



February 2010

**To the Ministerial Council for Education and Early Childhood
Development and Youth Affairs**

**Indigenous Education Action Plan 2010 - 2014: KPV
Submission**

KPV promotes the voice of parents in quality early childhood education for Victorian children, serving more than 200,000 children and their families. Our membership is made up of over 1200 early education and care providers such as independent kindergartens, cluster managers, long day care services, childcare centres and local governments.

We recognise that the provision of quality early childhood education is one of the most effective investments governments can make to promote good outcomes for children and the community. We use our voice as the peak employer organisation for kindergarten in Victoria to promote well resourced and accessible early education for all. Policy guidelines, regulations and legislation must facilitate quality early childhood education services and the development of an agreed strategy to close the gap in life chances for indigenous Australians is applauded.

The overall structure of the action plan establishes priorities related to life stages and this creates the sense of building blocks that will influence generational change over the long term. The introduction recognises the reforms currently occurring in early education and alludes to their influence on achieving longer term educational goals. This could be strengthened in the final action plan to ensure that the important focus on early education is embedded in how educational strategy is developed and supported. On a general level we believe that the plan needs to make a clearer distinction between schools and early education providers.

Our submission focuses on three sections in part 2 National Collaboration: Readiness for school, Engagement and connections, as well as Literacy and numeracy. In each instance our comments relate to the links between issues, outcomes and actions.

Readiness for school is introduced broadly as promotion of engagement with learning, encouraging progress across developmental domains and providing foundations for educational achievement. The outcomes need to focus on the partnership between families, early education providers and the strategic platforms (building blocks) which are necessary to promote engagement with learning. The National collaborative action needs to incorporate a greater focus on integrated approaches to

‘readiness’. At a systems and school level it is important to clarify the difference between access and attendance and recognise the important role that ‘family’ engagement plays in achieving success in school readiness. The role of parents cannot be underestimated. They contribute by taking children to programs through to participating in decision making. In Victoria, early education programs are predominantly delivered on the ground by community based organisations, the support of these organisations through collaborative policy making and funding is necessary.

Engagement and connections in early education settings is central to learning. Policy can highlight the importance of engagement, however resourcing and support through jurisdictional and local levels will make the most significant difference. The ongoing commitment to working with local aboriginal educational consultative groups (as in Victoria) is not just about considering aboriginal perspectives but embedding them in policy and action. It is important that the action plan reflects a focus on Aboriginal identity. The Early Years Learning Framework focuses on Belonging, Being and Becoming. These have resonance with the idea of identity – *knowing where and with whom you belong – is integral to human existence*¹ and are central to closing the gap in educational achievement between indigenous and non-indigenous Australians.

The action plan acknowledges that literacy and numeracy competence starts in the early years yet there is minimal consideration of strategies to promote early literacy beyond intensive support playgroups. The plan needs to strengthen the approach to early years literacy support. This means strengthening strategies that will educate and support early childhood educators to provide “culturally inclusive” programs. At the jurisdictional level greater emphasis needs to be placed on having Koorie early childhood workers, personalised learning plans and good transition programs.

Underpinning this response to the Indigenous Education Action Plan is the support of good leadership and programs which will enable early childhood program coordinators and school principals to lead continuous improvement in program content and the learning outcomes of Koorie children. Meeting the commitment to provide additional guidance on implementing the EYLF with cultural security should be included in the plan.

All strategies need to be implemented through good promotion strategies and effective communication with parents and the community.

KPV is available to work with VAEAI to support further development and implementation of the Indigenous Education Action Plan in Victoria.

¹ Belong, Being and Becoming: the Early Years Learning Framework for Australia, Commonwealth of Australia, 2009