

Editorial

The challenge for any research journal today is how to continue to make the work we publish relevant, contemporary and innovative for the research groups, educational organisations, and Indigenous communities locally and globally that we serve. At the same time, we recognise it is important for us to continue our work in *The Australian Journal of Indigenous Education* within the critical pedagogical agenda in which it began; that is, the empowerment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples through education, combined with a concern to critique and challenge the national and international colonial contexts in which Indigenous education is positioned today.

In 2015, *The AJIE* enters into its 42nd year of publication, and we are very pleased to announce a significant new addition to the publication in the spirit of looking forward while also remembering our past. The original editor of the journal, Betty Watts (1928–1997), was a former primary school teacher and was twice Chair of the Board of Teacher Education in Queensland. Her eminent career included many years as a researcher and teacher at the University of Queensland, with a particular focus on Aboriginal education and special education. In 1973 she initiated the journal *The Aboriginal Child at School*, which continues to this day as *The AJIE*. Many of us in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education remember Betty Watts for the ways in which she opened up doors of possibility for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander researchers in the field of education. The Australian Association for Research in Education (AARE) honours the memory of Emeritus Professor Betty Watts and grants the Betty Watts Award to the best paper by an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander researcher presented at their annual conference to encourage and support educational research by Indigenous Australian researchers. *The AJIE* has entered into partnership with AARE to publish the winning paper of the Betty Watts Award and we look forward to publishing the 2014 Betty Watts Award winner's outstanding research in our next issue.

The articles in this volume take up the contemporary challenges of Indigenous education and their discussions weave their way from the context of early childhood education, through primary and high school settings, and transition through to higher education. The research pre-

sented in this volume takes up the call to think critically and creatively about our praxis in Indigenous education, both in Australia and beyond, to not only find ways to close the gap in Indigenous educational disadvantage, but to do this with Indigenous ontologies, epistemologies and methodologies leading the way. The first article, by Maher and Buxton, positions their work in early childhood education within the theoretical framework of the cultural interface to explore ways of improving young children's literacy and numeracy skills and thereby enhance their capacity for school readiness. Crucial to such capacity building is the centrality of Aboriginal ways of knowing, being and doing to the learning opportunities provided to the children.

The following two articles take us to the remote regions of Australia and provide us with an important look at both sides of the educational coin in these contexts — Indigenous Australian students who receive schooling in remote areas, and students who leave remote communities to attend boarding schools. Through research based in knowledge exchange and collaborative participatory processes, the first article on this topic by Godinho, Woolley, Webb, and Winkel explores the enabling and constraining factors associated with building sustainable partnerships between students, teachers and researchers in the provision of education in remote schools in Western Arnhem Land. The second article, by Mander, Cohen, and Pooley, privileges the voices of male students from remote Aboriginal communities in Western Australia in relation to the ways they negotiate and make meaning from the transition experience to boarding school. Together, both papers make significant comment about the need for Indigenous Australian students from remote locations to have capacity to enact agency and make choices about the kind of education they receive, and the need for strong social relationships based on Aboriginal epistemologies and ontologies to remain firmly in place.

The next three articles in this volume turn attention specifically to the becoming, being and belonging of Indigenous learners in a range of educational contexts. Shay and Heck provide insight into the nature of alternative education and flexi-schools, and the rates and nature of participation in these sites by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. Their work highlights how

schools that step aside and away from traditional colonial models hold potential for greater engagement in education by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. Edmonds-Wathen's paper considers the identity and positioning of Aboriginal students as mathematics learners by teachers in the Northern Territory. This discussion highlights the tension between the Indigenous language proficiencies that Aboriginal students bring to the classroom, the dominance of Standard Australian English in the teaching of mathematics, and the need for teachers to rethink the concept of school readiness as a result. Similarly, the next article by Plater, Mooney-Somers, and Lander directs their discussion towards the perceptions and expectations the public hold of mature-age Aboriginal and Torres students. The authors engage in a critical, international comparison of discourses about mature-age Indigenous students and disturbingly reveal that in Australia, the overwhelming narrative is that it is too late for education to be of any benefit to this cohort of student and society as a whole.

The type of curriculum being offered in relation to Indigenous Studies and Indigenous education in universities links the final four articles in this volume. Riley, Howard-Wagner, and Mooney report on the findings of an Office of Learning and Teaching funding research project that explores the use of online teaching and learning methods for cultural competence education in relation to Indigenous Australian kinship systems in higher education. The key message from this work is the importance of cultural 'praxis' in making meaning and building understanding of Aboriginal kinship systems. The article by Hindle, Hynds, Phillips, and Rameka similarly explores ways to build bridges between binaries in their discussion

of the tensions that exist between Maori epistemologies and ontologies of art and creativity, and the need to assess student work according to measurable outcomes and neo-liberal agendas in university courses. With a major focus on the concepts of 'being and flow', this discussion raises questions about the possibility of assessing creativity in the arts from a Maori perspective. The capacity for higher education curricula to be inclusive of Indigenous knowledge systems and pedagogies is explored too by Pridham, Martin, Walker, Rosengren, and Wadley. Their article directs our attention to pre-service teacher education curricula in Australia and their experience of putting in place a course for pre-service teachers aimed at building culturally inclusive teaching practice through cultural inclusive curriculum. The final article in this volume, by Wilson, Mehta, Miller, Yaxley, Thomas, Jackson, Wray, and Miller, undertakes a similar kind of review, with the focus this time on the Indigenous health curriculum in nutrition and dietetics at an Australian university. Using an action research approach, this article demonstrates the need for consultation from key stakeholders inside and outside the university in relation to Indigenous health knowledges, pedagogies and frameworks to ensure that Indigenous health is given status, prominence and value within the core curriculum of a degree course.

We hope you enjoy reading the articles in this volume of *The AJIE*, and have time and space to consider the ways in they contribute to, challenge and inspire your own research in Indigenous education. We encourage you to join the debate and discussion provided by *The AJIE* and the ways in which critical attention to theory and practice in our field can continue to improve Indigenous education.