

MOORT DANDJOO KAADADJINY (FAMILY LEARNING TOGETHER)

Why invest in Aboriginal led and run early childhood education programs?

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BACKGROUND AND WHAT WE DID

- Engagement in early childhood education (ECE) programs is important for children being ready for school and contributes to better life outcomes later in life.
- However, the lack of ongoing culturally appropriate ECE programs has contributed to a lack of engagement by Aboriginal families. Schools not engaging with local Aboriginal Elders and culture also contributes to Aboriginal families not engaging.
- ECE programs that incorporate Aboriginal cultural values will contribute to increased engagement and attendance from Aboriginal children and families and an increase in a child's readiness for school.
- The Moort Dandjoo Kaadadjiny (MDK) ECE program is co-designed with Aboriginal Elders and community members and is led and run by Aboriginal people.
- We conducted qualitative interviews with families that attend MDK to hear why they attend and what they enjoy the most about the program.
- Parents and children loved attending. They feel culturally safe and respected at MDK.
- Children learn about their culture, Noongar language, family connections and identity. Parents enjoyed being part of the cultural learning as some missed out on this.

OUR FINDINGS

- An Aboriginal led and run ECE program is really important to Aboriginal families and staff.
- The presence of Aboriginal Elders was valuable in passing on cultural knowledge and building connections. The children also enjoy being part of the program and keeps them active. Children grow up being part of their Aboriginal community.
- The intergenerational aspect of MDK assists in building a sense of community with the families that attend.
- Many parents saw improvements in their children's social behaviours and confidence as well as learning things that would be important for them when they go to school.

OUR RECOMMENDATIONS

- Ongoing funding for Aboriginal led and run early childhood education programs.
- Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations with an ECE focus need to be better funded to have these programs.

