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Why Koobara?

For over 60,000 years, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families have been educating our own children. Ancient conditions of relatedness are already established when learning takes place within a family or familiar community. Lived experiences are shared, people are already connected (both with each other and the natural environment), and a deep sense of trust and safety is at the core. Today, with the formalisation of Early Childhood Education (ECE) in Australia, the educational experience of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families and our children has become marginalised: we are measured by our deficits using another culture's 'measuring stick', and often in exclusion of our lived histories and our voices.

This 'study', which will be referred to as, gana (Jandai Language word meaning to hear, think and understand) centres the voices of First Nations families and staff at Koobara Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Kindergarten and Family Resource Centre on Brisbane's north side, in an attempt to mobilise their narratives of self-determination. Indigenous Research Methodologies (IRMs) have been adopted, so as to continue the vital work of disrupting colonial discourses that disempower our people. A pedagogical analysis of the experiences offered by Koobara has complemented the yarns shared by families and staff; and has both highlighted and honoured the relational nature of Indigenous knowledges. Relationships and community connectedness, historical influences, future aspirations and cultural protection emerged as broad common themes. The qualitative findings identify a continued need to decolonise ECE spaces and fund Aboriginal-and-Torres-Strait-Islander-specific ECE services.