INTRODUCTION

The Department of Education’s (draft) Closing the Gap in Aboriginal Education Outcomes 2016-2019: a strategy for Aboriginal student success through school improvement outlines a series of initiatives that will improve the success of Aboriginal students in early years programs and schools by supporting the particular needs of individual schools, students and their families and by developing and promoting culturally responsive practices. This document also informs the Department of Education Tasmania’s Aboriginal Education Framework (2016-2017).

The Aboriginal Early Learning team consists of Aboriginal Early Years Education Workers located in Child and Family Centres (CFCs) around the State who are guided and supervised by Centre Leaders and staff from Aboriginal Education Services (AES). Aboriginal Early Years Education Workers work closely with families of Aboriginal children from birth to five years of age to engage in early years initiatives that enhance their children’s learning. The initiatives include Child and Family Centre programs and Launching into Learning (LIL), Pre-kinder and Kinder programs that aim to stimulate young children’s learning and affirm family involvement to help children to become ‘school ready’. Aboriginal Early Years Education Workers play a key role in building connections between schools and families with young children.

The Aboriginal Early Years Education Workers work with parents of Aboriginal children, staff in Aboriginal Education Services, schools, CFC’s and agencies to enable the successful implementation across the early years of the Department’s Closing the Gap in Aboriginal Educational Outcomes 2016-2019 strategy. In addition, the Aboriginal Early Years Education Workers provide education and guidance for early years educators within the Department of Education with regard to supporting culturally responsive practice in accordance with the Early Years Learning Framework.

This Handbook has been developed to assist schools and CFCs with the management and support of Aboriginal Early Years Education Workers including roles and responsibilities of Centre Leaders/Principals, teachers and the Aboriginal Early Years Education Workers. This Handbook also provides Aboriginal Early Years Education Workers with useful information to assist their participation in the education workforce.

Cover Photo: Leanne Pelikan (Aboriginal Early Years Education Worker) with Sophia Cowen (3 years).

ABORIGINAL EARLY YEARS EDUCATION WORKER ROLE

Aboriginal Early Years Education Workers develop, promote and maintain communication networks between Aboriginal families, schools and CFCs. They play a key role in providing knowledge and understanding of Aboriginal people, community and culture within schools to promote better cultural understanding and supportive school environments. Aboriginal Early Years Education Workers engage parents/carers of Aboriginal children from birth to five years in the education of their children. Specifically, the role will contribute to improved kindergarten enrolment and attendance by supporting parents to participate in programs and enhance their capacity to support their children’s learning and preparedness for school entry. Aboriginal Early Years Education Workers conduct their role in close collaboration with CFC Centre Leaders and support staff and with teachers and school Principals.

Communication and Interpersonal

The Aboriginal Early Years Education Worker

- facilitates discussions between families and early childhood program leaders/schools
- shares information with parents
- provides a point of contact within the school/CFC for families of Aboriginal children
Supporting the teaching and learning program

The Aboriginal Early Years Education Workers can assist the teacher/facilitator in:

- outreach practices aimed at engaging Aboriginal children and their families
- the planning and delivery of education programs, particularly in the area of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Histories and Cultures Cross-Curriculum Priority and the Early Years Learning Framework
- supporting the well-being of Aboriginal children by helping them become involved in Early Years initiatives that
- assisting in developing and maintaining Personalised Learning Plans (PLPs) for Aboriginal students of school age
- developing their knowledge and understanding of Aboriginal people and culture
- accessing programs, people, resources, funding and opportunities offered by Aboriginal Education Services and its partners

Working in the school environment

The Aboriginal Early Years Education Worker assists the teacher/facilitator with:

- the well-being and the learning of families or groups of students in CFC’s, classroom, out-of-class activities and on school excursions
- developing a learning environment that is culturally inclusive
- outreach, including home visits, in collaboration with the support team structures within the CFC/school

CENTRE LEADER RESPONSIBILITIES

Induction

As with any new staff member, it is important the Aboriginal Early Years Education Worker is introduced to all staff and their role is explained clearly. The Aboriginal Early Years Education Worker will respond much more effectively if they feel valued and welcome in the CFC/school. Aboriginal Early Years Education Workers may be new to the CFC/school environment and culture and will need support to understand the policies, processes and systems associated with their CFC/school. Effective Aboriginal Early Years Education Workers form close working partnerships with teachers and CFC staff, and are able to work with them to influence pedagogy and build strong relationships.

Professional Development Plan (PDP) process

The CFC Centre Leader is responsible for a regular process of performance management for Aboriginal Early Years Education Workers through the Professional Development Plan (PDP) process. The objective of the PDP process is to ensure that the Aboriginal Early Years Education Worker:

- can see how their own role contributes to the overall goals of their CFC and the Centre Improvement priorities especially for Aboriginal students; to the goals of Tasmania’s Aboriginal Education Framework (2016-2017); and to the goals of the Learners First Strategy 2014/17
- understands, and has input into a conversation about their strengths and areas of importance to develop
- is supported to identify learning and development needs and ways that these may be met
- understands and upholds the State Service Principles and Code of Conduct
The **Aboriginal Early Years Education Worker** is a human resource employed by AES and as such is strategically managed by AES. AES may be included in the PDP process by negotiation.

For more information please refer to the following links:

**Professional Learning**

The Centre Leader is responsible for the provision of information, and access to, professional learning opportunities for **Aboriginal Early Years Education Workers**. From time to time, Aboriginal Education Services (AES) will facilitate professional learning workshops for **Aboriginal Early Years Education Workers** and will involve **Aboriginal Early Years Education Workers** in the professional learning of DoE early years educators. In these cases, CFCs are requested to support their **Aboriginal Early Years Education Worker’s** participation. For more information, please contact AES on (03) 6165 5478 or email aboriginal.education@education.tas.gov.au.

**Home visits**

All home visits should be conducted by negotiation with the Centre Leader. Centre Leaders are responsible for ensuring that **Aboriginal Early Years Education Workers** are aware of, and follow the DoE Conducting Home Visits Procedures. This should include a Risk Assessment and a clearly articulated process for ensuring safety. It is recommended that the **Aboriginal Early Years Education Worker** works closely with the support team in the CFC and completes a short report or comment in SSS or on CFC files at the conclusion of each home visit.


**Timetables**

The Centre Leader is responsible for ensuring that the **Aboriginal Early Years Education Worker** has a clearly defined timetable or work schedule that indicates where they are located on given days at given times and the duties they will be performing. Copies of the timetable should be provided to the following staff members in the CFC:

- **Aboriginal Early Years Education Worker’s** line manager
- Teachers in whose class the **Aboriginal Early Years Education Worker** will be working

**Appointment of a line manager**

AES are responsible for the overall management of the **Aboriginal Early Years Education Worker** including employment and ongoing management of leave entitlements and human resourcing issues. The Centre Leader is responsible for the line management of the **Aboriginal Early Years Education Worker** as the CFC is the workers base and accepts responsibility for the day to day functioning and care of the Aboriginal Early Years Education Worker. The Centre Leader may appoint a line manager to support the **Aboriginal Early Years Education Worker** within the CFC environment. The line manager should:

- meet regularly with the **Aboriginal Early Years Education Worker**
- support the **Aboriginal Early Years Education Worker** to build relationships and networks with the CFC
- ensure that the **Aboriginal Early Years Education Worker** is supported to meet with families and schools staff
- assist the **Aboriginal Early Years Education Worker** to seek and participate in appropriate professional learning
- provide feedback and advice to the **Aboriginal Early Years Education Worker**
- ensure that the **Aboriginal Early Years Education Worker** activities aligns with the *Closing the Gap in Aboriginal Education Outcomes 2016-2019* priority areas.
**Access to office space and computer**

Centre Leader is responsible for ensuring the Aboriginal Early Years Education Workers have an office space (some Aboriginal Early Years Education Workers may have cultural resources that require storage) and a computer to access their work emails and relevant online information.

**Budget**

AES provides each Aboriginal Early Years Education Worker with a small budget for the purchase of resources and supplies.

With funding allocated for Aboriginal students through the Fairer Funding Model, principals are encouraged to allocate a budget to support Centre-based strategies towards closing the gap in Aboriginal education outcomes. Strategies can include: purchase of Tasmanian Aboriginal cultural resources, funding programs and resources that are proven to close the gap in educational outcomes, trialling innovative and inclusive strategies for improving attendance, engagement and educational outcomes, celebration of days and events of Aboriginal significance, and Aboriginal Community engagement activities.

**Travel**

All Aboriginal Early Years Education Workers are ‘Required Users’ of their vehicles. AES provide funding for up to 4000km and it is the responsibility of the Aboriginal Early Years Education Worker and the Centre Leader to ensure that travel is for core business and is kept to within 4000km per financial year. **AES will not pay for travel over this amount.**

**TEACHER/FACILITATOR RESPONSIBILITIES**

Teachers/facilitators need to have a sound understanding of the role of the Aboriginal Early Years Education Worker and the duties they can perform. They need to allocate time and organise regular sessions with the Aboriginal Early Years Education Worker to discuss curriculum, individual student, family, community or class priorities. Aboriginal Early Years Education Workers will need opportunities to discuss strategies and to gauge success of any approaches.

**Teaching program**

Teachers/facilitators have the responsibility for their education initiatives and programs, however, if the Aboriginal Early Years Education Worker is comfortable to be involved in assisting the delivery of programs, then the program should be planned with the Aboriginal Early Years Education Worker to ensure an understanding of the overall education strategy for the group of children and their families. Program ideas should be shared with them and their contributions valued. The teacher/facilitator should indicate clearly the role of the Aboriginal Early Years Education Worker when involving them in early years programs.

CFC and school staff must ensure that Aboriginal Early Years Education Workers are aware of their role in planning and delivering learning alongside them. Constructive feedback to Aboriginal Early Years Education Workers is encouraged.

Early years educators are encouraged to allow experienced and confident Aboriginal Early Years Education Workers to participate in programs, particularly in:

- Aboriginal issues and histories and cultures.
- areas in which the Aboriginal Early Years Education Worker is skilled (e.g. cultural practices, art, dance, drama, law, politics, storytelling, sport, music)
ABORIGINAL EARLY YEARS EDUCATION WORKER RESPONSIBILITIES

Responsibilities of the ABORIGINAL EARLY YEARS EDUCATION WORKER

Aboriginal Early Years Education Workers are required to participate in programs described in their statement of duties and initiated by the CFC to assist Aboriginal families. They may act as a reference point on Aboriginal issues. An Aboriginal Early Years Education Worker might also provide advice in development of CFC/school policy, planning and programs where these affect Aboriginal children. Aboriginal Early Years Education Workers have an important role to play in connecting the CFC/school with Aboriginal families and Community.

A copy of the Aboriginal Early Years Education Worker Statement of Duties can be found in Attachment A.

In order to assist Aboriginal Early Years Education Workers to be highly effective members of staff, Centre Leaders are encouraged to support the Aboriginal Early Years Education Worker to undertake the following:

- Negotiate and review a timetable that reflects support time in CFC’s and schools, the names of the Aboriginal children the Aboriginal Early Years Education Worker is in contact with, planning time, other regular activities, and meetings.

- Work with relevant staff to manage student transition points. Particularly, from the home, to early childhood programs, and to kindergarten.

Home visits

All home visits should be conducted by negotiation with the Direction of the Centre Leader and/or line manager. When an Aboriginal Early Years Education Worker conducts a home visit they should adhere to the DoE Conducting Home Visit Procedures (see link below) and complete a risk assessment. The risk assessment should be sent to the principal and a copy sent to the Manager AES. Best practice would involve Aboriginal Early Years Education Workers working in collaboration with support teams in CFCs/schools to ensure consistency and transparency. A home-visit report should be made in the Student Support System (SSS) where possible including the following information:

- date and time
- who is being seen and their address
- purpose of visit
- discussion
- advice
- requests received
- outcomes
- follow-up

Where confidential information is recorded, a note should be made in SSS or in CFC records that sensitive information about an issue is held by the Aboriginal Early Years Education Worker. The Aboriginal Early Years Education Worker should record this information in a private place.


Mandatory Reporting

Aboriginal Early Years Education Workers should be aware of their obligations around mandatory reporting. All employees should read and familiarise themselves with the Department’s Mandatory Reporting Procedure (see link below).

Travel log and travel claims.

Aboriginal Early Years Education Workers should keep a spreadsheet/diary of their work-related travel for each financial year. It should clearly show travel for each month – purpose and number of kilometres. Aboriginal Early Years Education Workers should also submit a monthly travel claim to AES within two weeks of the end of the month. Aboriginal Early Years Education Workers should work with principals to ensure they keep their travel to within 4000km per financial year. AES will not pay for travel over this amount.

Resource Collecting

Aboriginal Early Years Education Workers may need to collect resources (e.g. bull kelp, shells, wood) for cultural activities in CFCs/schools. A risk assessment should be completed before each excursion to collect resources. Where practicable, Aboriginal Early Years Education Worker should partner with at least one other Aboriginal Early Years Education Worker, AEW or teacher to ensure safety and for collegial reasons. Aboriginal Early Years Education Workers should use a hire-car for resource collecting unless otherwise negotiated.

Meetings

Aboriginal Early Years Education Workers attend meetings that relate directly to their role in the school/CFC. These might include:

- staff meetings
- planning meetings
- reflection meetings
- meetings with DoE Aboriginal Education Services staff
- Aboriginal Early Years Education Worker program and training meetings
- professional development days

Centre Leaders/Principals, through the Aboriginal Early Years Education Worker line manager, need to be aware of these meetings. Regular meetings should be reflected in the Aboriginal Early Years Education Worker timetable.

Cultural awareness

Aboriginal Early Years Education Workers support Aboriginal culture within the CFC/school learning environment and seek further Aboriginal participation from parents, Community, and Aboriginal Education Services staff. Aboriginal Early Years Education Workers are encouraged to visit Aboriginal Education Services and the Aboriginal Education Resource Centre to access Aboriginal education materials and resources and access professional learning opportunities. Aboriginal Education Services and the Aboriginal Education Resource Centre are located at 30 Raminea Road, or phone (03) 6165 5478. A state-wide list of Aboriginal Education Services contact details can be found at https://www.education.tas.gov.au/parents_carers/schools-colleges/Programs-Initiatives/Pages/Aboriginal-Education-Services.aspx

Away from work

If an Aboriginal Early Years Education Worker is sick they must let their line manager at the CFC or school know and at the Manager, AES before 8:30am. It is the Aboriginal Early Years Education Workers responsibility to ensure they enter their absence on Employee Self Service (ESS), and forward any medical certificates to AES, the next working day.
USEFUL CONTACTS

AES Office
30 Raminea Road, Lindisfarne
GPO Box 169, Hobart Tas 7001
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