

Editorial

We are very pleased to bring you Volume 45 of *The Australian Journal of Indigenous Education*. At this moment in time, we feel that the work of *AJIE* has perhaps never been more important, particularly as it relates to engaging Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and communities in systems of schooling. In May this year we witnessed the evacuation of school teachers from the remote community of Aurukun, Queensland in fear of violence. A group of 15 disengaged young people had threatened the School Principal and as a consequence of the evacuation, 300 engaged children were subsequently disengaged from School for the remaining five weeks of term following the closure. There is no doubt that teacher safety is paramount, similarly, there should be no doubt that community consultation and engagement in a move like this one equally so. The questions which hang in the air relate to why such levels of disengagement exist. Why are Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people disengaged from schooling in Aurukun? What makes it okay that a large number of engaged Indigenous children were forcibly made to disengage from school? Why is there such disengagement from government in engaging local people in the ways in which education business is carried out with and for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and communities? The papers in this volume of *AJIE* then, all speak strongly to issues of engagement – the kinds of pedagogy and curriculum that can and should be in place, the kinds of relationships that can and should be in place, and the kinds of outcomes made possible when such educational moves are made. A resounding message from all of the articles in this volume is that the on-going engagement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, parents, and communities is key to defining and achieving what educational success might mean for each individual child, context and classroom. This is by no means a new message, but the recent events in Aurukun remind us that it is one we must keep returning to – the stakes for complacency and forgetting are too high.

The articles by Oliver, Rochecouste and Dann, and Trudgett, Page and Harrison provide us with insight into engagement issues in higher education; specifically factors which lead to the retention of undergraduate students in the first and a detailed account of what makes a successful Indigenous doctoral student in the second. The papers by Burgess and Cavanagh, Sartor, and Mac-

donald, Gringart and Gray, take us into the context of primary and secondary schooling. Collectively they suggest that Indigenous community engagement in professional development for teachers, in decision making practices around curriculum and classroom design, and in relation to knowledge making processes in and of themselves, have the capacity to address deficit courses about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and their families, to thereby create a strong sense of cultural identity. The final papers in this volume by Baynes, Rofe, Moeed, Anderson and Bartholomew, and Melchert, Gray and Miller speak specifically to issues of curriculum – namely, science education in schools and occupational therapy health education. This work illustrates that the kinds of beliefs that teachers hold in relation to Indigenous Australian knowledges and its place in curriculum at all levels, contributes greatly to engagement on two levels: first and broadly, student engagement; and second, teacher commitment to the social, political and education justice underpinnings related to embedding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives in across the curriculum.

Of significance in this current volume, is the publication of the inaugural 2014 Australian Association for Research in Education (AARE) Betty Watts Award for the best Indigenous paper by Robyn Heckenberg, 'Learning in place, cultural mapping and sustainable values on Millawa Billa (Murray River)'. Heckenberg's paper brings into the focus the centrality for learning on country as enactment of Indigenous Australian pedagogical and epistemological sovereignty. We are also very pleased to present the 2015 AARE Betty Watts Award winning paper by Anthony McKnight, 'Meeting country and self to initiate an embodiment of knowledge: Embedding a process for Aboriginal perspectives'. McKnight's article similarly draws attention to the potential that being on and with country holds for 'social justice thinking' via an embodied and ultimately transformative learning experience in place. The publication of the AARE Betty Watts Award winning paper will be a regular feature in *AJIE* from now on and for us it represents an important move to open space for the voices, knowledges and experiences of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander researchers to be privileged and foregrounded.

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