

## Working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families and children toolkit

### Finding the secret garden

*I have a secret garden, but you don't see,  
I feel my family circling me with love, is this what you see?  
I am the future of how you work and how you interact with me,  
I am shaped by this experience.  
When you're working with my parents you see our skin, poverty, and violence,  
but I see how you look down at me.  
I feel sad that you think you know, but you don't know me;  
what you see on tv, that's not me.  
My culture is beautiful, is that what you see?  
I see you not listen, that's what I see,  
I hear my family angry because of what you say about my people, they are  
part of me.  
I see fear, you are scared of me,  
but I need your help, why are you scared?  
I have a secret garden, but you don't see.  
– Anonymous*

### Who is this toolkit for?

This toolkit has been developed with support and guidance from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, to support non-Aboriginal practitioners in mainstream organisations to engage with First Nations families.

### How has this toolkit been developed?

When developing this resource we felt it was essential to include the voice of as many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples as possible.

We visited numerous communities across Australia to ensure we honoured the richness and diversity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander experience.

This toolkit is a result of the consistent themes and challenges that communities and practitioners face across the country.

### Why was this toolkit developed?

This toolkit has been developed as a result of consistent themes that we heard during the consultation process.

First Nations Peoples felt that, regardless of the area of engagement, practitioners required a foundational knowledge of Aboriginal experience. We hope to honour this voice and provide practitioners with knowledge and skills that support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples to feel safe and respected in their engagement with services.

We hope to encourage mainstream practitioners to work with a sense of respect and wonder for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and families. We see this toolkit as an opportunity for curiosity and learning, developed from the generous narratives that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples have shared.

### What information does the toolkit include?

Within this toolkit mainstream practitioners are provided with a framework that is based on the narratives and lived experience of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples. You will have access to practice tips, stories, reflections and guides that will assist you in your understanding and engagement with First Nations families.

We felt it was very important not to recreate the amazing work that has already been done by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations, so we have included links to further information and resources that can support you on your journey.

### Taking a curious stance

We would like to invite practitioners to approach this toolkit with curiosity and willingness to reflect on the cultural lens they bring to interactions with families, and consider the impact this has on engagement.

We hope the toolkit will build knowledge, skills and practice when engaging with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families.

### Acknowledgements

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The Centre would also like to recognise the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander National Consultancy Members, and the dedicated professionals who inform our work for the wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children and Families.

Visit the toolkit at [emergingminds.com.au/resources](https://emergingminds.com.au/resources)

Delivery partners:



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