



Discussion Paper:

# 2021 National Quality Framework Approved Learning Frameworks Update

August 2021

## Section 1: Vision

### 1.1 Strengths

*EYLF: All children experience learning that is engaging and builds success for life.*

Recognising that learning begins from birth, the EYLF Vision is for all children to experience learning that is engaging and builds success for life. The Objectives and Guiding Principles of the National Law underpin this vision, in particular “to improve the educational and developmental outcomes for children attending education and care services” and “children are successful, competent and capable learners”. Notably, there is also strong alignment between the EYLF Vision and Goal 2 of the Mparntwe Education Declaration (2019): “all young Australian become confident and creative individuals, successful lifelong learners, and active and informed members of the community” (p.4).

The EYLF Vision was rated as extremely or very important by 89% of educators/providers, 85% of other professionals who support early childhood education and care (ECEC) services, and 87% of families who use these services. Educators/providers and other professionals also endorsed the view of children’s lives as “belonging, being and becoming” (89% rated this as extremely-very important). Overwhelming support for the vision was reflected in the survey comments and the voices of the children and young people.

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#### Example comments from stakeholder feedback

*It sets high expectations (ECEC, Early Childhood Teacher [ECT], Family Day Care [FDC])*

*The vision is deep and meaningful and focusses on each child's strengths, physical, emotional, social, and cognitive development. I love how it is play based (ECEC, ECT, Director, Nominated Supervisor, Preschool, Independent school)*

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*MTOP: All children experience meaningful and joyful learning, enriching their childhood.*

The MTOP Vision for children's learning through play and leisure was rated as extremely to very important by 84% of families, 73% of educators/providers, and 69% of other professionals who support outside school hours care. Educators/providers valued the vision, but felt it too wordy, complex, and highlighted the need to make it easier to understand.

There was stronger endorsement of “play, learning and leisure”: 98% of educators/providers and 96% of other professionals rated this aspect of the vision as extremely-very important for their work within OSHC. For MTOP the importance of leisure and play was emphasised as an essential aspect for the children. Children and young people require time for the elements and characteristics of leisure experiences as they contribute directly to the “development of identity, autonomy, competence, initiative, civic duty, and social connections” (Caldwell & De Witt, 2011, p.13).

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**Example comments from stakeholder feedback**

*Continue to dictate and emphasise the role of play and leisure-based activities (OSHC, Nominated Supervisor, After School Care [ASC])*

*The children are given play options, they're not forced to all do the same activity. This allows my child to grow in the area he wants to (OSHC, Parent, Before School Care [BSC]/ASC/Vacation Care [Vac]).*

*Lots of time to play and lots of time to eat. Together with my sister and brother and there is lots of free choice (OSHC, Child, 9 years).*

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## **1.2 Opportunities**

### **1.2.1 Strengthening Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives throughout the Frameworks, including the vision, principles, practices and outcomes**

The NQF acknowledges Australia is a nation of great diversity, “and an ancient land that has been cared for by Indigenous Australians for many thousands of years” (ACECQA, Sept 2020, p.10). ECEC and OSHC services are expected to value and engage with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, and to support children, families and educators to strengthen their understanding of First Nations histories and cultures. The ToR for the ALFs Update includes consideration of cultural competence and representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives in the EYLF and MTOP.

Embedding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledges, cultures and perspectives throughout both ALFs is a priority and reflects the Alice Springs (Mparntwe) Education Declaration (Education Council, 2019). This includes recognition of the more than 60,000 years of continual connection by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as a key part of the nation's history, present and future. The Declaration makes the following commitment, "Through education, we are committed to ensuring that all students learn about the diversity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, and to seeing all young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples thrive in their education and all facets of life" (Education Council, 2019, p.3). Quality environments provide all children with rich learning experiences that nurture and support their cultural identity (Priest, 2005). Additionally, Holzinger and Biddle (2015) suggest that embedding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives is a way to move towards Reconciliation.

While the words Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander are discussed in the two ALFs in the preamble and some outcome elements, the terms are not threaded through the documents. There is an opportunity to recognise the role of ECEC and OSHC in supporting educators and children to understand and advance Reconciliation. This could be reflected in the vision as well as embedding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledge and perspectives across the Principles, Practices and Outcomes of both Frameworks. This will support services and educators to build respect for, and recognition of, the world's oldest continuous living cultures, authentically advance Reconciliation and identify that ECEC and OSHC services are working towards understandings of this through their ways of working, conversations with children and openness to diverse perspectives.

The Literature and survey findings emphasise the need to introduce a new principle of embedding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives into both Frameworks. Stampoulos and Barblett (2018) insist that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives should be represented in philosophies, policies, pedagogies and practices. Educators have a responsibility to create culturally safe places that support the telling of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stories and perspectives, working in intercultural ways through their practice. Young children in a dominant culture can build a false sense of racial superiority that is damaging, causes isolation and ill prepares children to function in a diverse society (Derman Sparks cited in Miller, 2011, p.39). Embedding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives will enhance all children and young people's educational experiences and contribute to Reconciliation.

The words Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander are not found in the descriptive elements of the five learning outcomes. Mulhearn (2016 cited in Sumsion et al., 2018) suggests that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, ways of knowing and being (p.173) are silenced in the EYLF (DEEWR, 2009) with general statements about diversity so that respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledges had been rendered close to 'invisible' (p. 253). Yunkaporta (cited in Burgess and [Cavanagh](#), 2016, p.53) believes that Aboriginal education should be "built in rather than bolted on". Embedding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives throughout the Frameworks, including the vision, principles, practices and outcomes was supported by stakeholder feedback in Stage 1.

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### **Example comments from stakeholder feedback**

*Greater acknowledgement and expectation for the provision of culturally safe places for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and their families (ECEC, Director, Nominate Supervisor, Educational Leader, Long Day Care [LDC]).*

*As a key guiding Principle of the NQF, "Valuing Australia's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture", it would be good to see this embedded into each framework and their significance intensified (OSHC, Other-Catholic School, BSC/ASC/Vac/LDC).*

*"Valuing Australia's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture", it would be good to see this embedded into each framework and their significance intensified (ECEC & OSHC Participants).*

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### **Points of Discussion: Vision - Strengthening Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledge and perspectives**

*To what extent do you agree/disagree with updating the EYLF/MTOP by:*

- 1.*
  - a. Expanding the EYLF and MTOP visions to recognise the role of ECEC and OSHC in advancing Reconciliation.*
  - b. Adding a principle about embedding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledges and perspectives in both the EYLF and MTOP.*
  - c. Making Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders cultures and ways of knowing more explicit in all of the learning outcomes to reflect family/community connections, connection to country, kinship systems, telling of stories (oral history), spirituality and connecting with the extended family.*

#### *1.2.2 Clarify 'success for life' in the vision*

The ToR for the ALFs Update include a focus on strengthening pathways between both ALFs and links to the Australian Curriculum. The vision of both ALFs can be strengthened to emphasise the importance of quality relationships and connections, learning through play and children's holistic learning, development and wellbeing (CASEL, 2020; Milton et al., 2020). Informed by the literature, these are key concepts in the NQS, and align with the general capabilities in the Australian Curriculum. Stakeholders strongly endorsed the themes of belonging, being and becoming and the need to continue to recognise the significance of the here and now in children and young people's lives. Many spoke of the need to shift the focus from 'success for life' as it was seen as confusing and something hard to measure.

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#### **Example comments from stakeholder feedback**

*I like to hang out with the OSHC carers and use the school playground (OSHC, Child, 9 years)*

*I would take away "builds success for life" and add something more along the lines of for every child to build relationships and engage in learning that helps them achieve their full potential (ECEC, Educational Leader, LDC).*

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### **Points of Discussion: Vision for children's learning**

*To what extent do you agree/disagree with updating the EYLF/MTOP by:*

- 2. Reconsidering the words "success for life" in the vision and instead emphasise the vision as all children and young people become confident and creative individuals, successful lifelong learners, and active and informed members of the community.*