

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education

An introduction for the
teaching profession



Edited by Kaye Price

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Foreword

For many decades Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander educators have been advocating for quality resources that will better equip classroom teachers so that they have the necessary competencies to teach our children. This book entitled *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education: An introduction for the teaching profession* is an essential resource for teachers, particularly undergraduates. It offers clear insight into Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education whilst offering a number of perspectives and personal experiences from the various Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander authors and educators.

Quality teacher education is absolutely essential to the social and economic security of Australia. It is a well-known fact and backed by research that the most important factor in influencing student achievement is quality teaching. Furthermore, investment in teacher education not only increases the academic performance of students but also reduces the need for remedial programs. This resource gives teachers the opportunity to become familiar with our history since colonisation, and to understand that the impact of that history, in one way or another, affects the performances of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. Teachers who become more culturally competent are then able to effectively teach Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and provide an education that creates pathways to independence, employment and lifelong success. Increased understanding of and respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories, heritage and cultures by all teachers will play a major role in bringing about the accelerated improvement we are seeking.

The critical importance of education, particularly English literacy and numeracy, and the impact it has on improving the lived experiences of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples cannot be disputed. Whilst a degree of progress has been made in recent years, education systems and sectors, particularly schools, are failing far too many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. Dr. Mark Rose calls it the 'silent apartheid'. In Rose's words, 'the "silent apartheid" is a knowledge or intellectual segregation that targets the "colonisation of the mind"'. As a result, non-Indigenous Australians ignore or dismiss Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture, histories and world views as unimportant or irrelevant. Far too many Australians have no concept of the unique place Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have in the world, that uniqueness being that we have the oldest living culture. This uniqueness should be promoted and celebrated, not dismissed and ignored. Teachers, as the gate keepers of knowledge and the instruments of cultural

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change, have a crucial role and responsibility in making this fact known to all students under their care and supervision.

It is the role of teachers to equip themselves with the knowledge of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander history so that in their teaching they can dispel myths about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and ensure that all their students know the true history of our nation. Teachers also need to develop their cultural competencies so that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students receive an education that enables them to exercise their rights and participate fully in Australian society. This resource will assist teachers in gaining some knowledge and understandings in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education, as well as offering useful tips for those who work with our children.

After 21 years of the national Aboriginal Education Policy and the rhetoric about the importance of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education, there is still a significant gap between the educational outcomes of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and other Australian students. The trend by education systems and sectors across Australia to ensure that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education is a priority and to 'close the gap' will be achieved when all our children enjoy quality teaching by culturally competent teachers.

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people contributing to this book are highly educated individuals and professionals in their own right. They write on their personal and professional experiences in concert with extensive substantiated research. Their contributions to this book are a testament to the commitment that each has to significantly improving teacher education and subsequently the educational outcomes of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. I encourage you to read this book and learn from the depth of experiences brought together in this one publication; our people telling our story.

Carol Garlett

Chairperson

Western Australian Aboriginal Education and Training Council

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Contributors

Professor Peter Buckskin is Dean of the David Unaipon College of Indigenous Education and Research (DUCIER), University of South Australia. Before taking up this position, he served as a career public servant, in which roles he has been professionally involved in Indigenous education for over 30 years. He is a Narungga man, and has worked as a classroom teacher in Western Australia and South Australia, as Chair of the South Australian Aboriginal Education Consultative Committee, Ministerial Adviser, Superintendent of Schools, and a Senior Executive at both State and Federal level. Peter is Patron of Principals Australia's *Dare to Lead* program, which encourages and supports Australian school principals in improving Indigenous education outcomes and working for Reconciliation in their schools. He has received numerous awards and citations for his work in the pursuit of excellent educational outcomes for Aboriginal peoples. These include the Frank H Klassen Award in 2003 for leadership and contribution to Teacher Education from the International Council on Education for Teaching (ICET); and the Commonwealth's Department of Education, Science and Training Award for Outstanding Achievement in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education at the National Deadly Awards held in Sydney in 2005. Professor Buckskin is a member of the First Peoples Education Advisory Group and Director of the More Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Teachers Initiative.

Ms Christine Evans is a Wiradjuri woman with connection to the Mudgee region of NSW. Christine's research to date focuses on the privileging of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander voice in higher education curriculum and in the evaluation of school-based teaching and learning practices in the area of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education. This has incorporated arts-based inquiry as a complementary research method drawing upon Christine's visual arts education background. Christine worked initially as a secondary visual arts teacher and head teacher, and most recently in NSW teacher education programs at the University of Technology, Sydney, within the areas of Indigenous Australian education and Visual Arts education. Christine has also contributed to the establishment of courses at Tranby College, the development and maintenance of a range of teaching and learning initiatives while at Jumbunna House of Learning, UTS, and the development of the Australian Curriculum while working at the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority, 2011–12.

Professor Jeannie Herbert is the Foundation Chair of Indigenous Studies at CSU, NSW. During almost two decades in the university sector, she has held various positions including: Vice-Chancellor of the Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education, NT; Chair of Indigenous Australian Studies and Head of School of Indigenous Australian Studies at JCU, Qld; and Director of the Oorala Aboriginal Centre at UNE, NSW. She is an Aboriginal woman from the Kimberley region of Western Australia. Her work in the tertiary sector is the culmination

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of a long career in education that has included more than 20 years' experience as a P-12 Guidance Officer and classroom teacher across all sectors; more than 10 years' educational administration and management across schooling and tertiary sectors; education and training consultant in the private and public sectors; and researcher, including her PhD study, which focused on Indigenous success in education.

Dr Christopher Matthews is a Noonuccal man from Minjerribah (Stradbroke Island), Quandamooka First Nation (Moreton Bay) in Queensland, Australia. In 2003, Chris completed a PhD in Applied Mathematics and was successful in bidding for an ARC Discovery (IRD) Grant to undertake postdoctoral studies within Applied Mathematics. Chris also researches in the area of mathematics education and is currently working with the Yumi Deadly Maths team at Queensland University of Technology (QUT) on an ARC Grant within the Vocational Educational and Training (VET) sector. Chris is also the patron of the Make It Count Project being carried out by the Australian Association of Mathematics Teacher (AAMT). Chris is currently Senior Lecturer, Griffith School of Environment, Griffith University, and the co-chair of the Working Party for the development and implementation of an Indigenous Curriculum using a whole-of-university approach.

Professor Martin Nakata is the Director of Nura Gili and Chair of Australian Indigenous Education at the University of New South Wales (UNSW). He is the first Torres Strait Islander to receive a PhD in Australia. His mother is an Indigenous woman from the Torres Strait Islands, and his father was born in Kushimoto-cho, Japan. Martin's current research work focuses on higher education curriculum areas, the academic preparation of Indigenous students, and Indigenous knowledge and library services. He has presented 18 plenary and keynote addresses at conferences in 10 countries, and published widely on Indigenous Australians and education in academic journals and books internationally. His book, *Disciplining the Savages: Savaging the Disciplines*, was published in 2007 by Aboriginal Studies Press.

Dr Kaye Price is an Aboriginal woman from Tasmania, currently working at the Centre for Australian Indigenous Knowledges at the University of Southern Queensland, lecturing in the Education Faculty. She has co-authored material for use in teaching Aboriginal Studies and Torres Strait Islander Studies. Kaye has had extensive input into current policies relevant to Indigenous education in Australia, having been on the teams developing *What Works: Explorations in improving outcomes for Indigenous students*, then taking *What Works* to the higher education sector. She was also involved in the Review of *Australian Directions in Indigenous Education 2005-2008* for MCEETYA and co-edited *Stepping Up: What works in pre-service teacher education* (2009). Kaye has extensive experience in the areas of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education in Australia, and culturally-responsive curriculum in the Philippines, and has worked as a primary school teacher and in curriculum development. She

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holds a Bachelor of Education, Master of Education and Doctor of Philosophy. In 2010, she was the Senior Project Officer, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education, with ACARA, and is now Deputy Chair of the First Peoples Education Advisory Group, as well as the National Trade Cadetship Advisory Panel. Kaye is an Indigenous Education Ambassador, and works with Professor Peter Buckskin and Professor Emeritus Paul Hughes to manage the More Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Teachers Initiative.

Dr Peter Radoll was the Director of the Tjabal Indigenous Higher Education Centre at the Australian National University for five years and is now an Assistant Professor at the University of Canberra. His grandfather's country is Anaiwan (Northern Tablelands of NSW), but Peter was brought up in Tamworth and Western Sydney, and spent some time in Taree before moving to Canberra to go to university. He was a motor mechanic for 11 years before he started studying. Peter's PhD 'Stone Chips to Silicone Chips' examined the adoption and effective use of Information Communication Technologies in Australian Indigenous Communities. Peter has Bachelor and Masters Degrees in Information Technology. Prior to working at the Tjabal Centre, Peter taught Information Systems in the College of Business and Economics at the ANU. Peter's research interests include Information Systems and Information Technology development projects in Australian Indigenous Communities, and he has presented at many conferences.

Professor Mark Rose is traditionally linked to the Gunditjmara Nation of Western Victoria. With a thirty-year career in education he has contributed to a broad range of educational settings within the State, nationally and internationally. As the former principal of Koorie Open Door Education (KODE), Mark has been an active member of Victorian Aboriginal Education Association Inc. (VAEAI) and is fully supportive of community-driven education. Mark consults regularly with Indigenous and non-Indigenous organisations both nationally and internationally. For over a decade Mark taught in predominantly postgraduate programs at RMIT University's Faculty of Business, and he has also taught in Beijing, Hong Kong, Singapore and Malaysia. He served two terms on the Indigenous Higher Education Advisory Council (IHEAC) advising Julia Gillard, as the Federal Minister of Education. In 2003-05 Mark co-chaired the Victorian Implementation Review of the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody. In 2008 Mark moved to VAEAI as General Manager during the World Indigenous Peoples Conference: Education (WIPC:E) and he is currently Chair of Indigenous Knowledge Systems at Deakin University, and a member of the First Peoples Education Advisory Group.

Dr Jaky Troy, a Ngarigu woman, is Director of AIATSIS Research, Indigenous Social and Cultural Wellbeing. Her academic research is diverse but has a focus on languages and linguistics, anthropology and visual arts. She is particularly interested in Australian languages of New South Wales and 'contact languages'. Her doctoral research was into the development of NSW

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Pidgin. Since 2001 Jaky has been developing curriculum for Australian schools, with a focus on Australian language programs. Her most recent project is to co-write the National Languages Curriculum framework document for ACARA. She previously worked on major government initiatives in Indigenous affairs, including developing and writing the Native Title Act, managing Commonwealth land rights legislation, and managing national languages and broadcasting programs. She began her academic life researching Indigenous anthropology and linguistics. Jaky has lived and studied in Mexico and Japan, where she was able to develop her interest in the art, culture and languages of those countries. She is particularly interested in world 'Indigenous art' and has recently been developing her own art practice in the area of ceramics. Formerly, Jaky taught in the Faculty of Education, University of Canberra, which enabled her to develop her research in the field of arts and languages education and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies.

Dr John Williams-Mozley is a Western Arrernte man from Ntaria, previously known as Hermannsburg, 130 km west of Alice Springs. John has postgraduate qualifications in Criminology and received the NAIDOC National Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander 'Scholar of the Year' Award and the Commonwealth Attorney-General's Department's Secretary's Prize for Outstanding Academic Achievement. John has 26 years' experience as a criminal investigator in federal and state investigation agencies, including the NSW Police, Australian Federal Police, Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody, Australia's counter-terrorism agency, NSW Independent Commission Against Corruption, NSW Ombudsmans Office and the United Nations Peacekeeping Forces. For the last 10 years, John has worked in the university sector as a lecturer in Criminology, head of the Indigenous Higher Education Centres at Charles Sturt University and, currently, the Centre for Australian Indigenous Knowledges, University of Southern Queensland.

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Kaye Price
2012