



*fka*CS eNewsletter

TERM FOUR

12 DECEMBER 2019

“Whereas a society is composed of people, a culture is composed of ideas, behaviour and material possessions. Society and culture are independent; neither could exist without the other.”

- KENDALL (2006)

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From the Multicultural Resource Centre

Celebrations that include, not divide

WE WISH YOU A CULTURALLY COMPETENT CHRISTMAS! THE TRANSITION REPORTS ARE DONE, THE ROOMS HAVE BEEN ALLOCATED FOR THE FOLLOWING YEAR, STOREROOMS ARE BEING SORTED AND NOW IT'S TIME TO CELEBRATE CHRISTMAS... OR IS IT?

Increasingly, what was once taken for granted in Australian early childhood settings - Christmas trees, Santa's, concerts - is now being questioned.

The Victorian 2016 census highlighted that 49.1% of Victorians were born overseas with at least one parent born overseas. 26% languages other than English were spoken at home and 59% followed more than one of 130 different faiths.

Taking the above information into account, many services have been questioning the what's, why's and how's of our celebrations. In some cases, services have gone as far as to implement policies that exclude celebrations from the curriculum all together.

Whilst critical reflection on the nature of our celebrations and what they are achieving can only be a positive part of strengthening our pedagogy, have we become too cautious?

In the forward of Bisson's (2016) *Celebrate! An Anti-Bias Guide to Enjoying Holidays in Early Childhood Programs*, Derman-Sparks asks the question, "why would you have a no holiday policy?" She goes on to state that "this has

raised more problems as it deprives all stakeholders from opportunities to explore their culture and identity" (p. 16).

Given that the 2018-19 festival and events program in Melbourne received over 1,100 applications from community groups seeking support to hold celebrations and events relevant to their communities; it is quite safe to state that the community views celebrations as an important part of preserving and more recently sharing the traditions that define a sense of identity.

The VEYLDF practice guide for principle 5: Equity and Diversity (2016, p. 16) suggests "practicing diversity includes choosing experiences that are authentic and relevant to the community, the families and the children who use the service."

Maybe the time has come to stop 'playing it safe' by removing or watering down celebrations until they are unrecognisable, and instead become agents for children and families' rights to have their culture and identity included in meaningful ways that enrich the understandings and capacities of all stakeholders in the service.

In an article for the London School of Economics and Political Science titled *After the Christmas Holidays*, Snéha Khilay reflects on the role such celebrations play in cultivating a sense of ‘sameness’ and belonging. The author speaks of being a child and fabricating her own Christmas story in order to fit in with peers - e.g. “what did you get/do for Christmas?” - hiding the fact that this was not something her family celebrated.

This led me to reflect on the role that Christmas and other celebrations can play in bringing us together, or alternately, highlight our differences.

In order to provide celebrations that unite us in our similarities rather than highlighting our differences, reflecting on the following questions may be helpful:

Who holds the power?

- In your service, who decides what will be celebrated?
- Are some celebrations preferred over others, or given more ‘space’ in the curriculum?
- Are all families provided with equal opportunities to contribute to these decisions? For example, if we are handing/emailing our forms to collect information around family celebrations, how does this include the family who can’t read English?
- Who decides how the celebration will look?

What is the purpose?

All of our guiding documents state the importance of including the cultures and identities of all our children and families in the service. “Early childhood professionals ensure that the interests, abilities and culture of every child and their family are understood and valued” (VEYLDF, 2016, p. 14).

However, in what is often a time-poor environment, early childhood professionals can find themselves under pressure to meet these requirements by ‘including’ a

range of celebrations and, whilst well-meaning, they may result in high levels of stress and effort for educators and few outcomes for children. Taking this into account, it is important to reflect on what the purpose of the celebration is and what you would like it to achieve and why.

Derman-Sparks in Anti-Bias Curriculum for Children and Ourselves suggests the following goals in anti-bias education:

Goal #1 — Identity

Each child will demonstrate self-awareness, confidence, family pride, and positive social/group, identities.

Does every child see themselves in the program?

Goal #2 — Diversity

Each child will express comfort and joy with human diversity, accurate language for human differences, and deep, caring human connections.

Can we help children identify the similarities?

Goal #3 — Justice

Each child will increasingly recognize unfairness (injustice), have language to describe unfairness, and understand that unfairness hurts.

Are all children being given a voice and a chance to feel powerful and important?

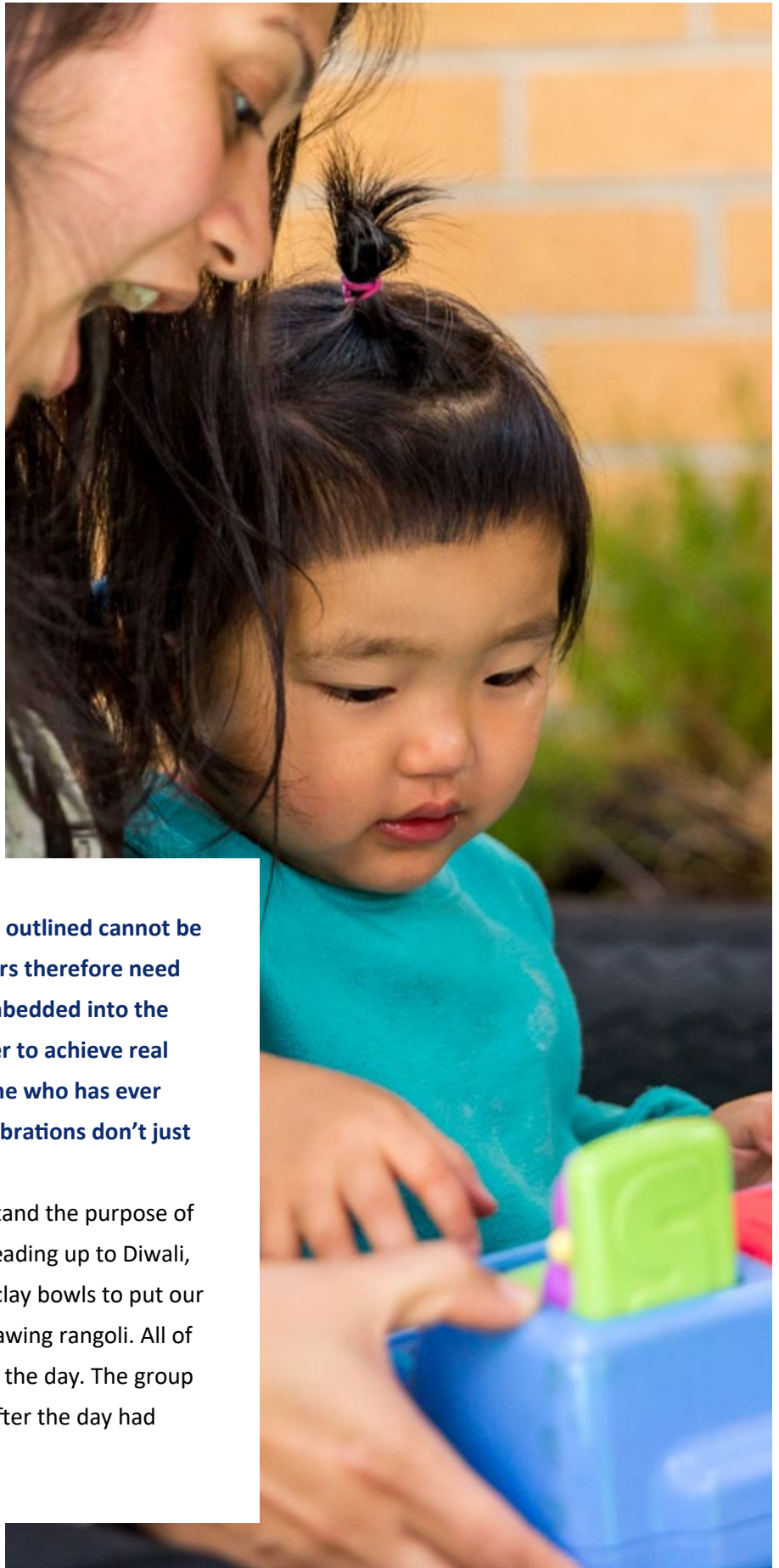
Goal #4 — Activism

Each child will demonstrate a sense of empowerment and the skills to act, with others or alone, against prejudice and/or discriminatory actions (Derman-Sparks & Edwards, 2010, p.4).

Practice & Pedagogy

It is important to understand that the goals outlined cannot be achieved in one afternoon activity. Educators therefore need to think about how a celebration can be embedded into the curriculum and take place over time in order to achieve real meaning for children and families. As anyone who has ever organised a Christmas lunch will know, celebrations don't just magically fall from the sky!

A good starting point would be to understand the purpose of the celebration. For example, in the weeks leading up to Diwali, we learnt the story of Rama and Sita, made clay bowls to put our lights (diyas) in and practiced making and drawing rangoli. All of this preparation led up to the celebration on the day. The group continued to explore this celebration even after the day had passed.



Additionally, last Christmas we decided that, like Eid, the 'spirit of Christmas' was to give to others and be kind. Along with a range of other interest-driven activities, we made this the focus of our celebration and hosted a movie afternoon, raising money to buy gifts for other children in developing nations. We also used this final celebration of the year to talk about the similarities around all we had celebrated during the year.

At this point I was mindful of the words of Snéha Khilay. Had I done enough to ensure that children who didn't celebrate Christmas at home had equal opportunity throughout the year to celebrate their special times? Was the celebration enacted in a way that highlighted our similarities not our differences?

In order to avoid cultural tourism and misinterpretation of a celebration, it may be suggested that a celebration should have three parts:

- 1. Preparation:** Building an understanding of what and why in addition to any making, learning, cooking, inviting, etc. that needs to happen.
- 2. Celebration:** The celebration is not only an opportunity for the community of that service to come together, it can also be a celebration of what the group have learned/gained in the process leading up to the celebration.
- 3. Reflection:** As many of us know, Christmas day - like many other celebrations around the world - is just the beginning. In the days following, there are toys to be played with, excess food to be eaten, relatives to catch up with, and of course, the Boxing Day sales! Time after the festivities is often when the real celebrating occurs; we rejoice that we got through it, about what we have received/given, and most importantly who we have seen.

Think about what opportunities can be offered within a service to encourage children to consolidate what they have learnt and gained:

- Can the celebration be moved to the home corner?
- Can any activities that we have been engaging in remain out for children to continue extending their knowledge?
- Are photos available for children to look at? Making a book or having slides on a device can help children reflect on what they have achieved.

As suggested by Bisson (2016), 'culture cannot be taught through simple activities, it has to be embedded through daily practice'. 'Box tick' celebrations may amount to little more than tokenism, or a tourist approach to someone's identity.

Alternatively, when educators work with families and the wider community to understand the purpose of a celebration and embed it in meaningful ways into the curriculum, it can have the following benefits:

- Celebrations may help broaden children's awareness of both their own culture and the culture of others
- Celebrations may be a platform to unify children towards a common goal
- Interest based celebrations may provide platforms for further learning

Given the benefits, it is worthwhile to think about the place of celebrations in the curriculum; instead of removing our celebrations completely, we could view them through a lens of cultural competence. If we take time to reflect on how other celebrations relevant to families have been reflected and respected throughout the year - in addition to its relevance within the context of your own service - it may be another wonderful opportunity to come together, learn and celebrate the community that we have created.

Sector Updates

SCHOOL READINESS FUNDING IN 2019

fkaCS Consultants have been travelling to areas of Victoria during 2019, delivering packages of support to Kindergartens in receipt of School Readiness Funding (SRF) from the Victorian Government.

The flexibility of the SRF program enabled fkaCS Pedagogy and Practice Consultants to design a tailored program of work for Kindergartens based on their identified needs. This has included professional learning and development, coaching and mentoring, in-program observations, facilitated reflective practice, community language support and support to develop a bilingual library for families.

In 2020, programs in the existing DET areas will be joined by those in the Moreland/Hume and Goulburn Regions. With over 100 menu items currently on offer via the Department of Education menu of evidence-informed programs and supports (www.education.vic.gov.au/childhood/providers/funding/Pages/SRFmenu.aspx), Kindergartens

have the opportunity to select products that meet the needs of their children, families and communities.

There have been many highlights in the first year of the program including increased support to Kindergartens, access to resources and opportunities to network with other services and early childhood professionals.

Like anything new, there are learnings from the implementation of the first year of the program, particularly around managing time frames and accessing services. Below are some tips to support you in planning to utilise your SRF allocation in 2020.

Plan early

- Contact your preferred suppliers early to schedule your support across the year

Think creatively

- What are you hoping to achieve?
- Think about how you might use your local solutions funds flexibly outside of the menu to meet the priorities of the program.

Think about opportunities to network with other services and early childhood professionals

- Can you pool funds with other kindergartens to develop communities of practice across regions?
- Use your local connection with community groups and schools

Build a relationship with suppliers

- You may be able to negotiate with the supplier to co-design the program of work to ensure it meets the outcomes you are hoping to achieve.

Think about how you will manage momentum and expectations with your team across the year

- Have you allowed enough time to implement your plan?
- Have you allocated enough backfill to enact your plan?
- Think about choosing one or two priorities to focus on for the year.
- Remember the funds are ongoing it may be worth concentrating on one area of practice and build up slowly.

Think about how you will translate your learnings into practice

- Think about choosing one or two professional learning or training sessions and build mentoring and support around them in order to sustain learning and build capacity across your team.

Take time to review your plan across the year

- Have new priorities emerged?
- Is the supplier delivering the support you need?
- Is another supplier more appropriate?
- Have we allocated enough time?

Work closely with your local Department of Education and Training branch

SOME OF THE POSITIVE FEEDBACK WE'VE HAD SO FAR:

“[We] found having a Dinka worker in with the children was a great asset to our program.”

“It was great that there was someone who could tell us what the best books are for children and where to find them.”

“The Consultant was very in-tune with our needs and local community needs.”

“[The Consultant] was so supportive and helpful to our service- helpful, resourceful and extremely professional, sourced books for us for our borrowing library and was a great mentor for us all.”

CALD PARTICIPATION PROJECT

Research has shown that early education helps set children up for a bright future, which is why kindergarten is important for all children.

The CALD Participation Project, an initiative led by Parliamentary Secretary for Early Childhood Education Sonya Kilkenny, aims to address kindergarten participation and attendance within Victoria’s culturally and linguistically diverse communities.

A feature of the CALD Participation Project, the CALD Communications Pilot, is the development of a suite of CALD communications strategies to seek to raise awareness including:

- translated, culturally specific print materials to build awareness of the benefits of and pathways to access kindergarten (Chinese, Somali and Vietnamese)
- video stories developed to share information about kindergarten from a range of perspectives (such as families, educators and children at play) (Somali).

For information about the project and to download resources, visit:

www.education.vic.gov.au/parents/child-care-kindergarten/Pages/kindergarten-cald.aspx.

AHLAN SIMSIM / WELCOME SESAME

Sesame Street and the International Rescue Committee have partnered to create an Arabic Sesame Street show designed specifically to help Syrian refugee children cope with their past trauma.



Ahlan Simsim, or ‘Welcome Sesame’ will focus on educating Syrian children living in refugee camps in basic literacy and math, as well as providing fundamental social and emotional support that will assist them in coping with traumatic experiences.

The show will air in February 2020.

IMAGE: TARA TODRAS-WHITEHILL/IRC VIA SBS

Tongue Tied and Fluent, an ABC Earshot series

In the ABC National Podcast Earshot, Masako Fukui and Sheila Ngoc Pham explore the Australian monolingual mindset within Australia's multilingual reality through the Tongue Tied and Fluent series. This monolingual mindset has a foundation in Australia's colonisation.

The series explores a number of topics such as;

- Is Australia ready for a multilingual mindset?
- Bringing up a bilingual baby
- How language education is failing and flourishing
- Talking through the generations
- Back to the multilingual future (available December 7, 2019)

What we found interesting within the episodes of this podcast included the following;

- Parents raising bilingual children noticed the rapid decline of home languages once children were immersed in monolingual English contexts such as in Early Childhood Education and Care Programs. Raising children bilingually isn't just about being in constant conversation, there is a holistic approach required such as sourcing books in home languages and sourcing early childhood programs that have educators and teachers that speak the child's home language.
- Learning multiple languages requires providing opportunities for children to engage in language in the context of their daily lives, within numeracy, literacy, the arts and play. Language cannot be taught in isolation; it must be taught within the everyday experiences of children.

- Remaining in culture and aware of individual identity requires engagement in language.
- There are some interesting points of view and experiences - from parents bringing up bilingual children, children themselves and multilingual educators - to consider as a part of the relationships you hold with families and children participating in your environment.
- Language learning requires a foundation in language ecology. There are particular factors that support building a language ecology. Relationships with grandparents who are often the keepers of tradition and provide an immersive language environment, 'roots migration' and returning to the homeland for extended periods and regular travel, all support building and sustaining fluency in languages and strengthening the language ecology multilingual speakers engage in (Tongue Tied and Fluent, Part 4).
- Societal views affect how people connect to their culture and language. Widespread images and propaganda influence the views society holds. In Episode 4, Talking through the generations, Nii Laryea Tetteh shares his experiences of dissociating from his home language, Ga, early in his life and what led him to reengage in Ga as a part of his everyday life and a mode of building stronger connections with his family.
- Reconnection to language and culture is important to wellbeing and sense of self. Billy Jangala Williams shared his experience of reconnecting with Gamilaraay/Kamilaroi. *"Learning the languages around identity, there is a sense of reality in it, a sense of connection, and maybe a healing that happens as well. Coming from this place where my mob was told you can't talk it, don't you dare speak that, even from 'don't say you're Aboriginal' - even that far - to now being in a position to proudly start to learn that traditional language is an amazing thing."* Billy Jangala Williams, Tongue Tied and Fluent, Part 4.



There are questions raised within this series that encourage the Early Years Education and Care sector to critically reflect upon. Consider the quote below;

“MULTICULTURALISM IS LIKE A MOSAIC, AND ALL THE CULTURES THAT ARE IN AUSTRALIA MAKE UP ONE AUSTRALIA. SO IF THERE IS NO LANGUAGE, THESE MINORITY GROUPS COULD DISSOLVE AWAY AND THAT’S WHAT MULTICULTURALISM DOESN’T WANT.”

(Armen Bekarian, Tongue Tied and Fluent, Part 3)

- How does multiculturalism influence your program?
- “How can you credit and take advantage of the huge resources in the community?” (Dr Ken Cruickshank, Tongue Tied and Fluent, Part 3)
- What value do you place on multilingualism within your program?
- In what ways are you including multilingualism in your program?
- How will you develop your multilingual mindset, and what does this look like in your Pedagogy and Practice?

You can find the Tongue Tied and Fluent Podcast at the [ABC Website](#), [ABC Listen App](#), [Apple Podcast](#) and [Google Play](#).

Events

2020 Professional Learning

We have a handful of professional learning events scheduled for the first half of 2020. Registrations are open but places for our Melbourne events fill fast, so get in quick to secure your place!

<http://fkacs.eventbrite.com>

Understanding & Implementing Authentic Cultural Inclusion

How do we avoid cultural tokenism in Early Childhood? Who decides what is important? And who does it benefit?

Yarra Junction · Tuesday 11 February · 9:30am - 12:30pm

Frankston · Tuesday 12 May · 9:30am - 12:30pm

Geelong · Tuesday 19 May · 9:30am - 12:30pm

Culturally Inclusive Transitions in Early Childhood

How do we ensure all children and families experience equity for successful transitions into services and schools?

Preston · Wednesday 12 February · 9:30am - 12:30pm

Supporting Children Learning English as an Additional Language in the Early Years

Developed by the Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority, Dr Priscilla Clarke OAM and fkaCS, this session explores the stages of additional language development and the role teachers and early childhood professionals have in supporting emerging English learners in kindergarten.

Glen Waverley · Monday 8 June · 9:00am - 3:00pm

NEED CONVINCING? HERE'S WHAT PREVIOUS PARTICIPANTS HAD TO SAY...

"This was a wonderful PD. The presenter was amazing... respectful, professional, knowledgeable, funny and so very easy to listen to."

"[The presenter] was very engaging and related to those of us "on the ground" so to speak and not as someone who has forgotten what it is really like to work with children and families."

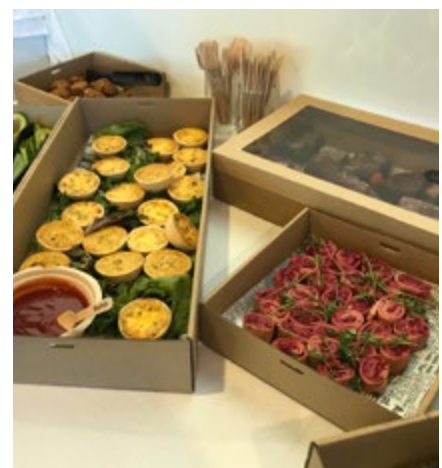


fkaCS Annual General Meeting 2019

OUR 2019 AGM WAS HELD ON 26 NOVEMBER AT OUR NEW ABBOTSFORD OFFICE.

For a full-house of attendees, we were delighted to host Fay Muir – Boon Wurrung elder of the Yalukut Weelum of the Boon Wurrung, Wamba Wamba and Wergiai clans, and senior linguist at the Victorian Aboriginal Corporation for Languages (VACL) – in celebration of the Year of Indigenous Languages.

Fay highlighted the importance of keeping culture alive through the use of language, shared her own journey of language revitalisation, and provided recommendations for ways educators can build relationships with elders in their local area to respectfully (and correctly) incorporate Aboriginal language into their programs. Attendees shared their own experiences and journeys, and were no doubt as grateful for the opportunity to hear Fay speak as we were. Thank you, Fay!



Thank you Pawa Catering and Events for the wonderful food!

News at *fkaCS*



The team at *fkaCS* wish you a safe and relaxing holiday season. We hope you enjoy this special time of the year.

Please note, *fkaCS* and the Multicultural Resource Centre will be closed from 5pm Friday 20 December, and reopening Monday 6 January 2020.

2020–21 Membership Fees

fkaCS would like to advise of changes to membership fees for our 2020–21 Membership Year.

Education & Care Service Single-Site:	\$250
Education & Care Service Multi-Site (first 6 sites):	\$940
Education & Care Service Multi-Site (each additional site):	\$125
Other Organisations:	\$825
Individuals:	\$80
Students:	\$55

New membership fees for the year of 1 March 2020 to 28 February 2021 will apply from today.

Join now to have your membership activated early, which means you receive the next 3 MONTHS FREE, on us! Visit www.fka.org.au/membership/information for information and to join.

Keep up to date! Add us to your safe senders list.

Please ensure you add *fkaCS* to your safe senders list (@fka.org.au) to ensure you receive event invites, newsletters and important e-communication.

Instructions for Outlook are at: www.extendoffice.com/documents/outlook/1242-outlook-add-domain-to-safe-sender-list.html#a1



From the Multicultural Resource Centre

THE MULTICULTURAL RESOURCE CENTRE HAS HAD A FACELIFT IN RECENT MONTHS...

We now have new shelves to complement our open plan space, create an inviting experience for our members, and provide the opportunity to display more resources! We've added new items to our musical instrument and LOTE book collections, and created a category called Display Material for resources to assist you in setting up displays in your service.

Finally, in an effort to reduce our environmental impact, we're replacing our plastic bags from the Multicultural Resource Centre with sustainable mesh bags made from recycled material. It's been a huge task, but we're nearly there!

For those of you who have borrowed these newly packaged items and wish to provide feedback – or to share your experience using any MRC resources – please email us at library@fka.org.au. We would love to hear from you!



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