



The Australian Journal of **INDIGENOUS EDUCATION**

This article was originally published in printed form. The journal began in 1973 and was titled *The Aboriginal Child at School*. In 1996 the journal was transformed to an internationally peer-reviewed publication and renamed *The Australian Journal of Indigenous Education*.

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Editorial

At the start of this new school year we bring you greetings from this editorial office. For those of you teaching for the first time significant numbers of Aboriginal students we wish you very well and hope you will find enjoyment and challenge in your new field and the professional satisfaction that has its source in successfully assisting the development of students.

Relatively few of you would have been teaching in schools with significant Aboriginal enrolments when this journal commenced in May 1973. I, as editor, and those who supported the journal were motivated by the thought that it would provide an avenue whereby teachers of Aboriginal children across the nation might share with one another their successful approaches, thereby increasing considerably the number of Aboriginal children profiting from their schooling and also diminishing the sense of professional isolation among the teachers which seemed so characteristic a decade ago. I thought you might find of interest extracts from the statements made, in launching the new journal, by the federal ministers of the day who held the portfolios of Education and Aboriginal Affairs.

It is an honour to contribute a few words to the first issue of *The Aboriginal Child at School* and to be invited to do so by Dr Betty Watts, whose contribution to thought on Aboriginal education is most significant. Notably, Dr Watts believes that vital facets of Aboriginal education should arise from Aboriginal initiatives and be expressive of Aboriginal culture and in Aboriginal languages.

Bertrand Russell once made this comment: "Certain mental habits are commonly instilled by those who are engaged in educating: obedience and discipline, ruthlessness in the struggle for worldly success, contempt towards opposing groups and unquestioning credulity, a passive acceptance of the teachers' wisdom...Instead of ruthlessness, education should try to develop justice in thought. Instead of contempt, it ought to instil reverence and an attempt at understanding."

I do not need to stress that Aboriginal children face distinctive and often serious problems in their schooling and it falls mainly on the teachers to deal with those problems if equality of opportunity is to be realised. Responsibility does not rest wholly on the teachers, of course, for it is the job of administrators and research people to provide the support that teachers require. There

is the obligation for all the Australian community to demonstrate that what counts in Australian society is character, not race.

This journal should express the joy of mental adventure, the essence of education, and offer hope, the creative principle in human affairs.

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The Aboriginal Child at School is designed to be an inspiration to the class teacher, and to that end to be a factor in creating for Aboriginal children a future of dignity and cultural renaissance, unshadowed by a sombre past.

(Kim E. Beazley, Minister for Education)

When I discussed Dr Betty Watts' proposal for this journal with her my pleasure that someone was taking up this task was tinged with the envy of a former teacher who would like to be doing it himself.

It is a work of great importance. A considerable body of research findings relating to the education of Aboriginal children is being accumulated, but despite occasional seminars and the like, all too seldom do the results reach practising teachers. Teachers of Aborigines are often in isolation from their professional colleagues. This journal will be tremendously useful in increasing teachers' insight into the problems and to help give direction to their efforts.

The journal will provide a unique service for practising teachers in this and in other aspects of education for the Aboriginal people, and I hope that teachers will use it actively as a forum for discussion as well as a source of information.

(Gordon M. Bryant, Minister for Aboriginal Affairs)

My very best wishes to you and your students.

E. W. Watts