



**Yanna Jannawi – Walk with Me.
Centering Indigenous Ways of Knowing
in Early Education and Care Services**

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the degree of Doctor of Philosophy,

under the supervision of Professor Susan Page, Professor
Gawaian Bodkin-Andrews and Professor Michelle Trudgett

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CERTIFICATE OF ORIGINAL AUTHORSHIP

I, Michelle Lea Locke declare that this thesis, is submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the award of Doctor of Philosophy, in the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences and the Centre for the Advancement of Indigenous Knowledges at the University of Technology Sydney.

This thesis is wholly my own work unless otherwise reference or acknowledged. In addition, I certify that all information sources and literature used are indicated in the thesis.

This document has not been submitted for qualifications at any other academic institution. This research is supported by the Australian Government Research Training Program.

This thesis includes Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property (ICIP) belonging to Indigenous participants from a variety of Aboriginal Nations including Dharug, Wakka Wakka, Wiradjuri, Gamilararray, Anaiwan Nganjaywana, Yorta Yorta, Bundjalung, Dharawal

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ABSTRACT

The *Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians* (2008) and the *Early Years Learning Framework for Australia* (Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations 2009) (DEEWR) prescribe that Indigenous Knowledges and perspectives be included in the curricula of early education and care services (EECS), to effectively value and support Indigenous families. However, the literature suggests there are substantial gaps in non-Indigenous teacher educator understandings and engagement with Indigenous Peoples and cultures. As a result, early childhood education too often includes stereotypically defined curricula interpreted from the dominant Western standpoint, which fails to value the complexity and diversity of Indigenous Knowledges. Using Indigenous research methodology, in a qualitative inquiry, this study sought to privilege the voices of Indigenous Peoples in identifying and exploring successful inclusion of Indigenous Knowledges in formal early learning settings. The study included thirteen Indigenous educators and parents/carers of Indigenous children, and eight non-Indigenous educators, who shared their views and experiences of Indigenous inclusion in the EECS with which they were engaged. Indigenous educators and parents/carers of Indigenous children identified and acknowledged positive approaches and examples of inclusion as well as sharing their views on additional needs and requirements to improve on the efforts of inclusion. Non-Indigenous educators demonstrated commitment to effective inclusion; however, the dominant positioning of Western worldviews over Indigenous epistemologies remained evident. In response, a relational model of inclusion

grounded in Indigenous Knowledges is proposed. The model illustrates the diversity, complexity and value of Indigenous Peoples and our Knowledges. Critically, the model relieves the burden on non-Indigenous educators to be the authorities on Indigenous inclusion by positioning Indigenous Peoples as the experts and owners of Indigenous Knowledges, and the custodians of the lives and interests of the Indigenous children. Finally, the model champions ongoing respectful and meaningful collaboration between Indigenous Peoples and non-Indigenous educators as paramount to attaining genuine inclusion of Indigenous Knowledges in Western-based EECS.

DEDICATION

I dedicate this PhD to my Mum, Denise Saunders, who has supported, guided and contributed to this journey in more ways than she could ever know.

I also dedicate this work to my sister Dannie and my Grandmother, Winifred Olive Harkins (nee Locke), who are watching over us in spirit.

I offer my respects to my Dharug Ancestors and all First Nations Ancestors who have walked and continue to walk this Country (land, sea and sky) for many thousands of years; past, present and future.

Ngalawan – We live we remain.

I wish to note that this thesis speaks with respect of people who have travelled
back to the Ancestors.

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Aunty Chris Burke 23rd April 1953 – 29th January 2016 (My Cousin)
Winifred Harkins 10th Sept 1921 – 15th April 2016 (Little Grandma)
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ABBREVIATIONS

ACECQA	Australian Children’s Education and Care Quality Authority
AIATSIS	Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies
ARC	Australian Research Council
BBF	budget based funding
CCB	Child Care Benefit
CIRCA	Cultural and Indigenous Research Centre Australia
COAG	Council of Australian Governments
DAA	Department of Aboriginal Affairs
DEEWR	Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations
EECS	early education and care services
EYLF	Early Years Learning Framework
LDC	Long Day Care
MACS	Multifunctional Aboriginal Children’s Services
MCEETYA	Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs
NAIDOC	National Aboriginal and Islander Observance Committee
NATSIEP	National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Policy
NHMRC	National Health and Medical Research Council
NQF	National Quality Framework
NQS	National Quality Standard
ORIC	Office of Registrar of Indigenous Corporations
OSHC	out of school hours care
PM&C	Prime Minister and Cabinet
SNAICC	Secretariat of National Aboriginal and Islander Child Care
VACCA	Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency

DEFINITION OF TERMS

Yanna jannawi: this is Dharug language, which when translated to English means 'walk with me'. As a Dharug researcher I strive to honour my Ancestors, family and community with the use of Dharug language in the title of this work.

Indigenous Peoples: it is understood and acknowledged that many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples consider the term 'Indigenous' to be too generic (AIATSIS 2018). As a Dharug woman I am more than aware of the challenges, restraints and stresses that terminology can inflict on the lives of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples. As an Indigenous researcher, I wish to acknowledge and honour the voices and vast diversity of Aboriginal and or Torres Strait Islander educators and families participating in the research. In light of this, the term 'Indigenous Peoples' is used with respect, throughout this research in reference to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples. However, as these are all Western imposed labels (Carlson, 2016), I ask the reader to respect the immense diversity of Indigenous Peoples and communities when reading this thesis.

Indigenous educator: The title 'Indigenous educator' refers to an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander person who is engaged on a regular basis by one or more Early Education and Care Services (EECS) to share and guide educators on the inclusion of Indigenous culture, languages and/or Ways of Knowing.

Non-Indigenous educator: this term refers to non-Indigenous early childhood educators who are employed in one of the four nominated EECS as Director or teacher and who have successfully completed a Degree and/or Diploma in Early Childhood Education and Care.

Parents/Carers of Indigenous children: these research participants are parents or legal guardians of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander children who are enrolled and attend one of the four nominated EECS. As children were not directly involved in the research (see Chapter 3) these people are integral to identifying the needs and interests of their Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander children and of sharing their children's experiences in the EECS.

Indigenous Knowledges: refers to the diverse and complex worldviews, languages, cultural practices and protocols of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples. In this paper Indigenous Knowledges are recognised as part of a relational ontology that sits within the epistemological framework of Knowing, Being and Doing (Martin, 2008). This term recognises and identifies that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledge systems predate colonisation and that they remain valuable and relevant to both Indigenous and non-Indigenous Peoples living and working in Australia.

Indigenous Ways of Knowing: in this research, this recognises and identifies that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledge systems predate colonisation and that they remain valuable and relevant to both Indigenous and

non-Indigenous Peoples living and working in Australia. This term is an abbreviation of Indigenous Ways of Knowing, Being and Doing. It respects and is inclusive of all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander worldviews, cultural protocols, cultural practices, values and beliefs.

Early Education and Care Services (EECS). For the purposes of this research EECS include services that provide early childhood education and care to children from six weeks old to five years old. In regard to EECS represented in this research it specifically means long day care or pre-school settings. Overall, the research recognises that occasional care and other service types also fall under this heading.