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The Mobilisation of Whiteness and Racism in ‘High Quality’ Approaches to Embedding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Perspectives in Early Childhood Education

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This session explores how whiteness and racism were reproduced in the work of embedding Indigenous perspectives in two Australian urban childcare settings, even when the educators’ work was seen to be productive, inclusive and high quality. Drawing on empirical data from a year-long action research study, analysis focuses on how the educators’ approaches to embedding Indigenous perspectives exceeded regulatory standards and how racialising practices were actively mobilised as part of this work. Ahmed’s (2004, 2012) theorising of racism as ‘a form of doing’ provides entry points for considering how the everyday actions and talk of educators are shaped by colonial discourses that reproduce inequities despite an outward appearance of inclusivity. Findings of the research indicate that naming whiteness and racism enables depth of understanding about how racialising practices are mobilised in policy, professional practices and personal standpoint, even when approaches to embedding Indigenous perspectives align with recommended strategies. The research is timely given a national commitment to recognising the histories and cultures of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in educational practices, as outlined in the recently introduced *Early Years Learning Framework* and *National Quality Standard* for children aged Birth – 5 years, and the *Australian Curriculum* for formal school sites.