

# Knowledge of Life

## Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australia

*Knowledge of Life* is the first textbook to provide students with a comprehensive guide to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australia. The result of extensive research and experience, the book offers fresh insights into a broad range of topics and, most importantly, is written by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander academics.

*Knowledge of Life* addresses topics ranging from history and reconciliation, to literature and politics, to art, sport and health. It presents social, cultural and political perspectives on these areas in a manner that is accessible to undergraduate students from a range of backgrounds and academic disciplines. Each chapter opens with a précis of the author's journey in order to engage students and offer them an insight into the author's experiences. These authentic voices encourage students to think about the wider issues surrounding each chapter and their real-life implications.

The authors – led by accomplished academic, educator and author Kaye Price – are eminent academics who each bring to this text vast experience and expertise in their field. *Knowledge of Life* is a timely publication, which emphasises the importance of relationships between non-Indigenous and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures.

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

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Islander Australia

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# Foreword

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At the outset, I wish to congratulate Cambridge University Press, and in particular Nina Sharpe, for the initiative in commissioning this outstanding contribution to Australian studies. The work includes participation from some of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australia's leading academics, whose works have explored our past, commented on our present and given great thought to our future.

*Knowledge of Life* is not just an undergraduate text; it is Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander storytelling at its finest, where authors share not only their knowledge from areas of expertise, but introduce the reader to aspects of their own lived experiences. The authors challenge the popular mainstream media presentation of Indigenous Australia and ask the reader to consider Indigenous Australia from a fresh perspective.

In this volume, the authors present a wide range of topics essential to those who will at some point in time reflect on the content as they work within Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australia. Some readers may feel confronted by the way in which racism is reflected while at the same time reiterating the historian Henry Reynolds's question, 'Why weren't we told?' This is a question I have heard many times within my many roles as a senior public servant, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner and Race Discrimination Commissioner with the Australian Human Rights Commission, and as Chancellor of the University of Canberra. This book, with its cross-section of themes, addresses many unasked questions and questions some readers have never thought to ask. As some students have said to me, 'How do I ask about something if I don't know it exists?'

It is indeed timely to introduce such a collection, as the Australian public debates the need to recognise Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in the Australian Constitution and to consider and be educated about the 'discriminatory' and 'race-based' clauses in the Constitution that most in our nation's population do not realise exist. As we celebrate the seventh anniversary of the Apology to the Stolen Generations and remember the Freedom Ride of the 1960s, let's not forget our past while we celebrate our achievement and our future.

This book offers the reader the opportunity to consider issues that have not been covered in the school curricula or issues that may not be covered following the Review of the Australian Curriculum, which will de-emphasise Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander history in preference for a greater emphasis on the role of

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business and the ANZAC tradition. It is timely also as leaders within academia and the wider education system are beginning to recognise how important it is for all to have respect for each other, to establish strong relationships and to promote reconciliation. Knowing who we are and how we feel about ourselves and our fellow Australians, and recognising our place in the fabric of Australia has a profound impact on our social and emotional wellbeing and health generally.

I commend *Knowledge of Life* as an essential read for all Australians.

Tom Calma AO, Chancellor,  
University of Canberra

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# Contributors

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## About the editor

### **Kaye Price**

Dr Kaye Price is an Aboriginal woman from Tasmania, currently co-leading the More Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Teachers Initiative (MATSITI) at the University of South Australia. She has authored material for use in teaching Aboriginal studies and Torres Strait Islander studies and most recently edited *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education: A Resource for the Teaching Profession* (Cambridge University Press, 2012). As a member of the MATSITI team, Kaye has assisted in developing the '3Rs' project, a national project supporting the provision of initial teacher education in an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander context, with an emphasis on respect, relationships and reconciliation. She was a member of the Improving Teaching in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Project conducted by the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership, and has worked extensively with the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority, chairing the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Histories and Cultures Advisory Group. Kaye was NAIDOC Scholar of the Year in 2005, is an Indigenous Education Ambassador and a Fellow of the Australian College of Educators.

## About the authors

### **Fabri Blacklock**

Dr Fabri Blacklock's family on her father's side are the Ngarabal/Nucoorilma people from Tingha and the Biripi people from Dingo Creek, both places in New South Wales; she also has English ancestry on her mother's side. She completed her PhD in Koori oral history and art in 2014. She is currently a Postdoctoral Research Fellow at Australian Catholic University. She graduated from the University of Technology, Sydney, in 1999 with a Bachelor of Arts (Communication), majoring in Aboriginal studies and film and video. She was Assistant Curator of Koori

History and Culture at the Powerhouse Museum, Sydney, from 1999 to 2008. She is a contributing author of the *Bayagul: Contemporary Indigenous Communication* and *Our Place: Indigenous Australia Now* catalogues. Fabri is also an artist and facilitates art workshops and arts-based community engagement projects for schools and community organisations. She is a facilitator of World Vision's Young Mob Program, which empowers Aboriginal youth to become leaders through public speaking and leadership workshops.

### **Dennis Foley**

Professor Dennis Foley researches and teaches across numerous academic fields related to Indigenous Australians. He directs his main research focus towards the emerging discipline of Indigenous enterprise and entrepreneurship. His career within the tertiary education sector began at Griffith University where he developed the Indigenous Career and Employment Strategy and was involved with the establishment of the first Australian Indigenous degree program in contemporary Indigenous art. Several teaching appointments followed. This included teaching MBA studies at the University of Queensland, business and management courses at Australian Catholic University, and Indigenous land-use management and practice studies at the University of Queensland. Dennis has taught across humanities, education and arts faculties at the Universities of Queensland and Sydney, Queensland University of Technology and the University of Hawaii, and has also taught financial and strategic management at Swinburne University. He is a Fulbright Scholar and dual Endeavour Fellow. Prior to joining the tertiary education sector, he held middle to senior management positions within the banking and finance sector. Dennis identifies as Koori. His matrilineal connection is to the Gai-mariagal people of northern Sydney, and his patrilineal connection is to the Wiradjuri people of the Capertree/Turon River region in New South Wales. He is active within the Indigenous community and Indigenous business associations within Darug circles and the NSW Indigenous Chamber of Commerce. He has also received several ministerial appointments to federal and State advisory committees.

### **Barry Judd**

Associate Professor Barry Judd teaches Australian Indigenous studies at RMIT University, Melbourne. He is a descendant of the Pitjantjatjara people of north-west South Australia and British immigrants who settled on the Victorian goldfields in the 1850s. He has a research interest and expertise in explorations of Australian identity and the process of cultural interchange between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples in Australia since 1770. Published as *On the Boundary Line: Colonial Identity in Football* (Australian Scholarly Publishing) in 2008, his PhD thesis explored cross-cultural engagements between Aboriginal people and Anglo-Australians in the sport of Australian (Rules) Football. Barry engages with (post-) colonial ideas of 'cultural hybridity' that claim colonial encounters between 'settler' and 'native' produced (post-)colonial identity positions resting somewhere 'in between' the invader and the invaded. He has co-edited a number of important

volumes on Indigenous peoples and sports, including *Native Games: Indigenous Peoples and Sports in the Post-Colonial World* (Emerald, 2013) and *Indigenous People, Race Relations and Australian Sport* (Routledge, 2014, 2nd edn). Barry's current research investigates links between participation in football and wellbeing at the remote Aboriginal community of Papaya in the Northern Territory.

### Steve Kinnane

Steve Kinnane has been an active researcher and writer for more than 20 years as well as lecturing and working on community cultural heritage and development projects. His interests are diverse, encompassing Aboriginal history, creative documentary (both visual and literary), and sustainability and the relationships between individuality, community, country, economy and human development. Steve is a Marda Marda from Miriwoong Country in the East Kimberley. He lectured at Murdoch University in Australian Indigenous studies and sustainability, completed a Visiting Research Fellowship at the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS), Canberra, and is currently Senior Researcher for the Nulungu Research Institute at the University of Notre Dame Australia, Broome. Steve co-wrote and produced *The Coolbaroo Club* (1996), an ABC TV documentary, and was awarded the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission Human Rights Award for the Arts in 1996. His book *Shadow Lines* (Fremantle Press, 2003) was awarded the WA Premier's Award for Non-Fiction in 2004, the Federation of Australian Writers Award for Non-Fiction in 2004, and the Stanner Award in 2004, and was shortlisted for both the Queensland and South Australian Premier's Awards. His recent publications include the chapter 'Blood History' for the book *First Australians* (Melbourne University Press, 2010) accompanying the *First Australians* television series, and reports and chapters examining sustainability and how communities are working towards future change by confronting systemic impediments and developing regionally relevant solutions.

### Paul Newman

A member of the Wiradjuri nation in central-west New South Wales, Paul has more than 30 years' practical work experience in Aboriginal affairs on a national level, within the private, community and public sectors. His tertiary qualifications include a Bachelor of Business, and a Master of Arts in Communications and Cultural Studies. As an experienced business management consultant, academic and corporate trainer, Paul has more than 25 years' adult education development and teaching experience with a range of educational providers, including the University of Western Sydney. The subject areas he has worked in include Indigenous economics, Indigenous landscapes and culture, and Indigenous health. Paul founded BlackBiz eMagazine, Australia's first online Indigenous business magazine, which he now edits. He has extensive senior executive management and board member experience within the broad ambit of Indigenous affairs policy, research and economic development. His board positions include former Chairperson of the NSW Reconciliation Council, and his current ministerial appointment to the Board of Trustees of the University of Western Sydney.

**Sandra R. Phillips**

Dr Sandra R. Phillips is of the Wakka Wakka and Gooreng Gooreng nations located in south-east Queensland. A lecturer in publishing and literary studies at the Queensland University of Technology (QUT), Sandra is also an industry-trained book editor. She has worked with Magabala Books (Broome, WA), University of Queensland Press (Brisbane) and Aboriginal Studies Press (Acton Peninsula, ACT). In teaching compulsory units of QUT's Bachelor of Fine Arts, Sandra has had the opportunity to exercise influence on future generations of creative and professional writers. As well as Indigenous publishing, her research interests are in Indigenous knowledges, with a focus on Indigenous stories and discourses. Sandra has raised her three sons as a single mother and is also a member of a large extended family.

**Jessa Rogers**

Jessa Rogers is an Aboriginal educator raised in Queensland. She is a PhD scholar at the Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research at Australian National University (ANU), holding an ANU Indigenous Australian Reconciliation PhD Scholarship. She was National NAIDOC Youth of the Year in 2010. She was a National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Catholic Council Youth Leadership Delegate in 2010, and a National Congress of Australia's First Peoples Delegate in 2011–12. She was a member of the National Congress Education Advisory Group in 2013 and is a member of the National Tertiary Education Union's National Indigenous Caucus, and of the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Higher Education Consortium. Jessa lectured in Indigenous education at the University of the Sunshine Coast in 2013 and as a sessional academic in 2014, following a period teaching in Catholic schools. She holds a Bachelor of Education (First Class honours), a Bachelor of Creative Industries (Drama) (with Distinction) and a Master of Education (Guidance and Counselling) from the University of Southern Queensland.

**Gary Thomas**

Dr Gary Thomas is Aboriginal and Australian South Sea Islander, from North Queensland. He is Associate Professor in Learning and Teaching at the Queensland University of Technology. He is responsible for a university-wide project focused on increasing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledges in the curriculum. Gary was Chair of the National Indigenous Higher Education Network and was responsible for this organisation being recognised as an 'Indigenous Peoples Organization' within the United Nations system. He has arranged for five delegations of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people working in Australian universities to attend the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, and drafted interventions on Indigenous peoples and their rights to education for these delegations.

**Raelene Ward**

Raelene Ward is a descendant of the Kunja Traditional Owner group of Cunnamulla and surrounding areas in south-west Queensland. Holding a Bachelor of Nursing and a Master's in Health, she has been an employee of the University of Southern

Queensland (USQ) since 2007. Raelene has also been a practising clinical nurse for the past 23 years, focusing on clinical work and research on suicide prevention, Aboriginal health, and social and emotional wellbeing and mental health as social determinants of Aboriginal health. She has a wealth of experience, knowledge and skills in undertaking research with Aboriginal people and communities, bringing into these projects well-established networks and rapport with many diverse communities. In 2009 Raelene was awarded the LIFE Award – Indigenous Category. This category identifies the unique and creative health program, service partnership or individual that has encompassed the holistic and social view of health – in this case, the physical, emotional, cultural and spiritual wellbeing of Indigenous individuals and communities in promoting suicide prevention.

#### **Karel Williams**

Karel Williams is an Aboriginal Tasmanian with family connections to the Western Arrernte, Yamatji and Nyoongah peoples. Karel's first job was at the Tasmanian Aboriginal Centre in Hobart. She subsequently moved to Canberra and worked in senior levels in the Australian Public Service for many years. During this time she participated in a 12-month exchange program between the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission and the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs in Ottawa, Canada. Karel has a Bachelor of Arts in Administration and has completed her final year of a Bachelor of Midwifery. While undertaking the latter, she was invited to become a member of the Golden Key International Honour Society. She has been on the board of a number of Aboriginal community organisations in Canberra, including the Aboriginal Education Consultative Group, and has taught in a number of Aboriginal studies units at the University of Canberra. Most recently, she was a student member on the Mentoring Reference Committee of the Congress of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Nurses and Midwives. Karel and her husband have two daughters and four sons between them.

#### **John Williams-Mozley**

A member of one of the Stolen Generations, Dr John Williams-Mozley 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 Peacekeeping Forces in Cyprus, John undertook study at Charles Sturt University (CSU), which culminated in a PhD. He was NAIDOC Scholar of the Year in 1997, has held academic positions at QUT and CSU and for nine years was Director of Indigenous Education at USQ's Centre for Australian Indigenous Knowledges.

#### **Asmi Wood**

Dr Asmi Wood joined ANU's National Centre for Indigenous Studies in 2012 as its Senior Research Fellow and manager of its Higher Degree by Research (HDR) student program. He has been an academic advisor to the ANU College of Law since 2002 and holds a position in the College as Senior Lecturer. Asmi gained a Bachelor

of Engineering/Science from the University of Melbourne and a Bachelor of Laws (LLB) with Honours from ANU. He completed his PhD in 2011, writing a thesis on the regulation of the use of force by non-state actors under international law. Asmi is also a practising barrister and solicitor in the Australian Capital Territory. He received the Vice Chancellor's Award for Teaching Excellence from ANU in 2010. Before commencing work at the College of Law, he worked in private practice and in government, both in Australia and overseas. Asmi's field of research is the use of force in international law, terrorism, international humanitarian law, legal ethics, comparative law, jurisprudence and legal interpretation, and Indigenous peoples and the law.

## About the cover image artist

### **Chris (Wirriimbi) Edwards**

Chris Edwards is a Gumbaynggirr man from Nambucca Heads, a town on the Mid North Coast of New South Wales. After working in shopfitting and joinery, he decided to pursue painting as a career. His work is inspired by the landscape in which he grew up, and his unique approach to depth and form has made him one of Australia's most sought-after Aboriginal artists. The stories behind his artworks reflect a cultural heritage dating back many thousands of years, Dreaming stories passed down through art displayed in caves, on trees and on the ground. Chris's company, Wirriimbi Designs, licenses his designs for commercial production, locally and worldwide; for example, the company has worked with The Rug Collection to produce a range of carpet designs. Chris is also engaged in a range of public art and education projects in Sydney.



# Acknowledgements

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There is something quite special about editing a volume such as this. Every chapter holds the essence of the contributor, and is marked by the generosity of each to share his or her stories. Each author has combined his or her talent and extensive knowledge with the creative power of writing for an audience in order to empower the reader. I am so grateful to you all – Asmi, Barry, Dennis, Fabri, Gary, Jessa, John, Karel, Paul, Rae, Sandra and Steve – for the gift of yourself, your work and your time.

My gratitude is also extended to the wise, patient and wonderful Nina Sharpe, senior commissioning editor at Cambridge University Press, without whose support this project would never have been accomplished. Many thanks go to the ever-patient Vilija Stephens, who does a commendable balancing act in her editorial role, and to Angela Damis too, who had the unenviable job of copyeditor.

As Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander writers, we remember the storytellers who came before us and look forward to the storytellers to come.