



The Australian Journal of **INDIGENOUS EDUCATION**

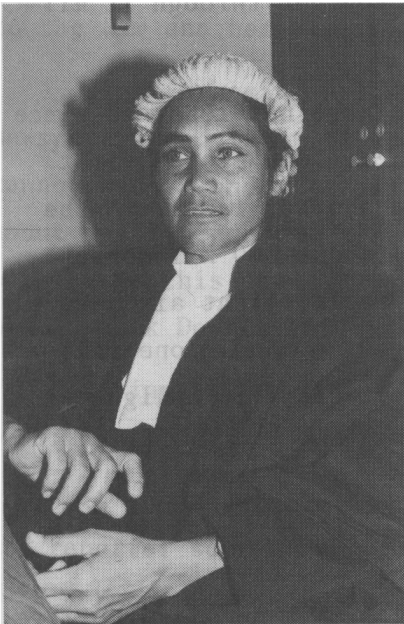
This article was originally published in printed form. The journal began in 1973 and was titled *The Aboriginal Child at School*. In 1996 the journal was transformed to an internationally peer-reviewed publication and renamed *The Australian Journal of Indigenous Education*.

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PROFILE : Lorraine Liddle - Barrister



*Ms Lorraine Liddle was admitted as a barrister in New South Wales one Friday in February, and within days had returned to her home town, Alice Springs, to practise as a lawyer at the Central Australian Aboriginal Legal Service (CAALAS). Ms Liddle had always intended to return to the Northern Territory to work among her family and friends in the service of Aboriginal people.

Ms Liddle has come home to a big family. Her father is Mr Arthur Liddle of Angus Downs Station; her uncle is Mr Bruce Braedon, Deputy Chair, Central Land Council; and her brother is Mr John Liddle, Director, Central Australian Aboriginal Congress.

She returned to Alice Springs after five and a half years' study at the University of New South Wales, a period made all the more intense by the birth of her third child.

Looking back she wonders how she survived university, especially after the birth of her son Ruaidhri (3). She said her family had given her enormous support through the difficult times.

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"I'd often ring up my Johnny, my brother, and tell him my hard luck stories. He'd always listen patiently and give me just enough encouragement to carry on. It's only when you get through it all that you realise just how hard it was."

Ms Liddle's determination and courage have not lessened since she returned to her family home and workplace. One of the first assignments offered to her was accompanying another lawyer to the remote community of Lajamanu (Hooker Creek) about 500 kilometres from Alice Springs. Transport was by twin-engine light aircraft - but even the security of having a back-up engine should one fail did not reduce her apprehension. She'd never flown in a light aircraft before. But the will prevailed.

"I went on the trip," she said. "If you stop at home, you miss out."

After nearly "breaking her neck" to get back to Alice Springs, she has set about her work at a steady pace, talking to other lawyers about the nature of the work both in Alice Springs and the remote communities, getting herself established in the office routine, and generally settling down.

On April 15, her program included a visit to the Alice Springs Supreme Court. The occasion was much more than routine: Ms Liddle was admitted to the Northern Territory bar. It was an event shared by Ms Liddle's friends and family who packed the courthouse to witness what Chief Justice O'Leary described as "a proud day for Aboriginal people."



Indeed, she is proud to be an Aboriginal lawyer working in Central Australia, but is puzzled by all the publicity her admission to the Bar and her remote area "posting" attracted.

Since becoming a lawyer, she has featured in many metropolitan newspapers and is still sought by interstate media. Ms Liddle cannot understand what all the fuss is about. "What's so special about me, I wonder? There are a number of Aboriginal barristers working in this country, and at least one other in the Territory - that's Mick Dodson, a legal officer at the Northern Land Council."

Having started at CAALAS, she is philosophical about the possible effects of her work in the Territory justice system.

"It's good to be able to work with my people," she told an ABC reporter soon after arriving in Alice Springs. "But put it this way -- one Aboriginal lawyer is not going to make all the difference."

Ms Liddle may be modest, but she's even more determined. She's sure to make her point as Central Australia's only Aboriginal lawyer.

