*
- 2 55%**  
of Aboriginal children  
will be assessed as developmentally on track  
in all five domains of the Australian Early  
Development Census by 2031\*
- 3 50%**  
of Aboriginal children  
in Early Childhood Education will have access  
to an Aboriginal language program by 2025\*
- 4 3%**  
of Early Childhood and Education Directorate staff  
will be Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander\*\*
- 5 100%**  
of staff employed in the NSW Department of Education  
Early Childhood and Education Directorates  
will have completed or commenced cultural awareness/  
safety training by 2025

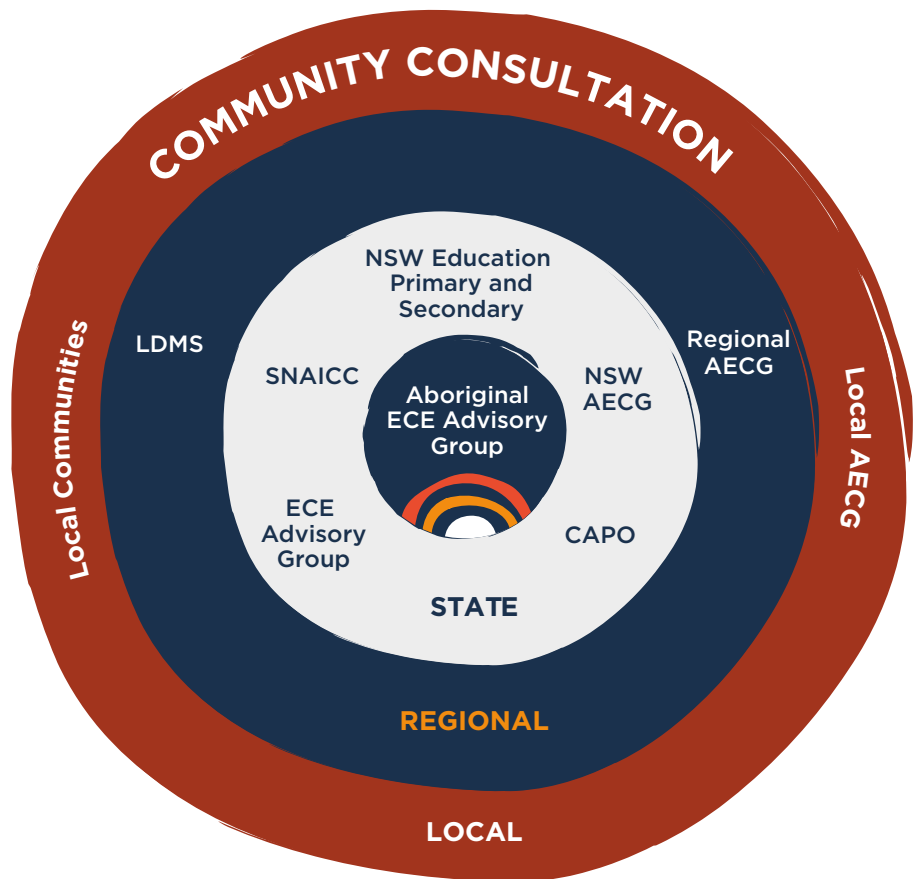
\* Closing the Gap target

\*\* NSW Public Sector Aboriginal Employment Strategy

**OUR  
GOVERNANCE  
STRUCTURE**



The NSW Early Childhood Education Aboriginal Advisory Group will be central in the governance of this strategy. The Department commits to work alongside the Advisory Group to develop initiatives that address the goals throughout the duration of the strategy.



**Figure 1**

Aboriginal Children’s Early Childhood Education Strategy Governance Structure

- AECG NSW Aboriginal Education and Consultative Group
- CAPO NSW Coalition of Aboriginal Peak Organisations
- LDM Local Decision Making Group
- SNAICC Secretariat of National Aboriginal and Islander Child Care

The ECE Advisory Group is made up from representatives of peak bodies, academics and other sector leaders.





**For more information please contact:**

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