

# EARLY LEARNING FUTURE SYSTEM PRINCIPLES





# ABOUT US

The Apiary brings together people who are committed to creating thriving futures for children in Australia.

Through the support of the Front Project and the Paul Ramsay Foundation, it builds system leadership, collaboration, and the capability to work differently to bring about lasting change in early learning.



# WE ACKNOWLEDGE COUNTRY

In the spirit of recognition and reconciliation, The Front Project and the Apiary Fellowship acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of Country throughout Australia connections community to land, and their sea and Apiary Fellows come from locations across Australia.

We pay respect to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples and their Elders, past, present and emerging of the places where we live, work and learn; for it is they who hold and generously share the memories, traditions, culture and hopes of many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

We also extend that respect to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who are joining us now and in the future.

We give gratitude to Elders past and present who have raised children, led people and shared their ancient gift of culture.

We express our gratitude for their caring of Country, our sorrow for the ongoing personal, spiritual and cultural costs of that sharing, and our hope that we may walk forward in harmony and in the spirit of healing.

We commit to educating ourselves and walking together on our life-long, two-way cultural learning journey. We believe strongly in the importance of connecting children to the full breadth of the true history and culture of Australia.

**We know sovereignty has never been ceded. This always was and always will be Aboriginal Land.**



# THE PROJECT

Over a series of convenings and workshops facilitated by the Front Project and through the incubation of key ideas to leverage systemic change, the Apiary identified an opportunity to unify our diverse early learning system under a shared purpose for the future and help visualise how stakeholders can meet the timeless needs of children into the future, as the world around us changes.

# THE PRINCIPLES

The Future System Principles are a vision for the future of early learning in Australia.

We believe the early learning system can optimise outcomes for children by locally and nationally shifting to these ways of working over the next several decades.

They were distilled by Apiary fellows through collective sensemaking of the results from the Transforming Early Learning futuring consultations, with children, early learning leaders teachers, educators, and early childhood professionals from around the country.





# HOW TO USE THE FUTURE SYSTEM PRINCIPLES

The Principles are intended as a set of design principles that anyone working with children and families can adopt to shape the improvement or development of new initiatives.

People who could use these principles might be: early learning teachers and educators in their annual planning, early childhood professionals for

their service improvement, policy makers to design reform, council and urban planners, when thinking about future environments and services for families and more.

By all of us adopting these principles in our strategies and work, we will get closer and closer to realising a future system that children and families have asked for.



- **CHILDREN'S VOICES**
- **DEEP CONNECTIONS**
- **SHARED ACCOUNTABILITY**
- **INTERGENERATIONAL CHANGE**



# CHILDREN'S VOICES



- 1. The voice and views of the child is equal to the voice of an adult.**
- 2. Children's voices are heard, elevated, centred and responded to.**
- 3. Children actively participate in decisions that affect their lives.**
- 4. Children have special rights that are reflected in the systems around them.**

**As outlined under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, early years settings have policies and procedures in place safeguard children's voices in discussions directly pertaining to their lived experiences, curriculum, and more.**

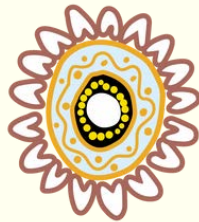




# What this looks like for children?

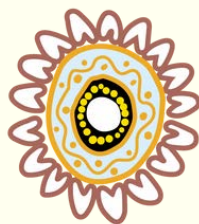
**5.**

**Children are afforded the ability to influence the nature and shape of their environments, toys and resources, relationships, learning and futures. Children's diverse emotional, cognitive processing, and communicative capabilities are respected and championed by adults, local community, institutions, and political systems.**



**6.**

**Children's learning, home, health and community environments are designed to elevate their innate curiosity and capacities for learning and self-expression, the value of imagination, and the importance of diversity.**



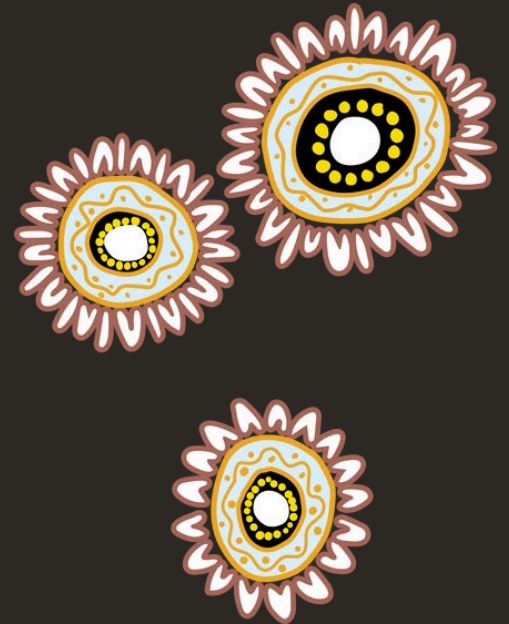
**7.**

**Children have opportunities to participate as active citizens in the co-design, monitoring and evaluation of early years environments, learning experiences, toys and resources, and more, that they use every day.**



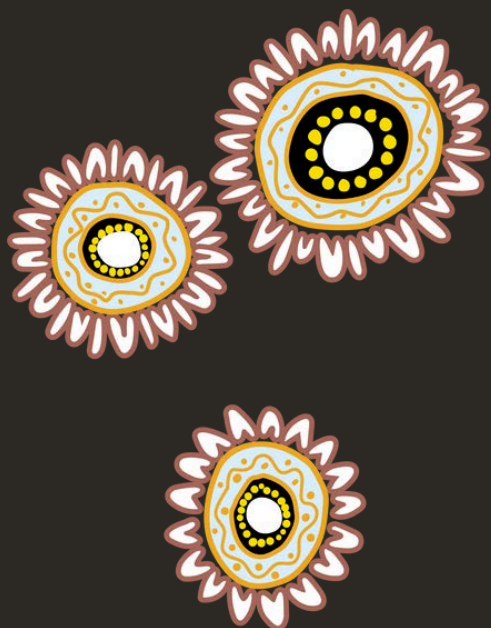
# DEEP CONNECTIONS

- 8.** Early learning services are embedded in their communities. Children have access to localised and community-informed learning and play environments. They are connected to families, other services, Country and culture.
- 9.** Collaboration at different levels within systems support shared stewardship between services, governments and communities with the required time and space for trust, relationships and shared intent to be built.



## What this looks like for children?

- 10.** Every community has an early learning system which supports children's overall agency, wellbeing, sense of nurture, security, culture and care. These systems facilitate connections with and between other settings in which children learn, play and develop.
- 11.** Learning environments are safe, accessible and engaging to enable genuine bonding / attachment with peers, family members, teachers and educators, community, and Country.





## What this looks like for children?



**12.**

**Opportunities for children to share their experiences of learning with others whom they care about in places that hold meaning for them.**

**13.**

**Children are supported to access and interact with their natural environment to learn about custodianship and care of the land, encompassing global and local sustainability.**

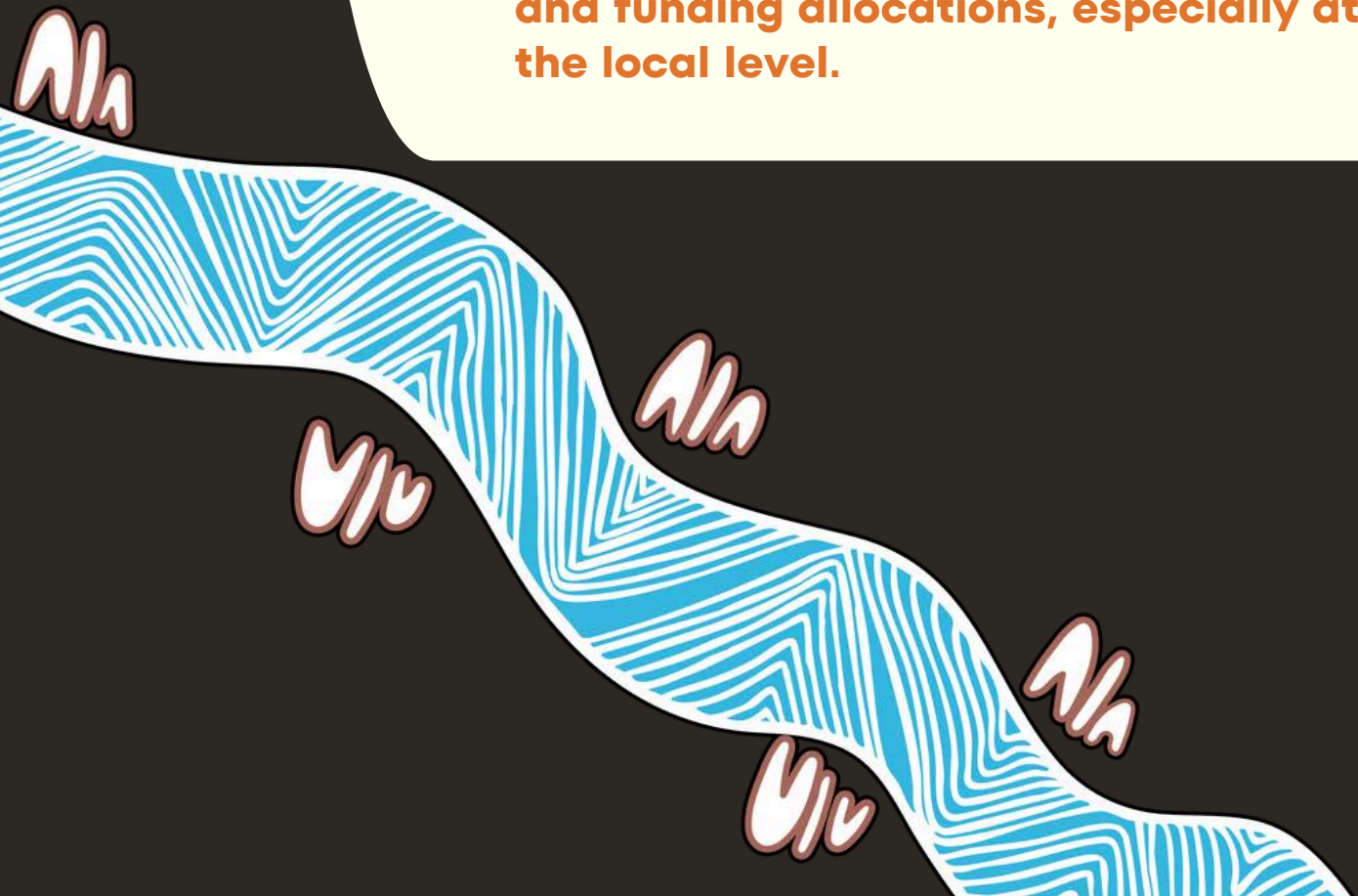
**14.**

**Children learn how to become active citizens in their community, and are given associated opportunities.**



# SHARED ACCOUNTABILITY

- 15. Collaborations reflect care and diversity, value First Nations' perspectives, overcome competition, and build shared accountability to children.**
- 16. Everyone working together both locally and nationally to improve outcomes for and with children, young people and their families.**
- 17. Incorporate child rights and family perspectives across all policy portfolios, service and built design, and funding allocations, especially at the local level.**







## What this looks like for children?

- 18.** Children's agency, culture, and capacity for caring for and thinking of their family and friends are activated in their home, community, political forums, and digital learning environments, through decision-making mechanisms, pedagogy, artefacts and built environments.
- 19.** Children are recognised as leaders. Their environments enable their agency and to have an active role in decisions that affect them. Children's voices and views are regularly and systematically captured and responded to on things that affect them.



# INTERGENERATIONAL CHANGE



- 20. Evidence is used to bravely test and try new approaches that create better outcomes for all children.**
- 21. Lifelong funding models for early learning and education, policy development and implementation, and integrated hubs which are community owned and controlled.**







## What this looks like for children?

- 22. Children's services and environments support continuity of experience, reliability and sustainability, so they can learn with and establish, maintain and grow their connections to friends and family, teachers and educators, health and welfare providers.**
- 23. Consideration is given to, and children and families are consulted with on, the design and development of indoor and outdoor built residential, community, learning and play environments, and policies pertaining to urban planning.**









# ABOUT THE ARTWORK

This Aboriginal painting tells a powerful story of connection, change, and the unity of diverse mobs. The handprints within the artwork symbolise intergenerational change, representing the transfer of knowledge and responsibility across time. The rivers that frame the piece are sacred lifelines, linking all mobs and reflecting the flow of life that unites them. The river running through the center is the Yarra River; one of the Wurundjeri people's most sacred waterways. Etched with intricate patterns, the river speaks to the ever-changing nature of life, with each ripple holding the memories of the land and echoing Dreamtime stories from all mobs.

These stories resonate through the waters, carrying the voices of ancestors across generations. The rivers shift and change direction, symbolising the creation of new journeys. Each individual meeting place in the painting represents the gathering of women and children, symbolising the transformative journey of children growing into adults. When combined, all the meeting places reflect the deep connections within. The green dots symbolise the trees and plants from various mobs, while the brown dots represent the diverse mob countries, each interconnected through the land.

The kangaroo tracks signify the continuous forward movement through life, never regressing. The meeting place symbols reflect the coming together of people in Naarm (Melbourne), with the Yarra River at the heart of the piece, a lifeblood for the land and its people.

Through dot work, handprints, and sacred symbols, this artwork tells a story of unity, continuity, and the deep connections that shape all generations.

John J Xiberras

## ARTIST'S PROFILE



Hi, I'm John Xiberras and a proud Wurundjeri Aboriginal man living and creating on Wurundjeri Country here in Naarm (Melbourne).

As a Wurundjeri artist, I draw deeply from my culture, heritage, and connection to Country, bringing stories to life through my art. My work reflects the strength, resilience, and ongoing spirit of my people, celebrating both traditional practices and contemporary expressions of Aboriginal identity and culture

**John J Xiberras**  
**Wurundjeri Man**

The Apiary  
Fellowship