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978-1-107-46384-4 - Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education: An Introduction for the Teaching Profession:
Second Edition

Edited by Kaye Price

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Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education

An introduction for the teaching profession

Second edition

The second edition of *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education: An introduction for the teaching profession* prepares students for the unique environment they will face when teaching Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in urban, rural and remote communities at early childhood, primary and secondary levels. This book enables future teachers to understand Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education within a social, cultural and historical context and uses compelling stories and practical strategies to empower both student and teacher.

Updated with the Australian Curriculum in mind, this is a unique textbook written by highly regarded Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander academics. Each chapter opens with a powerful anecdote from the author, connecting the classroom to real-world issues. This updated edition has also been expanded to include information on fostering the unique talents of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people and allows the reader to reflect on classroom practices throughout.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education is an essential and important resource for teacher education students.

Kaye Price is an Indigenous Education Ambassador and a Fellow of the Australian College of Educators.

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Foreword

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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 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 25 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

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Professor Peter Buckskin PSM FACE is a Narungga man from the Yorke Peninsula in South Australia. He is currently the Dean: Indigenous Scholarship, Engagement and Research at the University of South Australia. As an educator and professional bureaucrat for more than 35 years, Professor Buckskin’s passion has been the pursuit of educational excellence for Aboriginal students. Professor Buckskin’s international work has involved being appointed to the Australian National Commission to UNESCO for a term, and the 2009 Working Group of Experts to the Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples responsible to the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights in Geneva. He is currently an Executive Member of the World Indigenous Nations Higher Education Consortium. In recognition of his work Professor Buckskin has received the Commonwealth Public Service Medal in the 2001 Australia Day Honours, Frank G Klassen Award for Leadership and Contribution to Teacher Education from the International Council on Education for Teaching (ICET) and the National Deadly Award for Outstanding Achievement in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education. Professor Buckskin’s current research projects includes a grant to increase the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander teachers and leaders in Australian schools; leading a consortium of academics developing an Online Teacher Education Course for Pre-service Teachers ‘Respect–Relationships–Reconciliation’ to address Focus Areas 1.4 and 2.4 of the national Teacher Standards for the Australian Institute of Teaching and School Leadership; and an Australian Maths and Science Partnerships Program (AMSPP) project to foster mathematics excellence and equity in schooling and tertiary education choices for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. Professor Buckskin is a Fellow of the Australian College of Educators.

Ned David hails from the nation of Kulkalgal, central Torres Strait. He is the Chair of the Torres Strait Islanders Regional Education Council Inc. (TSIREC) and inaugural Director of Yumi Education Support Service (YESS). Ned also holds directorship on several other community organisations, including Chair of Gur A BaradharawKod (GBK) Sea and Land Council Torres Strait, and MaganiLagaugal Prescribed Body Corporate, and is a member of the More Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Teachers Initiative (MATSITI) Reference Group.

Dr Christine Evans is a Wiradjuri woman with connection to the Mudgee region of New South Wales. She is the Chief Education Officer, Aboriginal Education, NSW Board of Studies, most recently working with the Aboriginal Language and Culture Nests. 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 her visual arts education background. Christine worked as a secondary visual arts teacher and head teacher in New South Wales teacher education programs at the University of Technology, within the areas of Indigenous Australian education and visual arts education and the development of the Australian Curriculum while working with ACARA in 2011–12. She has also contributed to the establishment of courses at Tranby College, and the development and maintenance of a range of teaching and learning initiatives while at Jumbunna House of Learning, UTS.

Steve Foster is a Torres Strait Islander man who holds a Masters Degree in Education. He has been a primary principal for more than 30 years in remote Torres Strait primary schools, and is currently an Associate Principal at Tagai State College. In this role, Steve is accountable for leading the Infrastructure Design and Maintenance programs across 16 campuses in the Torres Strait. Steve has a passion for working with students, parents and agencies in remote Indigenous communities to improve educational outcomes. He has represented Education Queensland at numerous forums on Indigenous education issues. These include state, national and international forums. Steve has taken the lead with many initiatives, including the Yumi Way of working in the Torres Strait; facilities and infrastructure planning; the Indigenous Student Leadership program; sports coordination and excellence; and Growing our Own leaders across the College.

Professor Jeannie Herbert is Pro-Vice Chancellor, Indigenous Education; Foundation Chair, Indigenous Studies; and Head of Campus, Dubbo, at Charles Sturt University, NSW. During almost two decades in the university sector, she has held various positions including: Vice-Chancellor, Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education, NT; Chair, Indigenous Australian Studies and Head of School, Indigenous Australian Studies at James Cook University, Qld; and Director, Oorala Aboriginal Centre, University of New England, NSW. An Aboriginal woman from the Kimberley region of Western Australia, her work in the tertiary sector is the culmination of an education career that has included: 25+ years as a P–12 Guidance Officer and classroom teacher across all sectors; 15+ years educational administration and management across all tertiary sectors; education and training consultant in the private and public sectors; and her continuing research into education as a tool of empowerment within both individual and collective contexts, particularly in relation to Indigenous success in higher education.

Judith Ketchell is Executive Principal at Tagai State College, which has 17 school campuses and TAFE facilities across 15 islands in the Torres Strait. She enrolled

at JCU as a special entry student with the Aboriginal and Islander Teacher Education Program and graduated in 1982. She completed her Bachelor of Education in 1995 and has worked in remote, rural and urban school communities across Queensland. Judith works at local, regional and national levels to ensure Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander history, knowledge and protocols are embedded into the Australian curriculum, and recently led the development of the ‘Tagai State College Yumi Education for Life Frame’. In 2008 Tagai was the Queensland Showcase winner for Senior Schooling for its implementation of the Service Guarantee – a model ensuring every Year 12 student is employed, enrolled at university or in a training program within six months of graduating. As a result, 97 per cent of school students are finishing Year 12 and 97 per cent of students are completing a VET qualification. Judith was one of four Indigenous graduates of James Cook University honoured in 2012 as Outstanding Alumni. She was a Queensland finalist in the 2012 Australian Government Minister’s Award for Excellence in Leadership in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, as part of the Close the Gap campaign. Judith is also an executive member of the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Principals Association and a member of the National Project Reference Group ‘More Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Teachers’ Initiative. With Kaye Price and others, Judith co-authored the popular *Footprints: To Country, Kin and Cultures* in 1997.

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 has worked with the Yumi Deadly Maths team at Queensland University of Technology (QUT) on an ARC grant within the Vocational Education and Training (VET) sector. He is a patron of the Make it Count Project conducted by the Australian Association of Mathematics Teachers (AAMT), Chair of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Maths Alliance (ATSIMA) and a reference group member of the Excellence and Equity in Maths: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Student Achievement and Tertiary Aspirations in Mathematics Project. He is currently on leave without pay from Griffith University, having moved his family at the beginning of 2014 to Darwin, where his wife, Cath, is undertaking a PhD at Charles Darwin University (CDU) in renewable energies for remote communities.

Dr Kaye Price is an Aboriginal woman from Tasmania who has co-authored material for use in teaching Aboriginal Studies and Torres Strait Islander Studies and most recently edited *Knowledge of Life* (2015) and the second edition of *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education: A resource for the teaching profession* (2015). She works with Professor Peter Buckskin and Professor Emeritus Paul Hughes to manage the More Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Teachers [in Australian schools] Initiative (MATSITI) and was a member of the AITSL ‘Improving Teaching in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Project’. As a member of the MATSITI team, she assisted in developing the 3 Rs of Teaching:

Respect, Relationships, Reconciliation – a national project to design and develop a unit outline and content to support the provision of ITE to improve teaching in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education. Kaye has extensive experience in the areas of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education in Australia, and culturally responsive curriculum with 40 indigenous groups in the Philippines. She has worked extensively with ACARA, was Australia’s NAIDOC Scholar of the Year in 2005, named an Education Warrior in 2008 and is an Indigenous Education Ambassador and a Fellow of the Australian College of Educators. She is a reference group member of the Excellence and Equity in Maths: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Student Achievement and Tertiary Aspirations in Mathematics Project.

Professor Peter Radoll is inaugural Dean of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education and Research, and Director of the Wollotuka Institute at the University of Newcastle. Before taking up his current position, Peter held various roles in the university sector including: Director of the Tjabal Indigenous Higher Education Centre and lecturer in Information Systems in the College of Business and Economics at the Australian National University; and Acting Director of the Ngunnawal Indigenous Higher Education Centre and lecturer in Information Systems in the Faculty of Business, Government and Law at the University of Canberra. His grandfather’s country is Anaiwan (northern tablelands of New South Wales), 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 holds Bachelor and Master Degrees in Information Technology, and his PhD ‘Stone Chips to Silicon Chips’ examined the adoption and effective use of information and communication technologies in Australian Indigenous communities. Peter is Chief Investigator on the ARC funded National Indigenous Research and Knowledges Network and his interest lies in the science and technology field. Peter was the recipient of the ANU Vice-Chancellor’s Reconciliation Award in 2011, and was the 2012 ACT NAIDOC Scholar of the Year.

Professor Mark Rose is traditionally linked to the Gunditjmara Nation of Western Victoria. In his career of more than 30 years in education, he has contributed to a broad range of educational settings within Victoria, 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 more than 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, the then 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 in 2013 was appointed as the Executive Director Indigenous Strategy at La Trobe University.

Stephanie Savage is a proud Torres Strait Island woman. She has worked in education in both remote and urban centres for the past 23 years. Stephanie's professional experience ranges from classroom and specialist teaching, district-based advisory, deputy principal roles to state school principal. In early 2007, Stephanie took up her current position of Associate Principal at Tagai State College. In this role, Stephanie is leading the development and implementation of Torres Strait Language and Culture, Arts and Strait Start (Pre-Prep) among a number of other areas. Stephanie is honoured to be able to serve the aspirations of her people and help make a difference in the lives of the children, who are our future. She designed a college Student Support Services system that provides guidance and processes for teachers to cater for the needs of *all* students; is implementing Strait Start (0–3 programs) in partnership with Montessori Children's Foundation; is dedicated to the Traditional Language and Culture Strategy, ensuring Indigenous languages are holistically embedded into the Australian curriculum and the design of the college Student Referral systems for students educationally at risk.

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 Pidgin. Since 2001 Jaky has been developing curriculum for Australian schools, with a focus on Australian language programs. Her most recent project is co-writing the Australian Curriculum: Languages draft 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, a member of one of the Stolen Generations, is a registered traditional owner of country now known as Ntaria in the Central Desert of the Northern Territory. As a young Arrernte child adopted by a non-Aboriginal family, he always wanted to be a police officer and joined the NSW Police aged 16, as a cadet. Following a career within different areas of law enforcement and with the Australian Peace Keeping Forces in Cyprus, he undertook study at Charles Sturt University, culminating in a PhD. He has held academic positions at Queensland University of Technology and Charles Sturt University, and for nine years was Director of Indigenous Education at the Centre for Australian Indigenous Knowledges, University of Southern Queensland.

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Pat Brady of AIATSIS is adept at finding even the most elusive reference and Marg Cranney is always prepared to listen.

There are also many other colleagues, relatives and friends whose support and assistance were invaluable during this work’s preparation. Thank you.

To my husband – I couldn’t have done this without you. KP