



The Australian Journal of **INDIGENOUS EDUCATION**

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EDITORIAL

We are very proud to present a wonderfully varied and deeply critical set of papers on contemporary issues in Indigenous Australian education in this issue. Over the past five years *AJIE* has grown enormously and Volume 35 brings together the work of 14 authors from an array of disciplinary backgrounds including psychology, law, anthropology and information technology. One of the common threads running throughout is the search for meaningful engagement by, with and for Indigenous learners at all levels in order to provide better and more socially, politically and culturally relevant educational outcomes for Indigenous Australian learners.

The first paper by Sandra Kippen, Bernadette Warren and Lynette Ward identifies the major issues effecting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander student enrolment and participation in tertiary health studies. Through qualitative interviews, they report on the factors which enable students to remain at university and also those which impede successful completion. Laurel Dyson and Toni Robertson similarly speak to the participation of Indigenous Australian students at university and turn our attention to the information technology sector by reviewing a pre-tertiary programme at the University of Technology Sydney aimed at improving the recruitment, enrolment and retention of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in IT studies. Heather Gibb looks at the impact of learning via distance education online for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in remote and rural areas. Martin's paper picks up on the theme of better educational outcomes through a detailed discussion of the ways in which motivational psychology frameworks could be used to enhance Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students' participation in school.

Loretta de Plevitz challenges us to consider the ways in which systemic racism continues to work against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students by labelling them as different from the mainstream and therefore in need of "special schooling". Through a review of anti-discrimination law in Australia, she questions the ethos and morality of educational policies which claim to be for "their own good" yet in effect could be seen to discriminate against Indigenous Australian students. In a similar vein, Matthew Michaelson undertakes a statistical analysis of Education Queensland's Remote Area Incentive Scheme (RAIS) to better understand the relationship between the Indigeneity of a school and its institutionalised perception of undesirability. Brooke Collins-Gearing picks up on the theme of

Indigeneity and the way in which Aboriginal people have historically been represented in children's literature. Her critique of Aboriginalist writing asks us to consider and deconstruct the pervasiveness of whiteness in written texts.

Many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leaders have argued that improving the educational outcomes for Indigenous students in Australia requires commitment not just from Indigenous students, parents and communities, but from entire school and educational systems which include non-Indigenous and Indigenous people. Nina Burrige's paper provides us with an important picture of what reconciliation means in the school education sector today and reveals that while the desire for harmonious co-existence between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples is real, the ways and means to achieve this is less clear. Michael Christie explores *transdisciplinary* research as a paradigm for acknowledging, taking into account and putting into action Indigenous knowledge practices and suggests this as a possible pathway for Western researchers to privilege and make spaces for Indigenous researchers and research agendas. In keeping with the theme of reconciliation and education, the interview by Frances Devlin-Glass with John Bradley is an open and honest conversation by non-Indigenous researchers with the problematics of non-Indigenous researchers working with Indigenous knowledge traditions.

Education systems rely heavily on the use of written texts by non-Indigenous and Indigenous peoples to produce and reproduce, assess and sustain, and question and critique knowledges by and about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and cultures. For this reason we debut our book review section and in this issue. The texts reviewed are drawn from an array of disciplines – history, performance studies, health, social justice and critical race studies – and aim to provide readers with further information and understanding to inform your own positions and perspectives as teachers and learners in Indigenous Australian education and Indigenous Australian studies. Ultimately, the decision to include this section is about making space for an open dialogue between texts, authors and readers and thereby makes available a moment for review and reflection on the representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, knowledges, cultures, issues and agendas.

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Editors