



## The Apiary Fellowship Sixth Fellowship Convening, February 24–25, 2021 Communiqué

The Apiary Fellowship held its first convening of 2021 over 24 and 25 February – the sixth overall since the program’s inception. This convening was a hybrid event, bringing together local clusters of Fellows in person, where possible, along with connecting individuals nationally by videoconference.

The Apiary brings together and connects existing and emerging leaders from a variety of backgrounds who share a commitment to creating thriving futures for children in Australia. Through these connections, members can learn from shared and diverse experiences and understand how insights can be applied within their own contexts as well as the broader ECEC system.

### Impact of COVID-19

The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on early childhood education and care was discussed, with a particular focus on two areas. Firstly, the way that teachers, educators, leaders and other sector representatives had adapted approaches and ways of working. Secondly, the opportunity that the situation has presented to place children’s development and wellbeing at the forefront of conversations about ECEC more than ever before.

The general agreement was that 2021 would be a year of change and transformation in the ECEC sector and the Apiary Fellowship has an important part to play in this development.

### Strengthening cultural intelligence within the Apiary

Day one of the convening focussed on ensuring the Apiary is able to act as a cohesive group while representing the diversity found across the ECEC sector.

As a key step towards this objective, a Reconciliation Action Plan Working Group met under the guidance of ECEC cultural consultant, Jackie Bennett, prior to the convening. During the convening Jackie led a Historical Footprints workshop, covering a fuller picture of Australian history, the impacts of colonisation and the importance of connecting children with culture, and recognising truth-telling as an important component of healing. Post the workshop, dialogue and reflective exercises were undertaken by the group to examine and decide how to integrate learnings into culture and practise both as the Apiary and within each Fellow’s professional context.

## Design thinking

Day two of the Apiary centred on the concept of 'Design Thinking', a development process that uses evidence and enquiry to understand emerging needs from multiple perspectives and involving users in the solutions. Attention was given to the role of design thinking in achieving systems change. This approach involved identifying leverage points in the Australian ECEC system, understanding roles and relationships held within the sector and examining the mental models which constrain the sector to current conditions. Challenge statements were then identified, and the Apiary sought to develop iterative solutions and leverage hypotheses to tackle these challenges.

A particular focus of day two was working together on the design thinking framework to identify how to address the short- and long-term challenges around employee retention and skills shortages.

## Member Buzz



**Lisa Walker** joins the Apiary as its newest Fellow. Lisa is a Senior Educator, holds multiple Board memberships and is a Goori Cultural Consultant.

Lisa is a Galibal woman from the beautiful Bundjalung Nation on the Far North Coast of NSW, she is a descendant of the Yuin, Yaegl and Kabi Kabi Nations, who are all saltwater people on the East Coast.

Lisa works on the Grassroots level as it is her way of giving back to her mob as she supports jarjums (children) in their learning and advocates for their families by being their first point of call and breaking down cultural barriers within the wider community.



**Mark Yettica-Paulson** joins the panel of Apiary facilitators. Mark is the [Deep Collaboration](#) Lead with Collaboration for Impact, and Chief Director of Super Native Unlimited and Indigenous Queensland leader who specialises in cross-cultural collaboration.

Mark is an Intercultural Leadership specialist from South East Queensland and North East NSW regions. Mark is from the Birrah, Gamilaroi and Bundjalung peoples. Mark brings decades of wisdom from his career in leadership development, diversity and inclusion, and community education across the corporate, government and faith sectors.

To find out more about The Apiary or get in touch visit:  
<https://www.thefrontproject.org.au/initiatives/building-collective-leadership-the-apiary>

