

# {Embrace}

*Edition 3*

## Inspirational Victorian educators share their stories

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Exploring celebrations in  
children's services

Tips and tricks for fostering  
belonging

The fantastic benefits of sign  
language for ALL children



One For All



### How do we make what we do matter?

We're beyond thrilled to bring you this exciting new edition of *Embrace* magazine! This issue you'll hear from inspiring Victorian educators as they open up about what they're doing to make a difference in the lives of children in their care: Ujjval Goble, the director of an innovative Steiner-inspired family day care scheme, talks about ways to cultivate a sense of belonging; Quality Supervisor Sarah Gandolfo reveals the surprising benefits of sign language for ALL children; and Leanne Papas shares the challenges and triumphs of inclusion at her Bass Coast vacation care service.

But keep turning the pages for two of our favourite features: FKA Children's Services shares some fantastic tips and ideas for exploring celebrations in early childhood, and Yooralla examines what it takes to be truly inclusive.

And if that wasn't enough, the Victorian Aboriginal Education Association Incorporated has put together a super handy how-to for linking up with your local Aboriginal community.

So here's to rethinking possibility, jumping outside your comfort zone and championing diversity every day. After all, together, everyone achieves more!

**Karen Scobell**  
Victorian Inclusion Agency (VIA) Program Manager  
Community Child Care Association

#### Correction

The VIA wishes to apologise for printing an image in error on p. 9 of the previous edition of *Embrace*, and regrets any offence this may have caused.

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*The Victorian Inclusion Agency acknowledges Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as the First Peoples of this nation and the Traditional Owners of the land on which we work. We recognise their continuing connection to culture, land, water and community. We pay our respects to Elders past, present and emerging.*

#### VIA Contributors

We would like to thank the following people for their contribution to this edition of *Embrace*:

- |                              |                 |
|------------------------------|-----------------|
| Jacinta Butterworth – Editor | Stacey Davidson |
| Michelle Boudrie             | Caitlin Mason   |
| Amanda Chong                 | Dawn Meldrum    |
| Cathy Darvill                | Karen Scobell   |

# What you told us

A big thanks to the hundreds of education and care services that shared their thoughts in a recent email survey – here are a few highlights...

Reasons you have been getting in touch with the Victorian Inclusion Agency

Help/information creating an inclusive environment

**46%**

Help accessing the Inclusion Support Portal/AUSkey

**57%**

Help applying for funding via the Inclusion Development Fund

**57%**

Help/information about including a specific child with a disability or undergoing assessment

**39%**

**86%** of services said Inclusion Professionals are effective in helping to remove inclusion barriers

**74%** of services said they had made positive changes as a result of support from an Inclusion Professional

*'[We] have been given some fantastic resources around inclusion that are relevant to children's individual needs'*



## How have we helped?

*'Incredible change within the culture and expectations within our centre'*

*'Much more aware about preparedness for programs and really thinking about what we can do to be ready so that children attending the programs are supported, safe and having fun'*

*'Assisted in helping families with no English to communicate with staff and children'*

*'Many positive changes in order to embed inclusive practices such as how we communicate routines by using interactive visual displays'*

*'We have been able to give more time to the children in the room to support them to be included in all aspects of the program at their own pace'*

*'We have opened an additional room to allow all of the rooms to have a smaller age range and more space for educators and children to build comfortable and inclusive environments'*

*'All the children seem to be more relaxed and happy due to the support I have received from my Inclusion Professional'*

## How can we improve?

- Simpler, faster access to the Portal/AUSkey
- Regular follow-ups to support learning
- More networking opportunities
- Quicker process for interpreters
- Continued support for large providers



Inclusion Professional Cathy Darvill recently caught up with Ujval Goble to chat about how the 28 educators at his Steiner-inspired family day care scheme are making a difference in their communities.

**How did Ignite Minds come into being?**

In 2011, my wife and I established the first of three companies together – a registered training organisation called Organisational Learning Australia (OLA) – with the vision that educating children is a privilege and an excellent way to give children the best start in life. In 2014, we added further depth to our business by establishing Ignite Minds. We had a vision for graduates to consider family day care as an employment opportunity and professional career.

Dragonfly Toys is our third business. We offer natural, tactile, environmentally friendly and fairly traded toys direct to the public. Many of our toys are sourced from Germany.

**What is Ignite Minds' philosophy?**

We believe that small ratios allow educators to develop a deeper understanding and awareness of each child, and to instigate long-term projects that arise from children's interests and skills over time – sometimes children are with the same educator from the age of 0–12 years of age.

At Ignite Minds we value the intellect, imagination and creativity of childhood. We ignite minds through practical, hands-on activities and environments that encourage creative play for the whole community. Ignite Minds emphasises artistic expression and social capacities, fostering both creative and analytical modes of understanding.



'The need for imagination, a sense of truth, and a feeling of responsibility—these three forces are the very nerve of education' – Rudolf Steiner

**Where are you based?**

Our primary office is based at the Abbotsford Convent (near the Collingwood Children's Farm and the Sophia Mundi Steiner School) and we also have a small office in Bendigo.

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1, 3, 4 & 5. Luna Family Day Care (a FDC service supported by Ignite Minds)  
 2. Ujval Goble at Ignite Minds  
 6 & 7 (next page). Wattlebird Family Day Care (a FDC service supported by Ignite Minds)

# Q&A with Ujval Goble, Director of Ignite Minds

Meet the director of a Steiner-inspired family day care scheme that is doing things differently





We are excited to be moving to the ground level within the main convent grounds (near the cafés and bakery) in early 2018. With more space, the plan is to offer a playgroup on Thursdays for educators and children to come together.

**Can you tell us a little about your education program and practice?**

At Ignite Minds, we recognise that early years education and care is pivotal to the development of intelligent, compassionate and well-adjusted adults. 'No sugar' and 'no screen time' are two of our highest priorities. We believe nutrition is a significant contributor to healthy brain development as well as encouraging exploration and enquiry. The use of TVs, DVDs, iPads and electronic media is not encouraged as we believe they are not learning enablers.

**You've recently employed an educational leader for Ignite Minds – how does this role fit into the service you provide?**

There are three fieldworkers that visit, support and monitor educators' practice, including Carol, our educational leader. She has introduced an app called Storypark, which educators have been encouraged to implement. The app enables educators to know where each child is at developmentally, where their interests and skills are, and how to extend on these to support the inclusion of all children. Carol visits our educators as often as needed, or at least monthly.

*'I use the Storypark app as a transparent tool for letting people know about my service. Each week I place photos of what we do. Storypark is a 'learner story' tool that shares stories with the child's family. The child's parent is the admin of the child's account and invites family and friends to participate in each story. It is great to see the family comments and contributions to the FDC service and how involved the child's community is' – Agnieszka Burton, Wattlebird Family Day Care*

**Tell us about your experience working with the Victorian Inclusion Agency**

A couple of our educators requested additional support and engaged in the Inclusion Support Programme through the VIA. It was a collaborative approach where Inclusion Professional Michelle Boudrie visited both educators' care environments to identify and work through the barriers to inclusion. Both educators requested Family Day Care Top Up through the Inclusion Development Fund. They found the support from Michelle, along with the reflective conversation process, additional resources, strategies gained, and inclusion action plan from the printable SIP (Strategic Inclusion Plan) to be of great benefit for the inclusion of all children. Parents have let us know that they are happy that children and educators have had additional support too.

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**About Ignite Minds**

Ignite Minds provides high quality, accessible and affordable home-based education and care in 23 locations across Melbourne and regional Victoria. Visit [www.igniteminds.com.au](http://www.igniteminds.com.au) to watch a short video about this Steiner-inspired family day care scheme.

## Once upon a sign

Why has this South Melbourne long day care centre signed up for sign language?

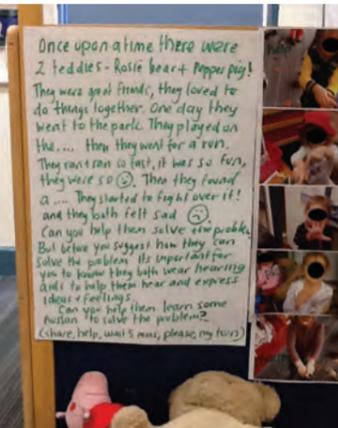


For some, communicating with others might not come naturally. But sign language can open doors for both children and adults. At Clarendon Children's Centre, an Auslan Bilingual Program is supporting children who have challenges with communication. Senior Inclusion Professional Caitlin Mason spoke to Quality Supervisor Sarah Gandolfo about how this inspiring program is helping every child feel comfortable and safe from day one.

**Where did the journey begin? What barrier to inclusion was there? And what inspired or made you think of adding Auslan to your program?**

Our journey began when one of our current families was due to enrol their second child into our 0-2 room, three days per week, in 2017. This child was non-verbal at the time, and heavily involved with speech therapists,

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occupational therapists and other medical specialists due to a number of medical conditions. There were several barriers to inclusion for this child, but one of the most prominent was the lack of verbal communication skills. We were unable to communicate with the child and the child was unable to communicate with us. Through conversation with the parents, we decided to follow the family and support the inclusion of Auslan into our educational program and everyday practice. The inclusion of Auslan as an additional language at our centre would, therefore, allow all educators, children and families to communicate effectively with one another.

**Your service developed and implemented the Auslan program to support children and their families with hearing impairment. Why was this important and what have been the outcomes so far?**

It was important to us to implement this program so as to ensure that all children, educators and families could communicate effectively with one another. We were also conscious of the flow-on effect this would have into the community, particularly when fluent Auslan signing children moved into school or community settings where others (their peers at Clarendon Children's Centre) could communicate with them. This would lessen any chances of the child feeling isolated. So far we

have seen many children communicate with peers and educators using Auslan. Educators have also increased confidence in using Auslan and are seen signing to children during play, routines and transitions. Families have informed us that children are using Auslan at home and are teaching their family members key signs. The children who we originally identified as requiring inclusion support are now effective communicators and are able to share their ideas, ask questions and communicate with peers and adults.

**You used a funding stream which is part of the Inclusion Support Programme called Innovative Solutions. What was involved in the application process and what were you able to accomplish by using Innovative Solutions?**

The application process involved creating a report about our service and about our educator teams' capacity to effectively meet the needs of all children within the setting. This led us to identify our need for ongoing Auslan coaching and mentoring. Prior to submitting the application, we had hired the Auslan Company (www.learnauslan.com.au) to provide us with a four-hour training session for all educators, and had funded two educators to complete Level 1 and 2 Auslan through Vicdeaf. The training was great at providing a base level of knowledge to the educator team but we needed

a long-term, ongoing solution. In the application, we identified what we hoped the Auslan Bilingual Program would involve:

- The provision of a foundational coaching and mentoring session available to educators, families and the wider community
- The provision of a selection of educational resources
- Extended coaching and mentoring for those educators working directly with bilingual children
- Building and maintaining connections with a range of inclusion support personnel including speech pathologists and early intervention teachers.

And we reported on what we hoped to achieve and the financial requirements of achieving it (this is where the funding came in). Once funding had been approved, we were able to organise for the Auslan Company to attend four out-of-hours staff meetings with all educators to refresh our Auslan skills and to provide us with ongoing coaching on how to include Auslan as a regular part of our day-to-day activities.

**How is it different to just attending professional development?**

PD is once off – this was about embedding a new practice, making a change to what we already do, and coming up with effective ways of including all children

in the educational program. Having face-to-face contact with teachers at the Auslan Company has also meant that we have been exposed to new resources that we may not have actually known about.

**Where to next?**

Auslan will continue to be an integral part of our educational program. 2018 will see a change in classroom demographics and how this looks in practice, so it will be great to see how the coaching and mentoring will help to facilitate the Auslan Bilingual Program with a new team of educators.



**About Clarendon Children's Centre**

Clarendon Children's Centre is a community-managed long day care centre located in the heart of South Melbourne. To learn more about this welcoming and vibrant service, check out the short video at [clarendonchildrenscentre.com](http://clarendonchildrenscentre.com)



## Respectful celebrations in early childhood

How can we do celebrations well?



Celebrations are a wonderful way of supporting connections between children, families and communities. Sharing and participating in celebrations can create joy and a sense of belonging for children, and often provide the opportunity to develop respect and understanding for diverse values and beliefs. No matter the occasion – whether it be religious, cultural, traditional, community-driven, or political – celebrations are often about people coming together, sharing their time, some food and joy.

'Children learn to respond to diversity with respect when educators explore the culture, heritage, backgrounds and traditions of each child within the context of their community'

*The Early Years Learning Framework for Australia 2009, p.27*

Celebrations can be big or small, every day or special events, religious or cultural, personal or communal. It is important to consider whether the event itself and the activities you plan on implementing are celebratory for all children and families. When planning a diverse range of celebrations, how the celebration is introduced, implemented and extended needs to be carefully worked out.

The development of strong relationships with families should be the foundation of our work as educators. Respectful and honest conversations with families can ensure that we have an understanding of why particular celebrations are important, what is being celebrated and what part of the celebration is meaningful to individual families. Families often have some interesting and wonderful ideas about how you can introduce celebrations to children.

**Developing a Days of Significance Annual Calendar with children and families may be a good starting point.**

There may also be times where families may want to participate in celebrations but don't feel they can for reasons that they may not be able to share with you. For example, the celebration itself may raise painful feelings for them because it is based on a day of mourning, or they may not feel like celebrating because they cannot be with, or may have lost, their families or loved ones. Or perhaps the family's faith considers certain aspects of life inappropriate to celebrate.

In responding to the variety of attitudes and beliefs, it is not always helpful to take blanket actions such as banning all celebrations or formally celebrating all events. It is more valuable to reflect on the way we think about celebrations and the opportunities we offer. Here are some questions you may like to ask when planning a celebration at your service:

- Do all families need to participate if they don't want to?
- Do we have the right to always know why or why not?
- How do we ensure we are sensitive to the needs of children and families and are we truly accepting of diverse views?

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Image source: FKA Children's Services

All of this can be learnt by providing genuine and regular opportunities to develop trusting and supportive relationships with families. When we collaborate openly with families, we are better able to develop and extend rich, holistic and culturally respectful programs including the opportunity to share celebrations and special events.

Respectful relationships with families are fundamentally about being upfront and transparent, ensuring everyone is informed and has the option to consent or refuse without fear of judgement. Educators should ensure alternative, equal options for participation (or not) are available to children. Respectful relationships view each child and each family as unique and entitled to make choices about the decisions that affect them, and consultation should be ongoing.

Children have an innate curiosity about the world around them, wanting to discover how other people live, communicate and celebrate. As an educator, your curiosity, positive engagement and pursuit to learn more are often reflected by the children participating in your programs. Critical self- and service-reflection is a fundamental tool in ensuring that celebrations are a time of enjoyment for all children and families. Here are some things you may like to consider:

- How invested are you in participating whole-heartedly within these times?
- What questions are you asking?
- What conversations are you driving and what conversations are you engaged in?

The practice of celebrating in a respectful way is underpinned by the understanding that every person has the right for their cultural identity and security to be positively supported and valued. Think about your

own valued cultural celebrations – what makes them important to you? Ask your families and children what they celebrate and why it's important to them. You may find that although the roots and history of the celebration may be different, the emotion and feeling evoked throughout the celebration may just be the same.

#### References

Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority (ACECQA) 2017, *Guide to the National Quality Standard*, Author, Sydney.

Department of Education and Training (DET) 2016, *Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework for all Children from Birth to Eight Years*, Author, Melbourne.

Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR) for the Council of Australian Governments 2010, *Belonging, Being and Becoming: Educators' guide to the Early Years Learning Framework for Australia*, Commonwealth of Australia, Barton.



For free CALD and refugee resources, check out [www.viac.com.au](http://www.viac.com.au) > Resources + forms > CALD + refugee resources



## Small things matter

**LEANNE PAPAS**  
Children's Services Team Leader  
Bass Coast Aquatic and Leisure Centre

### An inspiring Bass Coast team leader shares her story



As an educator, my personal journey began over 20 years ago working in early childhood centres. I have had the privilege to belong to many diverse communities, from Loch Kindergarten in the rolling hills of Gippsland to Tommaso Fiaschi Child Care Centre in inner-city Carlton.

The learning I take from these relationships is the intrinsic need for all children to belong to a family unit, form friendships and belong to their community, as did I as an educator. I base my practices on this philosophy.

I have been the coordinator of the YMCA holiday program for five years.

When I commenced my role I had no experience with primary-aged children or working with a broad age range of 5–12 years, which included a student who was 19 years of age with a global learning delay.

Programming for a diverse age range was challenging but when looking at the individual needs of the children, the learning was only just beginning. Relationships were to be established with the children, families and wider community. Within the group there were two ten-year-old children who were best friends; one had autism. I recognised they needed a certain amount of consistency in the routine as predictability was important for them.

The program was based on physical recreation, which the children embraced, but with experience working in early childhood, I wanted to broaden the planning and

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the physical environment. This was to include a focus on social play, learning of independence and relationship-building with peers and the broader community.

Attending the program was a child who had autism and was nonverbal and communicated with limited signing. One question I would regularly receive from other children was 'Why can't he talk?' I was challenged personally and ethically about the best way to answer this question and, with reassurance from his family, I shared with the group that he had autism. But that to me was only a label and he was so much more. I informed the children of his abilities and interests and the children began to share in his wonderful laughter. They also learnt basic signs so they could support his needs if he went to them as opposed to needing an educator.

After working at the service for a year, I displayed some posters on autism. The cool 10-year-old said to his best friend, 'I have that, I have autism,' without any sign of reluctance. 'No, you don't!' his friend responded. 'Yes, I do,' he insisted. Not knowing whether to intervene I said, 'Yes, he does'. The look on his friend's face was puzzlement and curiosity. 'It doesn't stop you doing anything, does it?' I left them chatting and must say I felt such pride that it was a normalised disclosure and that the work we had been doing was working.

Being from a remote area, professional development opportunities for staff are somewhat restricted, but we take a proactive approach to staff development, offering

as many opportunities as possible. With consent from families, we have made contact with paediatricians, primary teachers and principals, and attended the specialist school to observe interactions with children to support consistency of care, which is paramount in their development.

We have also had a student's primary teacher visit the program to support him in transitioning into our service. As a follow up on his interests, we began making books about his time at the program. At the end of the program, I made a book with photographs and delivered it to his school. This book highlighted his successes in the program and he could share it with his teacher and peers if he so decided.

In 2015 I had a meeting with a parent who was needing access for her child. He had a brain injury and serious medical-related issues. Obviously, this parent was very protective of her child and was looking for a service where her child would feel included and cared for.

I was concerned about how to provide an environment that would meet his physical and emotional needs. I applied for funding to have an additional educator to ensure his needs were met and support the transition of independence into the program.

The environment needed some adaptations to be made and, initially, we emphasised to the group the importance of physical activity at one end of the

stadium and quiet spaces at the other end. We talked to the group about spatial awareness and respect for others. The children created group rules which were made and written by them. They are revised every program to ensure all children feel safe and protected. The modifications were effortless but essential, and, with an additional educator, his physical needs were supported and self-help skills were developing.

Although this child had a significant brain injury, we noticed early on that he was attempting to make connections with peers. His kind nature shone above his disability and, with support from educators, he is transitioning into social play on his own.

He recently worked with peers to form a fashion show, walking along the runway and squealing with excitement. Children are aware of his physical challenges and did not hesitate to help him change in and out of dress ups. As time has gone by, the child has become more physically and socially independent and he has formed connections and friendships with others.

As a service, we do our best to support every child feel included in activities, and for every child, this looks different. I find games such as football a real challenge for many children to participate in but I have also seen such personal success. The challenges can be eased by supporting children with their anxieties about joining in and encouraging them to have a go and have fun.

A common concern I have unfortunately experienced at the service is the lack of disclosure of information from some families wanting to utilise the service. I feel some families are reluctant to share vital information about their children due to fear of discrimination. Our objective is to support all children to have a positive experience at the service but, in particular, be safe and to keep others safe.

We have reflected on our enrolment process for new families and invite all families to meet with me prior to their child's first day. Through this process, we have identified important information about children that may have been missed.

We are very fortunate at times to have educators that work in local kindergartens, schools and the specialist school. This forms a meaningful consistency for the children in our care and strong community ties for the service.

When planning for the program we utilise feedback from the children or from observations. My approach to planning is not 'why' but 'why not?' Activities are modified to meet the needs of individuals, and children are encouraged to give things a go and support a friend. Conducting thorough risk assessments for excursions helps ascertain identified risks for children with additional needs and we look at potential ways of minimising risks so all children can participate.

For Children's Week in October last year, the group continued their learning by researching respect. The children individually spoke about their perception of respect. They were filmed during this process and it formed a video which was played for Children's Week at our local cinema. At the end of their sharing, the children said, 'We are all one heart' – which linked caring for one another with the value of belonging.

Our journey continues...

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**About vacation care at Bass Coast Aquatic and Leisure Centre**

Located in Wonthaggi, the YMCA Bass Coast vacation care program caters for primary school children aged 5–12 years. This January, children enjoyed a range of awesome activities including chocolate making, movies and a visit to the desalination plant, along with loads of craft, art and sports.



# What should inclusion look like?

## Tips and tricks for fostering belonging

Inclusion begins with true acceptance of and respect for children and is much more than a child simply being present. Inclusion is more than just what you do – it's also how and why you do it. An inclusive curriculum requires continuous consideration to ensure it is reflective of and responsive to all children.

To support a child's learning effectively, consideration needs to be given to the family, community, and cultural context, as well as the child's interests, strengths and personality. Educators can be guided by a number of legal documents and learning frameworks to embed inclusive practice and nurture each child's sense of belonging to their family, community and early years settings.



- **Equity, inclusion and diversity underpin the National Quality Framework and Disability Standards in Education**
- **The Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework draws upon the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the rights expressed in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.**



If you're wanting to foster a deeper sense of belonging at your service, these key reflective questions can help you get started:

- Who can you ask for support?
- Do all children have the same opportunity to participate in the program?
- How can you support children to succeed in your program?
- How is each child supported to feel secure, confident and included in your program?

### Some ideas to help promote meaningful inclusion in your program

#### Be informed and prepared:

- Have an awareness and understanding of the diverse learning needs of all children within your program
- Meet with the family and obtain as much information from the family and any support agencies/services as possible about the child's strengths, interests, abilities and challenges, as well as effective and ineffective strategies.

#### Develop strong relationships:

- Consider how you welcome all children and families into your centre
- How can you ensure families have opportunities to participate in and contribute to the early childhood setting and get to know other families?
- How can you collaborate with family and support services to make shared decisions and set specific goals?

#### Consider the care environment:

- Is the environment accessible for children of all abilities?
- Is the care environment welcoming?
- Is the cultural diversity of the community respectfully reflected within the environment?
- Have you done a sensory audit of your environment for example:
  - Are the walls 'too busy' with artwork?
  - Are there items hanging from the ceiling that might cause distraction for some children?
  - Is the room too bright, too dull, too noisy or too quiet? Is there anything in the room that hums or ticks?
  - Does the room echo when you clap?
  - Is there a 'quiet corner' where children can take a break when needed?

#### Consider your programming:

- Does it reflect the diverse needs of the group?
- How are friendships supported?
- Is there opportunity for children to choose what they will participate in?
- Is there flexibility within your program to be responsive to the needs and interests of all children?
- How are communication tools such as visuals/social stories embedded in your program?
- Do you understand children's sensory preferences and are they available at all times?
- How do you plan for and support children with transitions?

#### Consider your team's approach:

- Who is involved and is there regular communication with and between families, staff and support services?
- What opportunities are created to meet and reflect as a team?
- Are there opportunities for professional learning?
- Are educators working well as a team for all children?

Meaningful inclusion is a team approach based on open communication, ongoing dialogue and reflection about how we can best support the needs and interests of all children within the program. For further information or to discuss tailored inclusive practices within your early education and care environment, please contact the Inclusion Professional, Kindergarten Inclusion Support Co-ordinator or Preschool Field Officer in your local area.

#### Resources

Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority (ACECQA) 2016, *National Quality Framework*, viewed 30 January 2018, <<http://www.acecqa.gov.au/national-quality-framework/explaining-the-national-quality-framework>>.

Cologon, K (ed.) 2014, *Inclusive Education in the Early Years: Right from the start*, Oxford University Press, South Melbourne.

Department of Education and Training (DET) 2016, *Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework for all Children from Birth to Eight Years*, Author, Melbourne.

Stonehouse, A with Boschetti, C 2013, *A Piece of Cake? Linking inclusive practice to the EYLF and the VEYLF*, Yooralla, Surrey Hills.



## How do you connect with your local Koorie community?

**MATILDA DARVAL AND ELLIE WATERS**  
Project Officers  
Victorian Aboriginal Education  
Association Incorporated – VIA Partner

A handy how-to from the Victorian Aboriginal Education Association Incorporated



It is really important that services promote access and inclusion by reaching out and engaging with their local Koorie community. Our experience has shown that many educators are unsure about where to begin, so we thought an article about the best ways to connect would be helpful.

### *Find out who the Traditional Custodians of your area are*

To learn which Aboriginal tribal group's land your service is situated upon, get in touch with the Wurundjeri Council ([www.wurundjeri.com.au](http://www.wurundjeri.com.au)). The Aboriginal Languages of Victoria map will help you find out which languages belong to your local area ([www.vaclang.org.au](http://www.vaclang.org.au) > Resources > Maps).

### *Familiarise yourself with important Koorie protocols*

Check out VAEAI's comprehensive guide to make sure you are aware of the appropriate protocols your service should follow when seeking to work respectfully with local Koorie people and communities ([www.vaeai.org.au](http://www.vaeai.org.au) > Resources for schools and families > Protocols for Koorie education in Victorian primary and secondary schools).

### *Get involved with your LAECG and get to know your community*

Connecting with your Local Aboriginal Education Consultative Group (LAECG) will help your service build positive relationships with the local Koorie community. LAECGs are voluntary bodies made up of a broad range of local Koorie community members. The members of LAECGs dedicate their time to improving education opportunities for Koorie children and students. To connect with a LAECG in your area, contact the VAEAI head office and speak with the Early Years Unit ((03) 9481 0800).

### *Support Koorie children and their families*

Koorie Engagement Support Officers (KESOs) are employed by the Victorian Department of Education and Training to engage and support Koorie students and their families, in partnership with education staff and community stakeholders. This may include assisting Aboriginal families to access a broad range of services to ensure the best start in life for Koorie children from birth through to the time they complete school. KESOs also offer advice and practical support to services that provide funded kindergarten programs, ensuring the delivery of programs that are respectful and inclusive of the cultural beliefs and practices of Koorie communities. To get in touch with a KESO, you will need to contact the Koorie Education Coordinator (KEC) ([www.education.vic.gov.au](http://www.education.vic.gov.au) > Home > The Department > Contact us > Aboriginal programs > List of Koorie education coordinators).

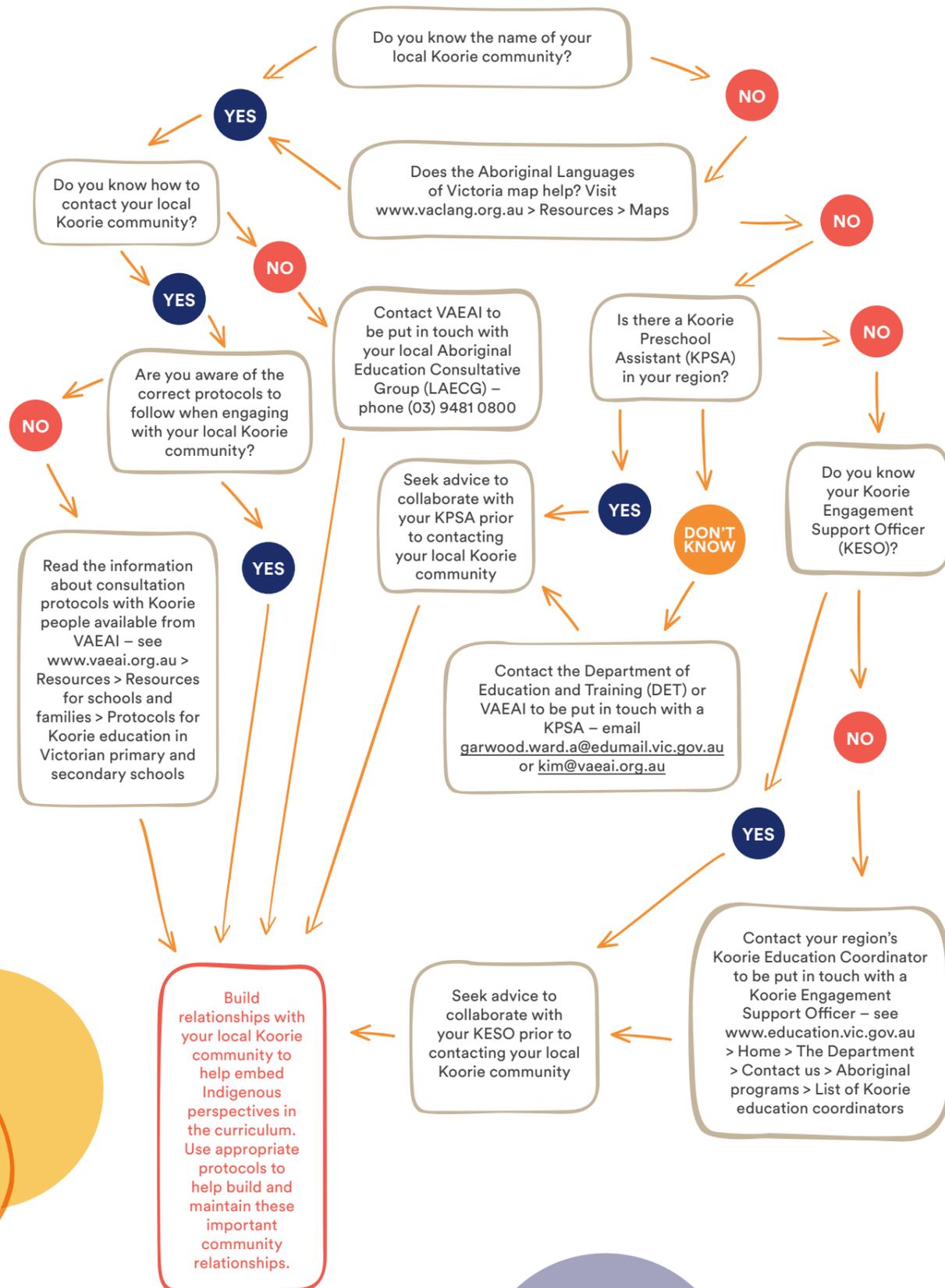
### *Make sure all children feel like they belong*

Your local Inclusion Professional can provide free program support and mentoring that will help you create a welcoming and inclusive space for all children (1800 177 017).

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## Building relationships with local Koorie communities Where can you start?

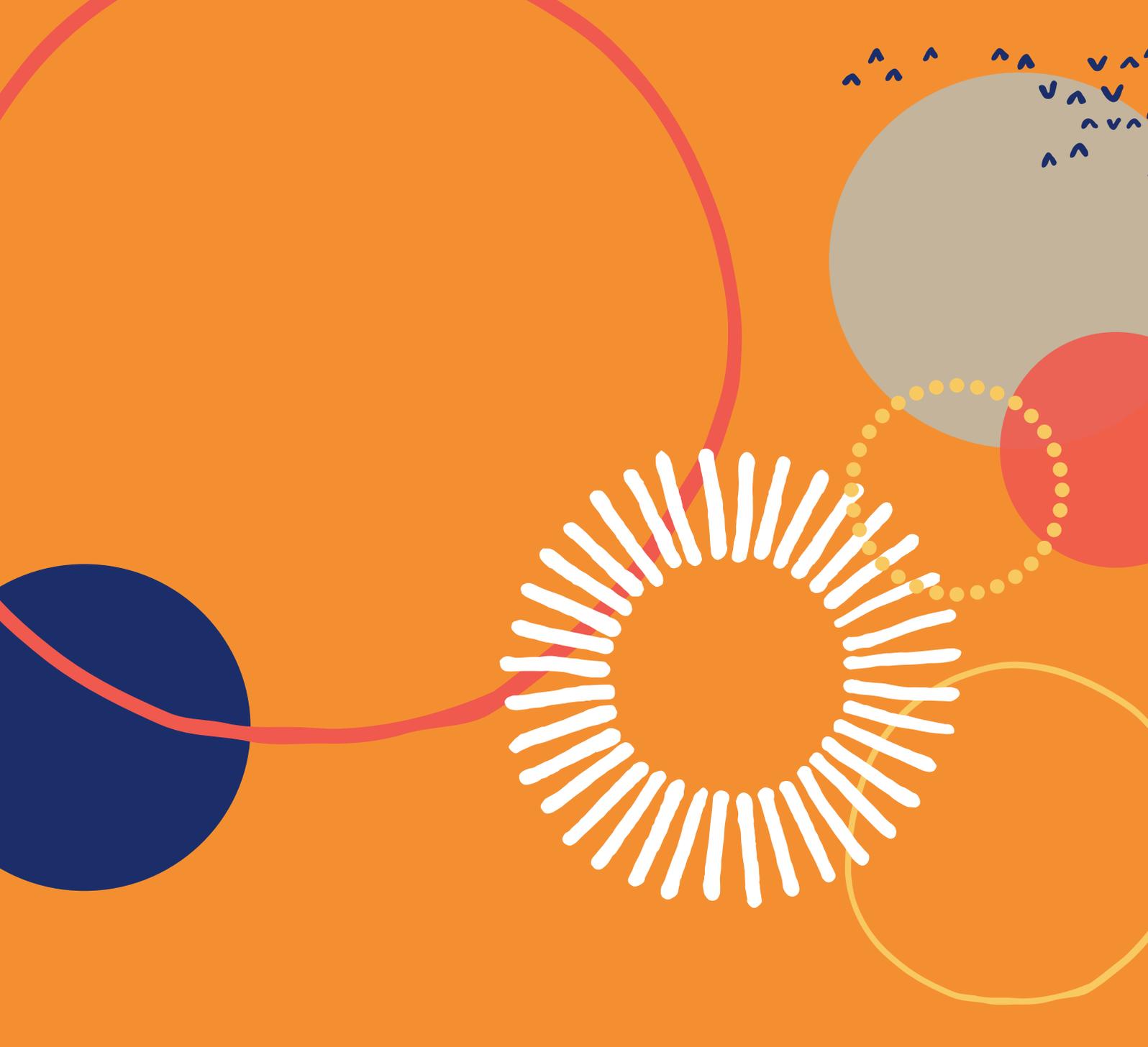


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*Community Child Care Association, KU Children's Services and Yooralla are working toward the vision that all Victorian children can meaningfully and actively participate in an education and care service of their family's choice in their community*

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