



# The Australian Journal of **INDIGENOUS EDUCATION**

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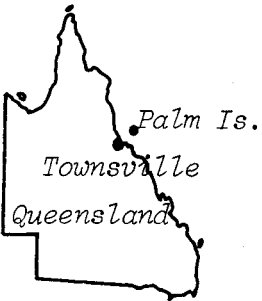
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I suspected that if I discarded the things that the children didn't see the point of, or didn't understand, everything might well be thrown out, including myself.

So I am not advocating that we throw out everything and keep only that which the children find interesting, relevant and able to be understood. We can't do that, simply because we don't know enough about what is relevant and possible for Aboriginal children. That is, or at least should be, one of the major thrusts of research into Aboriginal education. And really, it's teachers in the classroom that are doing this research. Every so often you come across a teacher who is saying to himself, "Why am I doing this?"..."Is this really what the children want or need?"..."Do they really see the connection between this and what goes on at home?" These teachers are the first to admit that their problems of content and communication are enormous, but they know that they've got problems and they are working on them. Their classrooms are alive with interest and discussion. If more teachers could look critically at what they are doing and how the children are responding, they would be able to develop ways of bringing first themselves and then their children down to earth.

*Reference*

Holt, J., 1969: *How Children Fail*. Penguin Books, Harmondsworth.



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**PALM ISLAND STUDENTS  
 IN TOWNVILLE**

\*S.Baartz

I teach at three Catholic secondary schools in Townsville. My students are Aboriginal and mostly from the Palm Island community. The breakdown of the schools is:- St Margaret Mary's College, 8 girls; Ignatius Park College, 2 boys; Ryan Community School, 7 boys, 2 girls.

The students are withdrawn for English and maths, and we have introduced an extra area which we call subject help. This can cover

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 \* Teacher/Co-ordinator in Aboriginal Education, Catholic Education Office, Townsville.

any other subject being taught, in which students may require extra tuition. In the English program we have students with a reading age from 7 to 11, so there is a wide range to cater for. Our maths program has to be set out with the same diversity of skills in mind.

## ENGLISH

The basic Grade 8 syllabus is used as a guideline and we try to use the novels and textbooks where possible. We also use extra material from English as a second language/dialect resources.

Oral work is done using newspapers, discussion of novels, local events, weekends or outings. These are often taped and played back. Reading into the tape recorder and use of the listening post are favourite pastimes.

## MATHS

The aim is to equip the students with skills according to their individual capabilities. This may range from teaching one student the uses of maths in day-to-day situations such as household budgeting, saving, shopping and the use of a calculator, to assisting another student in keeping up with more advanced skills in line with the syllabus.

The students are encouraged to participate in all aspects of school life and have been making and illustrating booklets on Palm Island stories. These are then put in the school library and will be distributed to other schools. Another activity at Ryan Community School will be the painting of a wall illustrating Aborigines in education, for National Aborigines' Week. The boys, in the form of their Illawarra Dance Team, by dancing at various schools, take their culture to children who have little or no experience of Aborigines. I might add that the boys are justifiably proud of their efforts.

## CO-ORDINATING ROLE

My first priority is to the parents on Palm Island. I visit there at least once a month to see parents, to pass on messages from their children, and to let the parents know how their children are progressing. My aim behind these visits is to get to know and better understand the parents, the home situation and Palm Island, and hopefully establish a firm rapport and trust with parents and their children through this.

I also assist tutors of Aboriginal children as a resource teacher, and co-ordinate the program between schools in the Catholic diocese (secondary) that have Aboriginal children attending.

Since this program has been started, and with the support of the hostels where the children stay, concerned and interested teachers and principals at the schools involved, the drop-out rate and absenteeism seem to be lower than in previous years. It is to be hoped that the pace can be maintained so that more students can reach higher levels of achievement, as it is of particular importance for Palm Island students to see fellow students reaching goals few of them have before.

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SOME TEACHER EXPECTATIONS OF WORKING  
IN QUEENSLAND ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT  
ISLANDER COMMUNITIES

\* M.J. O'Riley

For a number of years past the Queensland Department of Education has held an annual seminar, called *Jumbunna*, at the Queensland Agricultural College, Lawes. *Jumbunna*, which usually runs for a week in early December, is designed principally as an orientation program for newly appointed principals and teachers, both primary and secondary, who have been posted to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community schools for the first time. In addition, each year an invitation is extended to staff members currently working in these schools to attend the seminar and to assist the transition of new teachers through the application of their experience, as well as to review their own commitment to the work. Supervisory and advisory staff working directly in Aboriginal and Islander education as well as teacher aides with specialized knowledge or expertise then combine with the teachers for a series of discussions and workshops. In 1979 a number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students studying for a Diploma of Teaching at the Townsville College of Advanced Education were welcome participants, often adding to the liveliness of the discussions.

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\* Mr Matt O'Riley, Advisory Teacher, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education, Cairns, Queensland.