



ECIA (VC) Forum: July 10, 2006

Community Inclusion in the Early Years

Part 1: What are our desired outcomes?

Reading Material

– A range of perspectives regarding diversity and inclusion in early year services.

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www.eciavic.org.au

A. Early Childhood Intervention Australia - www.eciavic.org.au

Our Vision: A society, which provides the conditions and supports necessary to enable all families to nurture, protect and enjoy their children.

Our Mission: As a peak body, ECIA(VC) will promote and support a system of quality services for families with children who have special needs.

Early childhood intervention services aim to make a positive difference for families with a child with developmental delay or disability.

ECIA (VC) OUTCOMES FOR CHILDREN

	FUNCTIONING	PARTICIPATING
OUTCOMES	<p>Children will gain functional, developmental and coping skills that are appropriate to their ability and circumstances.</p> <p>Children will show confidence and enjoyment in their everyday life.</p>	<p>Children will participate meaningfully in home and local community activities to the extent of their ability.</p> <p>Children will experience and enjoy family life and community activities that are preferred by the family.</p>

ECIA (VC) OUTCOMES FOR FAMILIES

	FUNCTIONING	PARTICIPATING
OUTCOMES	<p>Families will be able to nurture and support their child according to their values and preferences.</p> <p>Families will be able to identify and address the needs of their child(ren) and family.</p> <p>Families will be able to advocate for themselves and their family, to the degree they choose.</p>	<p>Families will participate in social and community activities to the degree they choose.</p> <p>Families will feel supported by personal networks and local communities.</p>

ECIA (VC) OUTCOMES FOR COMMUNITIES

	FUNCTIONING	PARTICIPATING
OUTCOMES	<p>Communities will have a range of service options and facilities to respond to emerging needs of families in supportive ways.</p> <p>Communities will know how to, and be able to respond to the needs of all individuals and families.</p>	<p>Communities will value all members.</p> <p>Communities will be inclusive, providing for diversity, access and quality services for all families.</p>

B. Early Childhood Australia



www.earlychildhoodaustralia.org.au

Early childhood Australia Mission Statement: *Early Childhood Australia will advocate to ensure quality, social justice and equity in all issues relating to the education and care of children from birth to eight years.*

Inclusion of Children

Early Childhood Australia Position Statement – ratified October 2005

- All children have the right to access and participate in early childhood programs and services.
- Diversity is valued and acknowledged in all early childhood programs and services.
- Early childhood professionals work as partners with families, and in collaboration with other agencies, in providing a program that responds to the individual strengths and needs of all children and respects families' priorities and concerns.
- Staff promote the empowerment of families/caregivers as decision-makers about their children's development and wellbeing.
- The early childhood program is inclusive of all children's abilities and interests, seeking to enhance children's development and wellbeing.
- All staff take equal responsibility for the care and learning of all children.
- Staff access specialised advice and appropriate training in developing and implementing inclusive programs, building on existing strengths and accessing additional resources where required.
- Additional staff support a whole-team approach to meeting the needs of all children.
- The environment maximises children's participation, minimises risk and provides a safe physical and emotional environment.
- Planning for successful transition to other programs and services occurs with the child's family and other agencies to support the child's wellbeing and continuity in learning and development.

*** SEE Early Childhood Australia *Diversity and Inclusion papers and resources* - Follow links from ECA home page → Supporting Best Practice → Learning and Teaching → Diversity and Inclusion



**Article from FKA Resource Journal, May 2003.
Inclusion and inclusive practices.**

Inclusion.

In recent times, the concept of 'inclusion' has gained recognition in the general community, and it has in turn trickled down to children's services. Governments and government departments, community groups and individuals now widely use the term (though often in contradictory and possibly misleading ways). Broadly speaking, in Victoria inclusion is about creating a sense of belonging for all children, families and staff where diverse identities, experiences, skills and interests can be offered expression and the opportunity to develop. Inclusion takes in the needs and interests of every individual in society, so it is necessarily a very general term which is employed in a variety of ways. (It is worth noting that inclusion originated out of the disability field, and many people still associate it solely with disability issues.)

Inclusive practices.

The concept of 'inclusive practices' provides a framework for bringing inclusion to life. Inclusive practices are the things we do every day to make it possible for children to be successfully included in children's services. It is also the point at which inclusion looks different according to the situation. For example, the 'practice' of inclusion will differ when considering the needs of a child with a disability and the needs of a child from a refugee background. While the goal of inclusion is shared by disparate groups, the paths that lead to it (i.e. inclusive practices) will be many and varied. Inclusion must not be seen as 'one size fits all'. Recently, FKA staff met to discuss what form inclusion and inclusive practices take in our work with children and families from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. Though we all expressed our thoughts in different ways, common themes and ideas emerged, such as respect, collaboration, empowerment, participation and sensitivity. Our ideas dovetail neatly with recent work released by the State Government.

Valuing cultural diversity.

In 2002, the Victorian Government produced a booklet that clearly articulates their approach to supporting the state's cultural and linguistic diversity. Valuing Cultural Diversity builds on and extends the commitment of successive State and Commonwealth governments in promoting the benefits of a multicultural society for all Victorians, and sets the agenda for future work to be done. As Premier Steve Bracks says in the preface: "Cultural diversity, based on respect, is the glue that binds our society and enriches us both as individuals and as a community." The government is committed to pursuing these four principles of valuing diversity, reducing inequality, encouraging participation, promoting the social, cultural and economic benefits of cultural diversity for all Victorians.

FKA wholeheartedly supports the Government's ideals in this regard, and in this newsletter we 'unpack' the principles and explore what they mean in children's services. ¹ The full report can be viewed and downloaded at www.voma.vic.gov.au



D. Playworks
<http://home.vicnet.net.au/~playwork/>

PLAYWORKS supports the beliefs that:

- Inclusion is a continuous process that enables each individual opportunities for acceptance, belonging and participation in the community.
- Inclusive practice in child care requires a focus on individual children as well as a focus on group cohesiveness and connectedness with each other.

FEATURES OF INCLUSIVE PRACTICE

Inclusive practices require a focus on individual children as well as a focus on group cohesiveness and connectedness with each other. Consider the quality of the program from the perspective of all members of the community (Anne Kennedy 1999)



INCLUSION IS A PROCESS, NOT A PRODUCT. Developed by the Victorian Alliance of Specialist Resource and Training Agencies in consultation with Children's Services Resource and Development Officers. October 2000.

E. Community Child Care Association

www.cccinc.org.au

– part of National Association of Community Based Children’s Services www.nacbcs.org.au/



F. FACSIA – The Department of Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs. <http://www.facs.gov.au/>

The Department of Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (FaCSIA) is responsible for social policies and support affecting Australian society and the living standards of Australian families.

*** See Sections L and M (pages 10 to 16) for previous FACSIA papers on professional roles and inclusion.

G. University of Melbourne, Centre for Equity and Innovation in Early Childhood. www.edfac.unimelb.edu.au/eesc/ceiec/

The Centre for Equity and Innovation in Early Childhood (CEIEC) was established in November 1991 at the University of Melbourne. Since it began, the Centre has developed a strong research culture and international reputation for its work in equity and change research, professional development and teaching.

The Centre for Equity and Innovation in Early Childhood (CEIEC) and its work are premised on the following beliefs:

- all children have a right to participate as equal and active citizens in early education assured of their rights and free from all forms of discrimination including racism, sexism and classism
- Community/ University partnerships are an essential component in supporting equity, social justice and innovation in early education
- high quality research is a core component of improving outcomes and experience for all children in early education
- Interdisciplinary approach that draws on networks of interest around social justice and key equity issues is an important component of producing high quality knowledge about equity, children’s rights and early education.

- H. VICSEG – Victorian Cooperative on Children’s Services for Ethnic Groups – linking Ethnic Communities with Services for Families and Children in Victoria.



As a co-operative of ethnic community organisations with a direct interest in families and children, VICSEG is uniquely placed to assist child care services and those who resource them to develop culturally inclusive practices that acknowledge and respect the diverse cultures and languages in our community.

Support to ISFs includes orientation to ISF role, cultural competency and skills development as well as mentoring. VICSEG provides advice, consultancy and referral on cultural issues – contact – 9383 2533.

- I. Action on Disabilities in Ethnic Communities www.adec.org.au



Mission Statement: *Action on Disability within Ethnic Communities Inc (ADEC)* strives to empower people with a disability from non-English speaking backgrounds, their carers, and families to fully participate as members of the Victorian community. ADEC is a state-wide organisation.

- J. Department of Communities – Victorian Office of Multicultural Affairs
www.voma.vic.gov.au

More information regarding community profiles, birthplace, migration and settlement statistics etc., multicultural consideration of language and religion and spiritual areas and related resources.

- K. Secretariat of National Aboriginal and Islander Child Care Inc.
www.snaicc.asn.au



SNAICC Vision: An Australian society in which our communities are empowered to determine their own future, where the rights of our children, young people and families are protected, our cultural identity and achievements are valued and our children and families have access to culturally appropriate services.

SNAICC Mission: To provide a strong voice for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families through a national body which represents Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children's services and promotes the rights, needs and aspirations of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families.

SNAICC has released 7 priorities for indigenous children – including the following 2:

Early Childhood Programs

The importance of the early childhood years has been widely recognised, but too many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children are disadvantaged at the point of commencing primary school due to preventable health and developmental problems and lack of access to quality child care and early childhood education. These children may get left behind and do on to become the unemployed, marginalised and impoverished young people of the next generation. SNAICC calls on all Australian governments to better respond to the health, well-being, development, education, cultural and spiritual needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in the early years.

Capacity Building

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations are providing many successful programs and services for families and children across the country. It is now time to provide better service coverage and expand the range of services provided, with a particular focus on prevention and early intervention programs. We need to support and strengthen the programs, resources and management of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander child care, child development and child and family welfare services of all types, and implement initiatives to overcome the critical shortage of trained indigenous staff within the children's services sector.

Further information contact:

Victorian Aboriginal Education Association - www.vaeai.org.au/
Aboriginal Affairs Victoria: www1.dvc.vic.gov.au/aav

L. Previous FACSIA paper

INCLUSION SUPPORT FACILITATOR - ROLE STATEMENT

“The aim of the Inclusion and Professional Support Program (IPSP) is to promote and maintain high quality care and inclusion for all children in eligible child care services, by increasing the skill level of carers and service staff in line with nationally consistent principles”.

This role statement¹ has been developed following extensive consultation and a review of literature:

- to identify practices that facilitate inclusion of children from the identified priority groups in child care settings
- to support a nationally consistent approach to Inclusion Support Facilitator (ISF) service delivery.

Principles

A review of research and practice reveals that inclusive child care settings have the following characteristics:

- They work in partnership with families and their extended networks
- They build on the strengths of the child care community (child, family, staff and community)
- They use flexible programming approaches that are responsive to individual needs
- They respect and respond to families’ cultural values, needs and circumstances
- They provide welcoming and engaging environments that are responsive to all children and their families
- They create links through networking with other relevant services and supports.

These principles have informed the role of an ISF, which is characterised by approaches that:

- Strengthen relationships by recognising and valuing the diversity of the community
- Engage child care services in ongoing processes of reflection and development
- Enable child care services to identify and implement practical ways to support inclusion
- Support child care services to sustain flexible, responsive approaches that build on their capacity to be inclusive of all children.

¹ The Role Statement has been developed by the National Alliance of Disability Resource and Training Agencies (NADRATA), the National Association for Multicultural and Ethnic Children’s Services (NAMECS) and the Secretariat of the National Aboriginal and Islander Child Care (SNAICC)

Position Objectives

- To build the capacity of child care services to create an inclusive environment for all children and families, that supports their well being and development
- To promote the awareness of and responsiveness to the identified priority groups within child care services
 - children from cultural and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds including refugee and Australian South Sea Islander children
 - children with ongoing high support needs including children with a disability
 - Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children.

Key Responsibilities

To assist child care services to respond to the needs of children in the priority groups through the provision of high quality, inclusive environments by:

- a) Providing or sourcing information and support in response to child care service inclusion needs
- b) Supporting services to develop, implement and sustain flexible, inclusive practices
- c) Assisting services to link with relevant community groups, services and organisations
- d) Supporting services to work in partnership with families and support networks
- e) Assisting child care services to identify professional development needs and opportunities
- f) Supporting services to engage in ongoing reflective and improvement practices.

Knowledge

Knowledge and understanding of:

- Child development (including the relationship between culture and understandings of child development)
- The philosophy of inclusion and associated practice
- Children and families from the priority groups
- Reflective practice (individual and organisation)
- Strength based approaches
- Collaborative approaches to change
- Adult learning principles
- Australian Government child care services sectors, relevant resources and supports.

Skills and Experience

Ability to effectively utilise:

- Interpersonal communication skills (written and verbal) to facilitate collaboration and partnerships
- Reflective practice that supports services to engage in evaluation and ongoing development
- Partnership approaches to support the implementation of change
- Analysis to maximise opportunities to support inclusive practice
- Negotiation and problem solving approaches
- Relevant resources, networks and supports.

- M. Sections 2 and 3 from
FACSIA Inclusion Support Facilitator Information Kit 2005.

SECTION 2. INCLUSION: DEFINITION AND KEY PRINCIPLES

This section includes clarification of a definition of inclusion that is relevant to the role of Inclusion Support Facilitators. It also includes a summary review of key principles and best practice in inclusion of children with additional needs which is consistent with the current evidence.

2.1 Defining Inclusion

As currently defined by the Australian Government Department of Family and Community Services (FaCS), 'inclusion means access and participation of all children including those with particular needs into the child care environment.'

Inclusion is a value system that is evidenced by practices that provide each and every individual with the opportunity to feel accepted by others, to develop a sense of belonging and to participate in the community. The philosophy of inclusion informs the policies and practice of quality service provision.

Child care that is inclusive of all children assists staff, children and the broader community to learn and grow together in a setting, which values diversity.

Inclusion Support provides for all children in care to access and participate in a positive and nurturing environment where they can learn and interact with children of a similar age. This includes children from the following priority groups:

- children from cultural and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds including refugee and Australian South Sea Islander children
- children with ongoing high support needs including children with a disability
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children.

2.2 Key principles underpinning the provision of inclusion support

- All children and families have a right to access and participate in child care services
- Family centred practice is a foundation for quality child care service and delivery
- Strength based approaches build capacity of both services and Inclusion Support Facilitators
- Inclusion support is a shared responsibility of all stakeholders in the child care services sector
- Flexibility needs to be maintained to respond to local/regional demographics.

2.3 Key features of effective inclusive practice in child care settings

A review of research and practice reveals that inclusive child care settings include the following characteristics:

- They provide welcoming and engaging environments that are responsive to all children and their families
- They work in partnership with families and their extended networks
- They respect and respond to families cultural values, needs and circumstances
- They recognise and build on the unique contributions of each child and family
- They use flexible programming approaches that are responsive to individual needs
- They build on the strengths of the child care community (child, family, staff and community)
- They work in partnership with specialist service providers
- They adopt a team approach
- They allocate time for reflection and planning
- They demonstrate a high level of commitment, positive attitudes and a proactive focus
- They are adequately resourced, including sufficient, appropriately qualified staff
- The staff are well supported and provided with ongoing professional development and supervision opportunities
- They link with other relevant services and supports through networking activities
- They provide high quality child care.

SECTION 3. BARRIERS TO AND FACILITATORS OF INCLUSION FOR THE PRIORITY GROUPS

This section is informed by research undertaken to support the development of the Inclusion Support Facilitator role statement.

3.1 Barriers common to the priority groups

Issues faced by vulnerable families in accessing services identified two main types of barriers; service level (structural) barriers, and barriers specific to children, their parents and their family situations. Many vulnerable families experience several concurrent barriers, which impact on inclusion.

Service level (structural) barriers can include:

- lack of publicity about services
- lack of knowledge about complex services
- cost of services
- limited availability (eg child care places)
- inaccessible location
- lack of public transport
- limited hours of operation
- inflexible appointment systems

- limited access to specialist support for children with additional needs
- poor coordination between services
- lack of attention to cultural values and practices
- insensitive or discriminatory attitudes and behaviours of staff or other parents.

Barriers specific to children and families can include:

- limited income
- lack of social support
- lack of private transport
- unstable housing or homelessness
- low literacy or English language levels
- large family size
- personal preferences and individual beliefs about the necessity and value of services
- lack of trust in services
- fear of child protection services
- physical or mental health issues or disability and
- day to day stress¹

3.1 Children with disabilities

In addition to the range of barriers previously listed as pertaining to structure and family situation, barriers to the inclusion of children with disabilities in mainstream programs may include:

- Access to child care services and funding for inclusion support^{2,3}
- The beliefs and expectations of parents and professionals, including competing values and beliefs as well as the expectations of other parents, typically developing children and the community in general^{4,5,6,7,8}
- Program implementation, including program philosophy and culture, quality, failure to meet individual needs and the inappropriate use of resources. eg staff who work exclusively with the child rather than working with all centre staff and children ^{8,9,10,2}
- Issues regarding staffing, training and management, including a lack of training and difficulty recruiting and retaining competent staff, lack of time for planning and collaboration and difficulties accessing specialist support.^{3,10}

3.3 Children from Culturally and Linguistically Diverse backgrounds (including refugee children)

In addition to the range of barriers previously listed as pertaining to structure and family situation, the barriers to the inclusion of children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds in mainstream programs may include issues regarding:

- Access to child care services and funding for inclusion support including a lack of interpreters and translated material; unfamiliarity with the Australian child care sector ¹¹
- The beliefs and expectations of parents and professionals including differences in parental and professional views of child development, child

rearing practices, disability and the views and respective roles of parents and professionals^{12,13,14}

- Program implementation, including a lack of cultural sensitivity and support for bilingualism.^{11, 15,16} Prejudice or ignorance about the cultural practices of others may be reflected and embedded in individual workers' practices, as well as systemic arrangements.¹⁷ Communication problems may exist between service staff and families because of cultural and language differences and continuity between home and the child care service may be compromised¹⁵
- Issues regarding staffing, training and management including a staff team that is not representative of the populations they support and the shortage of personnel trained in culturally sensitive practice.¹¹

3.3.1 Issues for refugee families

Refugee families are also particularly vulnerable to additional barriers to inclusion due to:

Exposure to privation and trauma. Staff are not always aware of the pervasive and life altering effects on families that result from an experience of organised violence and exile, including the implications for child development and the impact on behaviour and ability to form relationships.^{20,21}

Experience in detention. Retention of refugee families in detention centres for extended periods can also be traumatising for children and their parents.^{18,19}

Social isolation. Including the challenges associated with integration into an advanced western society.

3.4 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children

In addition to the range of barriers previously listed as pertaining to structure and family situation, the barriers to the inclusion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in mainstream programs may include issues regarding:

- Health and welfare
- Access to child care services
- Attitudes and experiences of Aboriginal people toward mainstream culture and services e.g. fear and uncertainty
- Community attitudes towards Aboriginal culture. Some Aboriginal communities and families are subject to judgmental attitudes and prejudice. This may be reflected and embedded in individual workers' practices, as well as systemic arrangements
- Program implementation including cultural insensitivity and cultural irrelevance; the physical aspects of mainstream services; attitudes and practices of services including lack of respect for Aboriginal people or Aboriginal structures; and organisational practices; including lack of flexibility and respect for appropriate process
- Staffing; training and management including lack of Aboriginal staff and cross-cultural training for non-Aboriginal staff.^{22, 23}

3.5 General strategies to promote inclusion

There are a number of important approaches that child care services may adopt to support inclusive practice. They may need to address aspects of their physical environment,¹⁷ as well as the following principles of service delivery,¹ which are applicable to the priority groups identified in the Inclusion Support Program.

- Commitment to inclusive practices
- Adequate resourcing
- Knowing and involving the community
- Proactive focus
- Family friendly environment
- Flexibility and relevance
- Family centred practice
- Professional development
- Promoting a team approach
- Providing a blend of professional and informal supports.¹

To be more inclusive, services will therefore need to implement strategies which:

- Minimise the 'practical' (structural) access barriers and support parents to overcome their knowledge, financial, transport and time difficulties to maintain attendance
- Build positive and affirming relationships with parents, which counteract distrust and stigma, and assist parents to connect with others
- Ensure their programs are culturally sensitive and provide a perceived 'value for effort', both short term and long term, for the child and their parents
- Establish strong reciprocal links with other services, particularly those targeted to vulnerable families.¹

N. Centre for Child Community Health research and resources on website.

** See the full policy documents under the CCCH publications section.

POLICY BRIEF Number 1, 2006 *
Early childhood and the life course

INTRODUCTION

What happens to children in the early years has consequences right through the course of their lives. There are many opportunities to intervene and make a difference to the lives of children and young people. The evidence shows the most effective time to intervene is early childhood, including the antenatal period. This Policy Brief explores the issues that impact the health, development and well-being of children and therefore their life course. These issues will be addressed from ecological and economic perspectives.

POLICY BRIEF Number 2, 2006 *
Quality in children's services

INTRODUCTION

The quality of children's services has a profound influence on children's development throughout the life course. This policy brief will highlight the powerful influence that the interaction between regulation, accreditation and curricula has on the quality of children's services. For the purposes of this Policy Brief, the term *children's services* refers to services provided to children who are below school age in the form of child care and preschool/kindergarten (early learning centres).

Why is this issue important?

A high quality early childhood service:

- provides children with caring and nurturing learning programs, and where appropriate, specialist intervention creates and enhances family and community networks
- becomes a trusted source of information and support (OECD, 2001).

O. Niftey - National Investment for the Early Years

www.niftey.cyh.com

Niftey Mission:

'To build a lifetime on the early years: ready for school ready for life'

Follow the link to *What About the Kids?*

Also watch for the May 2006 paper: *Always there for me? Policy directions for improving the experiences of infants and young children in a changing world.*

P. International Example

Proposed Benefits of Preschool Inclusion by Mark Wolery,

Investigator and Fellow Director—Child and Family Research, Research Professor, Education,
Frank Porter Graham Child Development Center, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

Benefits for	Benefits
Children with disabilities	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. They are spared the effects of separate, segregated education – including the negative effects of labelling and negative attitudes fostered by lack of contact with them. 2. They are provided with competent models that allow them to learn new adaptive skills and/or learn when and how to use their existing skills through imitation. 3. They are provided with competent peers with whom to interact and thereby learn new social and/or communicative skills. 4. They are provided with realistic life experiences that prepare them to live in the community. 5. They are provided with opportunities to develop friendships with typically developing peers.
Children without disabilities	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. They are provided with opportunities to learn more realistic and accurate views about individuals with disabilities. 2. They are provided with opportunities to develop positive attitudes toward others who are different from themselves. 3. They are provided with opportunities to learn altruistic behaviours and when and how to use such behaviours. 4. They are provided with models of individuals who successfully achieve despite challenges.
Communities	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. They can conserve their early childhood resources by limiting the need for segregated, specialized programs. 2. They can conserve educational resources if children with disabilities who are mainstreamed at the preschool level continue in regular as compared to special education placements during the elementary school years.
Families of children with disabilities	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. They are able to learn about typical development. 2. They may feel less isolated from the remainder of their communities. 3. They may develop relationships with families of typically developing children who can provide them with meaningful support.
Families of children without disabilities	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. They may develop relationships with families who have children with disabilities and thereby make a contribution to them and their communities. 2. They will have opportunities to teach their children about individual differences and about accepting individuals who are different.

¹ Reproduced from: Wolery, M., & Wilbers, J. S. (1994). Introduction to the inclusion of young children with special needs in early childhood programs. In M. Wolery and J. S. Wilbers (Eds.), *Including children with special needs in early childhood programs* (pp. 1-22). Washington, DC: National Association for the Education of Young Children.

Q. Circles of Inclusion.

www.circleofinclusion.org/

A number of international papers and resources from 1990s onwards. Sections discuss inclusion and methods and approaches. Example programs are described, as well as resources and sample forms and materials.

