



Reggio Emilia Australia  
INFORMATION EXCHANGE



## Thinking Differently Together

Meeting Date: 13<sup>th</sup> June 2024

Time: 6pm to 8pm

Venue: State Library of New South Wales, 1 Shakespeare Place, Sydney

Exploration: A deeper dive into 'Welcome'

**Pre-Thinking:** Following on from the rich discussion about *Welcome* at our last meeting, we invite you to reflect on the following question, "who is the audience for your welcome?" Please bring examples along to the meeting to share and enrich our discussion.

**A Bit of Fun:** As you walk up to the library we invite you to find Trim, Matthew Flinders' cat.

**Transport:** Options, train, and car. Two train station options include Wynyard Station (exit George Street, 11 minute walk) and Martin Place Station (exit Elizabeth Street, 2 minute walk). Car parking is available in the Sydney Hospital car park (enter via Hospital Road), entry after 6pm is \$18.



Time	Agenda/ Notes
6.00 Deb Virginia Victoria	<p>The Thinking Differently Together Network will be gathering at the State Library of New South Wales. The State Library acknowledges the Gadigal people of the Eora nation, the traditional custodians of the land and waters on which the library stands.</p> <p>The evening's reflection begins in the foyer of the old section of the library. As you encounter the space, we would like to pose the following questions, "Do you feel welcome in this space, why, why not?" and "What about this space invites or excludes? and "What would you do with this space with children?"</p>
6.15 - 6.30 Deb	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Acknowledgement of Country</li><li>• Welcome and reflections on how you felt when you entered the library through the foyer space.</li></ul>
6.40-7.30 Virginia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Provocation - sharing thinking on who is the audience for your welcome in your service?</li></ul>
7.30 – 8.00 Victoria	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Summary/Conclusion</li><li>• REAIE News</li><li>• Dates for next meetings: Tuesday 3rd September Venue TBC Thursday 28th November Venue TBC</li><li>• Wander through the library</li><li>• Final provocation: "Thinking back to your feelings on entering the building, as you exit though a different space, we invite you to pause and reflect on which space made you feel more welcome?"</li><li>• Invitation to continue the conversation in the Library Bar</li></ul>



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## Minutes from previous meeting:

### Reflections from Network Meeting 13<sup>th</sup> March 2024

#### What makes a place welcome?

To begin the meeting, we reflected on initial thoughts of what made this space feel welcome and what were the elements that you heard from the participants that made them feel welcome? Were there parallels were there differences?

- Was it that the venue space was set up for collaboration, did it have good amenities, was it the smiling welcome, the greetings, was each participant welcomed?
- What do participants need to feel welcome?
- What are the elements of welcome?
- Did this venue provide opportunities for deep thinking collaboration, was it the atmosphere of friendly faces or the collaboration of safe space like mindedness space where deep thinking differences was celebrated?

We discussed the why of choosing these venues (having been chosen for the possibilities of thinking differently together) and how we landed on the notion of 'Welcome' by reflecting on conversations from the past being inclusive of everyone's thoughts and being flexible.

Breaking into small groups the following questions were explored in more depth. This thinking was then shared with the whole group:

#### Group 1

1. How do we welcome?
  - Through language, culture, philosophy, environment.
  - *It seems simple but it's complex.*
  - We welcome children, families, educators, community, birds and animals and the nonhuman too.
2. What does it mean to welcome?
  - Unintentional and intentional welcome. Our personal attributes contribute to the feeling of welcome.
  - Welcome can be full of ceremony and ritual.
  - Welcome is linked to place and Country – [Dr Tyson Yunkaporta](#), Eight Ways



### 3. How do people experience welcome?

- It depends on relationships. Are they in the relationship already or at the beginning of a relationship?
- It's a special and fundamental thing we do.
- There are procedures, such as fact sheets and handbooks.
- There are relationships and attitudes. Are you open to connect or not?

### 4. What do we do with what welcome does? Children, adults?

- It's a responsive dialogue that involves emotions and deeper connection; again, back to relationships.
- There's also intentionality there. There are procedural practices of welcome.
- Welcome is a continuum. It's an exchange in a specific place. It's an ING.
- It's a dance of both procedural and emotional welcoming. Welcoming has moving parts.

## Group 2

- Welcome is about establishing connections, welcoming is connection.
- Welcome is a feeling.
- Face-to-face is different than across a digital platform, such as the phone.
- Technology shapes welcome, procedures as well, such as communication.
- Visual and other languages, translating, body languages.
- There are a hundred languages of welcome.
- We belong to the environment and it creates a culture of the School and from welcome it can flourish.
- It's also a place of vulnerability where we can make mistakes and that's okay. When you first arrive at the centre and look around you can see where the educators are connected with parents with children. This is paramount.



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### Group 3

- We are generous with empathy and build a warm culture, responsive in different ways. For example, gifts have meaning.
- Relationships affect how you receive the welcome and feel a sense of belonging.
- How do we welcome? With our heart, with values, with otherness, with rituals?
- What do we do with what welcome does? We grow it, we treasure it, we nurture it.
- From initial interactions we make space for welcome to grow.
- We make space to be safe and happy.
- Welcome is a huge responsibility.
- We need to be curious about the possibility.

### Group 4

- Susan shared a most recent welcome in her service. The children invited her into their space, where they had their photos on the wall. They asked where was she? and asked her to include her photo on the wall, It was very much an invitation to be welcome and have her sense of identity valued in that place.
- We need to ensure that *children are involved in the welcoming process more often*.
- Values and philosophy, create the vision of welcome for the team in the space and the community. There must be trust and emotional safety.

### Group 5

- Welcome is strongly linked to our values. Some people may not be welcome because of beliefs not aligning. For example, teaching about gender diversity.
- It can be an opportunity to educate others and share perspectives. Perhaps they will become more inclusive.
- It's how we navigate these relationships in a time of discomfort that determines whether the feeling of welcome is achieved.
- Welcome changes over time.
- We bring our own personal bias – where do we feel comfortable and welcome? Familiarity with the place and customs. Understanding each other. Do I know what to expect, how to behave?
- We came up with a big question: does welcome always have to be reciprocal to be successful?



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The meeting concluded by sharing thought, posing a take away question to share with colleagues and an invitation to continue to think more deeply about *'Welcome'*:

- Welcome is when our values and fears come together.
- What thinking will you take back to your service and reflect share your thinking with us at our next meeting?
- How do children experience welcome and is it the same as families feeling welcome?