

# ReconciliationNews

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Rebecca Richards,  
**Rhodes Scholar**

Top marks for  
**a Coota boy**

The culture of  
**mathematics**



**Reconciliation**  
AUSTRALIA

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**Caution: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples should be aware that this publication may contain the images of deceased people.**

Reconciliation Australia  
Old Parliament House,  
King George Terrace, Parkes ACT 2600  
PO Box 4773, Kingston ACT 2604  
Ph: (02) 6273 9200  
Fax: (02) 6273 9201  
[www.reconciliation.org.au](http://www.reconciliation.org.au)

As the national organisation building relationships between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and other Australians, Reconciliation Australia acknowledges the traditional owners of country throughout Australia and their continuing connection to land, waters and community. We pay our respect to them and their cultures, and to the elders both past and present.

Reconciliation Australia is an independent, not-for-profit, non-government organisation. Your active contribution and financial support helps us develop innovative programs and resources.

This magazine is compiled by Reconciliation Australia to share reconciliation stories, issues and opinions. Feedback and story ideas are always welcome along with names and addresses of people who would like to receive the newsletter. Please email us at: [enquiries@reconciliation.org.au](mailto:enquiries@reconciliation.org.au)

**Cover image: Rebecca Richards, Australia's first Aboriginal Rhodes Scholar (Image by Rosalie Richards)**



**Reconciliation  
AUSTRALIA**

# CEO's message

This is likely to be my final message in *Reconciliation News* as I will soon be stepping down as CEO of Reconciliation Australia. I have absolutely enjoyed working here for the past four years and it has been a privilege to share that time with a Board and staff so committed to the work we do.

When I first took up my role, I said how honoured I was to be heading up an organisation that matched my own values, and that is just as true today as it was then.

The pathway to recognition and reconciliation is now engaging more Australians than ever before and I am proud to have been a part of our key achievements over the past few years.

We are now more dynamic and disciplined, our policy and people processes are more reflective of a social business and our programs including Reconciliation Action Plans, National Reconciliation Week and the Indigenous Governance Awards have all increased their reach and impact.

We have significantly increased our profile and engagement across all sectors of society—government, corporate, schools, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leaders and communities and non-Indigenous organisations.

My original vision was for Reconciliation Australia to elevate itself from a 'good' to a 'great' organisation and, in terms of staff commitment and programs that deliver results, we are well on the way to achieving that goal.

It's appropriate that my final message appears in this education-themed edition of *Reconciliation News*. Education is partly the reason why I am stepping down—to have more time for my children as they embark on the Higher School Certificate and Diploma of Childcare.

For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander youngsters there is nothing more important than early learning and in this edition you will meet the dynamic team leading our new *Narragunnawali: Reconciliation in Schools* program, partnered by BHP Billiton. I am so enthusiastic about *Narragunnawali* because it has the potential to promote real understanding and positive change in schools all around the country. I really look forward to watching that happen.

You'll also read a brilliant piece by Rebecca Richards, who last year became Australia's first Aboriginal Rhodes Scholar. Her observations on her time at Oxford University in England show that the sky is the limit when you set your mind to it.

Reconciliation Australia Board director Jason Glanville recalls his own journey of learning, from his idyllic school days growing up in Cootamundra to his current role as CEO of the National Centre of Indigenous Excellence.

Other stories include the tale of a group of young people from the Jobs Australia Foundation's Indigenous Youth Leadership program who walked the Kokoda Track; the remarkable reconciliation leadership shown by Lourdes Hill College, the first Australian school to have its own RAP; and the role of the Australian Indigenous Mentoring Experience (AIME), a finalist in this year's Indigenous Governance Awards.

On a very sad note, I extend my sincere condolences to the family and colleagues of Gavin Jones, founder of the Deadly Vibe Group and creator of the Deadly Awards. Gavin was passionate in telling the world about the talents and achievements of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and we will miss him dearly.

As I mentioned at the outset, it has been a real privilege to lead Reconciliation Australia. I sincerely thank the Co-Chairs and the Board for their constant support, and the dedicated staff who make things happen. They say that once you work here you never really leave and so I expect I will remain connected until the day dawns when we all wake to a reconciled, just and equitable Australia.

**Leah Armstrong, CEO Reconciliation Australia**



# From student to teacher

Sheree is dedicated to building a stronger, more resilient community, from the children up. (Image courtesy of World Vision)

**Ever since she was a young girl, Sheree has loved to learn. A Warlpiri woman, from the Central Desert of Australia, she's determined to give children in her community the best possible start in life and she believes education is the key.**

"From my grandparents I learnt about some of our traditions, and I'm always happy to learn more," says Sheree. Her grandfather, who was well regarded in their community, taught her about respect while her grandmother, who would take her out hunting, encouraged her capacity for patience.

Now it's Sheree's turn to teach. "I love to work with kids, and I love supporting families. It's part of my personality, and now it's also what I've been trained for," she says.

Looking for ways to harness the strengths, ambition and hopes of the many Indigenous communities with which it partners, World Vision supports people like Sheree to gain the skills they need to help their own community. In this case, all that Sheree required was a little bit of mentoring while

she was studying to get her Certificate III in Early Childhood.

"It really brightened up my future and helped me build my skills to the next level," says Sheree. And those skills helped her secure a job as community family worker where she works with families to help them ensure that their children grow up strong.

"It's good to start with the young kids", says Sheree, who actively encourages other parents to send their children to day care or playgroup, partly because she's seen how it helped her own son.

"It gives children confidence and the ability to socialise with others, so they're ready for school when they get there. They understand what their teachers are saying, and they follow routine because they are used to

doing that from playgroup. It's also important for the kids to learn about culture and the old ways, so they can carry on our traditions."

It is Sheree's belief that good education, which includes Aboriginal traditions, results in better health and more choices and opportunities for children and their communities. That's why she works hard every day to build a stronger, more resilient community, from the children up!

"It all starts with helping yourself and your family, so we can make a better future for our kids and our community. The people from World Vision are really helping us with that."

For more information on the projects World Vision is supporting in Indigenous communities around Australia please visit [worldvision.com.au/australiaprogram](http://worldvision.com.au/australiaprogram) and check out the map.

# Two cool for schools



Alex Shain and Susanne Bowles  
(Image by Steve Keough)

Reconciliation Australia, in partnership with BHP Billiton, has just launched the *Narragunnawali: Reconciliation in Schools* program designed to support the more than 21,000 early childhood, primary and secondary schools in Australia. The program will assist schools in developing environments that foster a higher level of knowledge and pride in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories, cultures and contributions.

Participating schools will be guided to find meaningful ways to increase respect; reduce prejudice; and strengthen relationships between the wider Australian community and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

*Narragunnawali* (pronounced Narra-gunna-wally) is a word from the language of the Ngunnawal people meaning peace, alive, wellbeing and coming together. Heading our schools' team are Alex Shain and Susanne Bowles, passionate believers in the powerful reconciliation role education can play. Each has provided a snapshot of themselves and what brought them together.

## Susanne Bowles

I always instinctively knew that I wanted to be a teacher. When I was in primary school I used to set up an 'outdoor classroom' in our backyard and play schools with my younger siblings and the neighbourhood kids.

The corrugated iron wall of our old house was the 'blackboard' and I used lumps of charcoal from the fire as my chalk. It was here that I taught the younger kids in our street to read, write and spell.

I loved role-playing and dreamed of one day becoming a real teacher. I think those years of playing school were a precursor to actually taking on teaching as a profession. I also think that I must have sensed at that early age, the importance of learning and academic success.

My parents didn't have the privilege of completing high school, and when they told me their stories about their schooling experiences, I was motivated to do well and aspired to achieve more than they ever could. My dad was a mechanic/taxi driver and my mum was a domestic working for the pearling master wives. They worked hard to raise 11 children. My parents encouraged me to pursue my career dreams and goals. They told my siblings and me that we 'could be whatever we wanted to be'. I was often told that I was smart and clever and sensible. These motivational affirmations reinforced my own self belief in my ability to not only complete high school but to also gain a tertiary degree. I was the first one in my family to go to university.

Achieving a teaching degree was probably a pivotal point in my life and I think I was seen as a role model for others around me to set their own goals and to go for what they wanted in life. I think too, that it made me, my family and friends realise

that university wasn't just for rich people or white people. If you set your mind to achieve your educational dreams, you could do it, overcoming any barriers, sacrifices, and hurdles in your way. Being an Aboriginal person, from a low-socio economic background, with parents who had limited schooling, only made me more determined to succeed and do well and to break the cycle of imposed low expectations.

I've now been a teacher for 32 years and I love teaching! I've taught in many different places from remote Aboriginal community schools to large regional schools and various metropolitan schools in Western Australia.

My love for teaching and my passion for education have seen me take on a diverse range of teaching and leadership roles over the years. I have always been committed to making a positive difference to the lives of young people and their families and communities. I believe education is critical to rising above poverty and a life of discrimination and dominance.

My personal dedication to continuously grow and learn, and to exceed my own expectations as an educator has now brought me from my hometown of Broome in the beautiful Kimberley region of Western Australia all the way to Canberra.

Although I've had many opportunities in the past to 'spread my professional wings' and to engage in programs that have a far-reaching educational influence (much greater than classroom teaching practice), nothing has been as extensive and pushed the parameters as much as my current role.

When I first met Alex, I had this immediate feeling in my *liyarn* that I had made the right decision to move to Canberra, take a break from classroom teaching, and to put my

time, energy, passion and experience into a worthy and important project such as *Narragunnawali*. Alex's youth, enthusiasm, openness and visionary thinking makes my job so much easier. We make a strong, smart, deadly team working with Australian schools.

My role as Senior National Schools Officer at Reconciliation Australia is very different to classroom work, and although I do miss the 'face to face' teaching side of education, I am thoroughly enjoying the opportunity to reach out to students, parents and teachers all around the country.

Coming all this way over to the east coast, away from family and country, even enduring Canberra's cold frosty mornings, is worth the challenge. I love the diversity of my job and the important role we play in Australia's reconciliation journey.

## Alex Shain

As I write this, I'm sitting in Cherbourg (former Aboriginal settlement, mission and now a strong independent Shire council) in South East Queensland. I've been here for a week, taking part in the inspirational *Stronger Smarter Leadership Program*. Last week I was in Broome, on Susanne's country, listening to the Aboriginal and education community in the Kimberley. Just a few days ago I stopped in Sydney for the weekend to be with my family where I had time to think about the great education adventure we're about to embark on here at Reconciliation Australia, the *Narragunnawali: Reconciliation in Schools* program.

I grew up in inner city Sydney and loved school. I distinctly remember sitting in my Year 2 classroom, at the age of eight, knowing I was going to be a teacher. I would consciously think about the great times I was

having as a student in the classroom, hoping I could someday replicate them as a teacher myself. After I finished Year 12 I spent a year in England working as a teacher's aide which further cemented my desire to teach. After completing degrees in linguistics and art history and then my Master of Teaching, a world of possibilities opened up for me.

Yesterday, while sitting in the boys' dormitory in Cherbourg, I was asked "What keeps me strong?" My response was I've known since I was a child that I have a relentless need for things to be fair. Fairness, justice, equity and equality are driving forces behind who I am, why I teach and why I do the work I do. Throughout my life my desire for equality and equity has been focused on what I think are the two most significant aspects of our society; health and education.

When living and teaching in Tibooburra (far north-west NSW) I wrote my Masters research paper on 'extending curriculum into the community through a kitchen garden'. It was here that I started thinking about the bigger picture and I knew I had a role to play in ensuring all Australians having access to health services and education opportunities.

Five years later in 2012, I was invited by Reconciliation Australia to join a number of people to meet and discuss just what makes schools tick. After this meeting, I was asked

if I knew of anyone who might be interested in developing a new schools program based in Canberra. My instant response was 'How about me?', and that's how it all began.

Already we have planned the first four years of the *Narragunnawali* program; developed relationships with the nationally focussed Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education advisory groups around the country; gained the support of the Government, Catholic and Independent sectors nationally and in each State and Territory; trialled an online tool to enable Australian schools (early childhood, primary and secondary) to develop Reconciliation Action Plans; and produced a series of short films based on the Australian Curriculum.

The films were developed in partnership with CAAMA Productions (Central Australian Aboriginal Media Association) and follow the lives of young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people talking about how they relate to their own histories and cultures. They will be available free to all schools along with a range of other resources.

Before we had even met, I remember Susanne telling me over the phone, 'Yes, I know the job is based in Canberra'. I needed convincing because I was understandably confused about why someone would move from Broome to Canberra; away from

country, away from family, and those golden sunsets on Cable Beach.

To cut a long story short, Susanne did move to Canberra to work with me and in no time at all we've formed a solid partnership. I have been strengthened by her experience and expertise and our combined commitment will, in turn, strengthen the schools and early childhood centres engaging in *Narragunnawali*.

I believe our *Narragunnawali* schools' program will open the eyes of Australian students and teachers. It will provide a greater understanding of our past, influence attitudes and encourage mutual respect. I am both excited and grateful for this amazing opportunity to work with Susanne and other dedicated people to make sure this dynamic program achieves everything it promises.

### ***Narragunnawali:*** ***Reconciliation in Schools***

**Purpose:** To see Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander history, culture and rights as a proud part of everyday life in Australian schools.

In line with the Australian Curriculum, provide students with a greater appreciation of the heritage of the First Australians.

**Delivery:** The *Narragunnawali* program will provide participating schools with the tools to empower and support teachers.

A suite of Curriculum resources will enable students to better appreciate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures and our shared national identity.

**Impacts:** Over time, students will develop stronger two way relationships with increased trust and less prejudice.

Schools will develop and strengthen links with local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and engage in meaningful, practical and symbolic actions of reconciliation.

A starting point for schools will be the development of their own Reconciliation Action Plans. For more information about how your school can be involved, go to [www.reconciliation.org.au/schools](http://www.reconciliation.org.au/schools)





## Lourdes Hill shares the spirit

The commitment to reconciliation is very strong at Lourdes Hill College, a Brisbane Catholic school which has a proud tradition of leading the way in recognising the giftedness of all cultures. Under the guidance of the College's highly respected Elder in Residence, Aunty Joan Hendriks, Lourdes Hill students are encouraged to embody the Benedictine values of listening, peace and justice—the building blocks for genuine reconciliation.

A passionate supporter of reconciliation, principal Robyn Anderson is delighted that Lourdes Hill College was the first school to develop its own Reconciliation Action Plan and says her belief is that strong governance processes are a key element of the College's commitment to reconciliation.

"The College has for decades ensured that there is a strong Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander voice at the decision-making table," she says.

"In most recent times, we were very fortunate to have Professor Cindy Shannon, Pro-Vice Chancellor (Indigenous Education) at UQ, as Board Chair. Cindy is a descendent of the Ngugi people from Moreton Island and was College Captain in 1976.

"Our Elder in Residence, Aunty Joan, is also a past pupil and has been an advisor and committee member over many decades. She has been and remains instrumental in building a strong culture of care, action and reconciliation."

An important element of reconciliation is to ensure Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students can reach their potential academically, socially, spiritually and emotionally, all within a context that is supportive of their cultural identity. Lourdes Hill

College has an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Unit that forms part of the Faculty of Differentiated Learning. With Aunty Joan's wisdom to guide them, the staff of the unit ensure each girl is encouraged to take charge of their own learning.

Student leadership is also key to the spirit of reconciliation embraced at Lourdes Hill College. A designated Reconciliation Captain sits on the Student Council and is responsible for keeping this important topic at the forefront of decision making. She is supported by the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Captain, whose job is to represent the perspectives of all students who identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander.

Lucy Moffett is the College's 2014 Reconciliation Captain. Her passion for reconciliation was sparked when she attended a National Sorry Day ceremony at Wynnum as a primary school student. She was impressed with the presence of Lourdes Hill College students at the event and wanted to be part of the community.

Lucy explains, "As captain, it is my role to promote reconciliation to our school community by highlighting key events such as Close the Gap Day and National Reconciliation Week. National Reconciliation Week is an annual highlight and features a special assembly dedicated to exploring the theme.

"As part of my role, I am also the captain of a service group named STAR (Santa Teresa and Reconciliation). This group gives students the opportunity to help conduct activities for the community such as decorating paper feet for this year's NRW theme, *Walking the Talk*. The group also fundraises for the Aboriginal community

**Aunty Joan (back row, 4th from left) with students at Lourdes Hill College.**

of Santa Teresa, to provide much needed support for the community's artists."

The connection with Santa Teresa is important in keeping reconciliation grounded in reality. Each year, as part of the College's leadership development program, a group of teachers and students visit the Santa Teresa community in the Northern Territory for an immersion experience like no other. Student Annie Ryan attended in 2013 and recalls:

"We helped in the women's centre, assisting the ladies to pack and deliver 'meals on wheels' and also lent a hand in their crèche. The little kids were so divine and it was amazing to see such small children speaking in two different languages!

"My favourite part of the trip was definitely the spirituality centre. This was where the elder women of the community would make beautiful art, including silk scarves, crosses and other beautifully decorated pieces. The knowledge, stories and artistic skills of these women are precious and I felt honoured to be in their presence.

"On one of our last days, the women from the centre prepared and cooked kangaroo tail and Johnny cake for us in traditional fire pits. It was so special to share a meal with them. We were also blessed to have a traditional smoking ceremony performed on us at the spirituality centre—a truly magical experience."

The journey to reconciliation is long but so important for Australia's future. Lourdes Hill College wholeheartedly subscribes to the belief that it must be authentic, empowering and illuminating if it is to truly touch the minds, hearts and spirits of the young people of this land.



# Rebecca Richards, Rhodes Scholar

by Rebecca Richards

Rebecca on graduation day with friends Megan and Hannah. (Image by Rosalie Richards)

**Rebecca Richards grew up in the Riverland and is a member of the Adnyamathanha and Barngarla peoples. Her passion for anthropology was sparked at 14 when she accompanied her father on field work along with Philip Jones, the head of anthropology at the South Australian Museum. Backing up her remarkable academic and professional achievements is her passionate engagement with Indigenous health, human rights and education issues.**

**In this article, 27-year-old Rebecca reflects on the many highlights of her time at Oxford University resulting from her wonderful achievement of becoming Australia's first Aboriginal Rhodes Scholar.**

The spires of Oxford were gleaming in the bright September sun, beckoning six tired but excited young Australians to a world of academic challenge, ancient traditions and exciting futures. The short distance from London's Paddington Station was the last leg of our travels together which had encompassed rail lines across Asia and Russia, emulating the long boat journeys undertaken by Rhodes Scholars of years gone by.

We had contemplated the importance of the bonds formed through leisurely journeys shared by diverse earlier groups and so had planned and shared our own adventure of train travel traversing China, Mongolia and Russia. We travelled aboard the Trans-

Mongolian railway, trekked on almost wild Mongolian horses and shared the long delays and vast distances on the Trans-Siberian railway. Now we came to Oxford sharing a passion to expand our academic horizons, with the bonds of our experiences to provide a basis of support and camaraderie in our 'new world'.

We dispersed to the various colleges that comprise the oldest University in the English speaking world. Mine was the ancient and esteemed Magdalen College. I was delighted to find that my housing was at the College's ancient Holywell Ford House, built in the 1450s as a ford over a branch of the River Cherwell.

My new abode was reached via the beautiful, peaceful Addison Walk through ancient oaks and the College deer park—a lovely place of peace and quiet reflection for a rural Riverland/Flinders Ranges girl in the midst of the nearby but largely unheard city surrounding the College. It was only later that I found the disadvantages of that idyllic isolation when winter ice and snow made walking or biking to tutorials and lectures a hazardous undertaking. I recall well a mad but vain scramble to try to arrive on time for a mid-winter presentation I was giving to the always compulsively early English.

The ancient traditions and academic ambience of Oxford provided many

highlights: the wearing of academic robes to venison dinners in wooden-panelled Harry Potter-style dining rooms and as a Reader in the magnificent Magdalen Chapel; discussing the philosophies of Kant over tea with Fellows of Oxford; practising for and singing in the College's Second Choir a three hour Latin Eucharist in the Christopher Wren designed Sheldonian; receiving invitations to dine with members of the Royal Society; cycling the streets and lanes of Oxford in the company of gown-clad ancient academics; wheeling my bike upstairs along narrow purpose built ramps to study in Oxford cafes which often replicate the Libraries and provide the stimulus for discussion groups including those of some very famous literary dons.

I also found interesting challenges: working out the correct colour of carnation to pin to my robe for each particular exam; endeavouring to row in the bleak dark at 6am on a cold English river in winter; being shut out of Chapel for not arriving the requisite 10 minutes early; judging when I was to start the move forward as the first listed in my Graduation cohort with proceedings conducted in Latin.

But there were also many familiar aspects: the discussions with peers sharing the same intellectual interests (though now set amid the magnificent 14th Century cloisters); the rigours of examinations; the tightness of deadlines; the lecturers who do not realise you are taking three other subjects simultaneously with theirs; the requirement to be self-disciplined, a skill for which study at Glossop High and then the University of Adelaide had prepared me well.

Other highlights of my time in England included an exclusive dinner at the prestigious Reform Club in London's Pall Mall, hosted by an Oxford friend who is heir to an earldom. Hiking is a great interest of mine and I was able to hike sections of the Way of St James in the mountains of Spain and the Ridgeway in the Cotswolds of England where the narrow lanes sometimes necessitated climbing onto and walking along the hedgerows when traffic approached. I hope to return to continue these hiking journeys one day. Touring the beautiful scenery of Highland Scotland and its coastal islands were also special times, with the constant press of people and cars far less evident than in the south of England.

Oxford's Pitt River Museum with its collection of many thousands of Australian Aboriginal artefacts, proved a drawcard wherein I was able to spend many hours of fruitful investigation, marvelling at its legacy, although querying the very outmoded salvage rationale and the methodologies that underpinned its collection.

Other amazing highlights related to the publicity and fortunate position of being the first Indigenous Australian to become a Rhodes Scholar and the variety of opportunities for service and leadership that I had been able to take up previously in Australia. For these openings, there are many individuals and organisations I thank. As a result, I became the South Australian Young Australian of the Year for 2012 and was flown back from England for the associated ceremonies in Canberra, including dinner at Government House with the Governor-General and morning tea at the Lodge with the Prime Minister.

“My passion for anthropology was formed while quite young, stimulated by my father and uncle with their incredible knowledge and custodianship of Dreaming landscapes.”

To my great surprise, I was later named 2013 Young Australian of the Year in the United Kingdom. This led to my participation in a number of functions at Australia House in London and the amazing experience of joining a small group of prominent Australians at afternoon tea hosted by Prince Charles and the Duchess of Cornwall in Clarence House in the grounds of Buckingham Palace. With Prince Charles' own study in anthropology and archaeology

at Cambridge, I found him to be very knowledgeable and interesting to talk with. More challenging were his questions on the possible future of the monarchy in Australia.

My passion for anthropology was formed while quite young, stimulated by my father and uncle with their incredible knowledge and custodianship of Dreaming landscapes and by my mother's constant encouragement and interest. A field trip with family and SA Museum personnel when I was 13 cemented this focus. A three-year Internship at the National Museum of Australia provided valuable support and proved important following the devastating loss of both my father and uncle through sudden heart attacks.

I have also been privileged to undertake two, four-week stints at the Smithsonian Institution in Washington with world renowned experts on repatriation. The first was the catalyst that stimulated my interest in applying for the Rhodes Scholarship. The second was very recent, in June and the first half of July, immediately prior to my graduation ceremony.

The greatest highlight of my time in Oxford was of course my graduation in July with my Master of Philosophy in Material Anthropology and Museum Ethnography. British ceremony can be quite amazing and very moving. It was preceded by dinner at Magdalen College with the Dean and was followed by afternoon tea for all of my guests in the cloisters. It was fabulous that my mother and aunt were able to come to join me there for my graduation, while my sister, niece and a number of friends had visited earlier.

With my Oxford chapter having drawn to a successful close, I have now commenced work and study again at the University of Adelaide where Aboriginal anthropology has a higher profile. Part-time tutoring and lecturing are a focus of my lectureship position there while I also have release time to undertake field work, and to plan and write a doctoral thesis with the aim of gaining my Doctor of Philosophy in Anthropology. I hope ultimately to work in museums supporting Indigenous contribution to the representation and repatriation of our culture and perhaps eventually to even establish or support a heritage centre for my own people in our traditional lands of the Flinders Ranges.



AIME's National Hoodie Day, 'not just a cool jumper...it stands for Indigenous success.'

# The magic of mentoring

**In 2005, 25 Indigenous and non-Indigenous University of Sydney students walked down to Alexandria Park Community School in Redfern, Sydney. There they met with 25 Indigenous high school students. On that day, the Australian Indigenous Mentoring Experience (AIME) was born.**

Nine years on and AIME now works with 3,500 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander kids and 1,500 mentors in all mainland states and the ACT. And AIME expects to grow those numbers to 10,000 kids and 3,500 mentors across Australia by 2018.

This dynamic educational program supports Indigenous students through high school and into university, employment or further education at the same rate as all Australian students.

These kids are helping to turn the tide. In 2013, the Year 9 to university progression rate for AIME students was 20.4 per cent—five times the national Indigenous average of 4.1 per cent and moving toward the national non-Indigenous average of 37.4 per cent. Seventy-seven per cent of AIME students attend schools that are classified below average by the Index of Community Socio-Educational Advantage (ICSEA).

AIME's belief is that *Indigenous = success*

This year's National Hoodie Day, AIME's winter fundraiser, was all about celebrating the people who have put AIME on the map. The event saw thousands of people across Australia and around the world donning AIME hoodies to support more Indigenous kids to finish school at the same rate as every Australian child.

One of those people helping make that dream a reality is Arthur Little.

While you may not know Arthur, chances are that one day you will. They say he's one of the most well liked guys on the planet and his mission is to share his story and get to know every person whose path he crosses. Arthur's trumped both footy codes, playing union for the Waratahs, Australian Sevens and Randwick District Rugby Union Football Club as well as the Illawarra Steelers, Canberra Raiders and West Tigers. His footy career has spanned the globe from Italy to Ireland, Hong Kong

to France, but he's still the same humble Wiradjuri and Kamilaroi man who grew up in Wagga Wagga.

For the past five years, Arthur's worked with AIME as a relationship manager and more recently, as a national presenter. These days he brings his worldwide network to shine a light on something so close to his heart: Indigenous success.

Here's a reflection from Arthur on National Hoodie Day: "The hoodie to me isn't just a cool jumper that keeps me warm when it's cold. It stands for a lifetime of positive change that I believe in. It stands for Indigenous success. It stands for the connection between so many people, not only across our beautiful country, but also around the globe, who are sending a message that if you believe, you can and will achieve. No matter what your background or where you've come from, if you truly have faith and are determined to make it work, then you can connect with

anyone and be successful at anything you put your mind to.

“Sometimes our head and heart seem miles apart, even though they are so close. When they come together, that’s when the magic happens.

“My magic is connecting with and inspiring Indigenous kids across the country to be the best they can be, reach their full potential and land the dream job that they’ve always wanted.

“Through my passion with AIME, I have been able to link a lot of high profile friends across the globe to share in our success, supporting our Indigenous kids through high school and on to uni, further education, or full time employment.”

It’s not too late to join Arthur, grab an AIME hoodie, and celebrate Indigenous success. Head to [www.aimementoring.com](http://www.aimementoring.com)



Relationship Manager Arthur Little with Geoffrey Rush and Doris Harrison.

## Indigenous Governance Awards update

The Australian Indigenous Mentoring Experience (AIME) is one of six finalists in Category A of the 2014 Indigenous Governance Awards (IGA). In all, eight of Australia’s top Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations have been selected in the two Award categories from a record 113 nominees.

The eight finalists hail from Australia’s remotest communities and busiest cities and represent a diverse range of sectors.

An independent judging panel chaired by Professor Mick Dodson AM had the difficult task of selecting the finalists from what he described as “a truly outstanding field of applicants”.

“Since the inception of the Indigenous Governance Awards in 2005, the depth, breadth and calibre of the nominations has continued to increase,” Professor Dodson said.

“From every corner of the country, the IGA finalists demonstrate that whatever the project—be it land and

sea management, drug and alcohol rehabilitation, education and training or health—Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations are achieving impressive results in often challenging environments,” he said.

In partnership with BHP Billiton, Reconciliation Australia began the IGA in 2005 to celebrate and promote strong Indigenous governance.

“Our finalists represent the best of what is happening in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities around the country,” Professor Dodson said.

“The reality is that we are starting to see consistency in the quality and quantity of highly successful Aboriginal and Torres Strait organisations across the country and it’s time that mainstream Australia took notice of their success.”

“These organisations indisputably deliver results and are examples of self-determination and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples leading positive change.”

### 2014 Finalists

#### Category A: Incorporated organisations

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Australian Indigenous Mentoring Experience

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Girringun Aboriginal Corporation

---

Institute for Urban Indigenous Health

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Ngnowar Aerwah Aboriginal Corporation

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Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency

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Waltja Tjutangu Palyapayi Aboriginal Corporation

#### Category B: non-incorporated projects

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The Marruk Project

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Muntjiltjarra Wurrugumu Group, Wiluna

By September, the judges will have visited each finalist with the winners to be announced at a special presentation on 30 October at BHP Billiton in Melbourne.



# Top marks for a Coota boy

**Jason Glanville is a member of the Wiradjuri peoples from south-western New South Wales. He is the inaugural CEO of the National Centre of Indigenous Excellence (NCIE) based in Redfern. Prior to joining the NCIE, Jason was Director of Programs and Strategy at Reconciliation Australia.**

**Over the last 20 years Jason has worked in a range of positions in community-based Indigenous organisations, state and federal governments and non-government peak organisations. Jason is Chair of the Australian Indigenous Governance Institute and on the boards of Reconciliation Australia, the National Australia Day Council, Carriageworks and the Australian Indigenous Leadership Centre.**

**Here Jason talks about his upbringing, his education and his passion for improving the life choices for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander youngsters.**

**As a young boy, what was life like growing up in Cootamundra in the 1970s?**

Idyllic probably, spoilt really. I've been thinking about this a lot lately because of a couple of family milestones and anniversaries, but also because I was asked recently to write an Op Ed piece for the (Sydney Morning) Herald in response to a Q and A program.

For me, growing up was that typical country story that most people want to be able to tell. I think that my generation was the last to experience that absolute freedom of walking a couple of kilometres to school without any fear of safety, going to and from sport on foot or on your bike. Nobody locked their houses back then, parents always knew where their children were and you'd happily crash at whomever place you ended up at the end of the night. That stereotypical country lifestyle was certainly part of my childhood and early teens.

I was lucky too because I was blessed with a very large family who I was close to on both sides and lots of friends. I started Kindergarten with a bunch of friends, some of whom I finished Year 12 with, so the whole of my formative years were largely spent with the same group of people.

And outside of the odd bus trip to Sydney for the father and son major semi-final NRL weekend or to play some other sort of sport, I was happy never to leave. I was convinced Coota was my life, and that was as good as it could get. My parents were happy and always seemed very lucky, although in economic terms they probably weren't. But I had no concept of that because we never wanted for food or clothes or comfort. Much like race, economic status was never part of conversations or entered my consciousness until the second half of my teens when I became a little more engaged in politics and life outside Coota.

So I was quite sure until my early teens that I would marry a Coota girl, have Coota kids and live the Coota life and would have been, at that stage, very happy with that.

**What did you enjoy most about school?**

Friends, and the school community really. I'm at the younger end of my generation and a lot of my cousins had gone through both primary and secondary school before me so there were good and bad examples of my family. I was lucky too in that I had the same teachers as my older sister and also my cousins had had. I remember one time I walked into class and the teacher asked if I was my sister's brother. When I said yes, she said 'Get out'. So I was expelled briefly because my sister had been a troublemaker and had been kicked out of almost every class she had with this particular teacher. But because I was a bit of a bookish nerd I got back into the classroom. So school was a happy place for me and I really liked the idea that there was already a family legacy in the school.

**Did you experience any racism at school?**

Not in primary school, but I think we had a pretty unique primary school experience. There were a number of Chinese families who had moved to Coota at that time and their kids fitted in straight away. By the time we finished primary school together, they had broader Australian accents than the rest of us. Interestingly though, when two of the brothers I was closest to moved to Sydney at the same time as me to go to university, they changed their Chinese names to Adam and Aaron, I guess because of the stigma of being different. You would have thought that could have been more problematic in a small country town.

As I got older I heard stories from my relatives, who were physically darker than me, about a different kind of racism. My parents, as an Aboriginal man and a non-Aboriginal woman certainly never seemed to bear any scars from it but their parents would tell me about the experiences they had when they first got together and married. None of that stuff really made sense

to me because it was never my experience although there's a fair chance that in my broad group of friends there would have been a racist or two, either by nature or nurture.

At high school there were the usual inappropriate jokes about race and sex and gender and such things but it was really only when I started to engage with the media more broadly and started to travel less for sport and more for leadership and academic stuff that I became more aware of racism in that way. As a blackfella who looks like me and who was growing into my identity and always very proud of my Aboriginality, I guess I was just more aware of the fact that racism existed and it was happening to people other than me. It was interesting because it didn't feel fair that it wasn't happening to me but also it didn't feel fair that it was happening to anyone.

**In what ways would you say school has changed for Aboriginal students since your day?**

I think it's probably gotten worse. Most of the young people we work with here are school age, and most go to school. But I think the emergence and prevalence of social media and the mishandling of the national debate around racism has made schools a much more fraught place for young blackfellas than it ever was when I was at school. To be honest, I just think it's nastier. You hear about straight out racism—in the classroom, in the playground, on the way to and from school, at the corner shop, all those sorts of things. There's no doubt in my mind it's the rise of social media that is a big part of it but also the overwhelmingly and deliberate negative reportage of Indigenous Affairs in mainstream media. Kids will either joke about it or talk about it in anger. It's almost normalised, everything from these learned assumptions that still exist around some teachers that Aboriginal kids will do worse, and it's acceptable that they do worse simply

because they're Aboriginal. So yes, I think school these days is more difficult than my experience.

**How important is schooling for Aboriginal children and young adults?**

I think education is very important although not necessarily in a formal school structure. In some cases that can be harmful for all sorts of kids, not just Aboriginal kids. Education is about choice and what frustrates me most is how choice has been taken away from Aboriginal people, particularly for the last half a century. It's been this structured set of interventions that say to Aboriginal people, especially young Aboriginal people, you aren't qualified to make choices about your own life. But it's axiomatic that people should make their own decisions about their existence, that's a basic determinant of human development.

What I love so much about what we're trying to do here at the NCIE with all of our partners is the choices we offer. We don't talk about education as one of our pathways, we talk about learning and innovation as our pathway. I'm a big believer in life-long learning, whatever form that takes, but I also believe most people, most of the time, given access to the right information, will make good choices. The reason our mob get accused of making bad choices is because we're not given access to the information we need to make better ones.

So while I don't think the formal school environment is the answer for all kids and particularly not all Indigenous kids, I do agree that education in its broadest sense is absolutely the central tenet to positive change, more vital even than employment or community safety.

**Who were your mentors in your early adult years and how did they influence your thinking?**

My grandmothers were my biggest influence, on both sides. They were both very determined about the power of education. Again they saw it very broadly so while they thought it was important that we went to school they also thought it was important that we spent time with older cousins, aunts, uncles, grandparents and great-grandparents. They were very big on inter-generational education. My grandparents were where my awareness around politics and certainly my awareness around race came from. Outside checking the footy scores in the Daily Telegraph, reading

newspapers wasn't a big habit in my family, but I'd often sit with my grandparents and we'd read the newspaper together.

I guess my main influences were female, not because there was any shortage of extraordinary male role models in my life including my Dad, uncles and cousins but there was just something about the nurturing of my grandmothers that resonated more strongly. I've made heaps of bad choices over the years but I wouldn't have made the good ones I've made if it wasn't for the two of them.

I was also blessed to have access to so many extraordinary people like Larissa Behrendt who was only just a year or two above me at university and who had a very different experience to me of growing up in a city. And as a young man, meeting Jackie Huggins was significant. Jackie is still one of the transformative forces in my life, always has been and always will be. I could roll out a long list of known Aboriginal leaders but it's more the people around the same age as me who I think are amazing and do amazing things who have been the greatest influence.

**Can you tell me about the role of the National Centre of Indigenous Excellence?**

We've now been operating for four and half years and what we're trying to do with the NCIE is to give a generation of young blackfellas access to choice on a scale that's never been available to them before. And so to do that we give them access to training, development and line of sight opportunities that they never knew existed. It's empowering to say to a young person that there are a million different ways to get to a billion different destinations. In other words, your journey doesn't have to look like anybody else's and you can still get to the place that you want to get to. And so what I hope the NCIE is doing is giving a generation of young Aboriginal people a different kind of choice.

Lots of local kids come here regularly but most groups we host (from interstate) come for a week at a time in groups of somewhere between 25 and 40. Here they can experience everything from literacy and numeracy, curriculum related topics, sports and the arts which open up doors for their aspirational and career possibilities.

Some kids have had little access to choice and if you throw too much choice at them it can get a bit overwhelming. But then there are others who are just hungry to be told that the door's open, so jump through it. So

we work especially hard to build cultural and personal safety to everything that we do. The last thing we want to do is build a generation of young people who just step into the void and hope it all works out. What we do is give them the tools to make good choice after good choice after good choice.

**The Centre hosts thousands of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander youngsters each year, many from remote areas. What is it that you want them to take away with them?**

Pride and confidence. Pride in themselves, pride in their culture and confidence in their abilities and their future.

**Would you agree that education is the catalyst for a reconciled Australia? Should we be largely investing our hopes in young people, Indigenous and non-Indigenous, to achieve it?**

Yes, and again, not education just in the formal classroom sense. Kids should go to school and stay at school as long as they can but it is also about the way that we use civil society to engage our young people in education. So that includes footy clubs, book clubs, music societies, the local performing arts groups and all those sorts of places where young people's minds can be opened up safely. I think it's the dialogue between this and the next generation of young Australians that will, if directed properly, do more than the last 15 years' worth of effort. Not to say that all that work hasn't been extraordinarily important but I think as adults we've spent too much time talking to each other and not enough time creating spaces for our young people to talk to each other and to build our capacity to listen which we're not very good at as adults.

**Finally, where do you see yourself in 10 years' time?**

I have absolutely no idea. Maybe back in Coota, raising kids! I wish that was the case, but it's not the case economically, but it would be a nice choice to make if it was. I'm not a very ambitious person, I've kind of tripped and fallen from extraordinary experience to extraordinary experience because I've had great friends and role models and mentors who look after me and think more highly of my skills than I do. I've never really had a plan, or a career curve. What will I be doing in 10 years? I have no idea. I hope it involves raising children and I hope it involves living in a country environment.



## Students hit the right note

by Elle Shepherd

Bray Park State School, Kylie Kain and Jemma Cher were the prize winners in Reconciliation Australia's *Sing Loud!* competition. Held during National Reconciliation Week (NRW) this year the winners in three categories were selected by judges Delta Goodrem and Gurrumul.

The students of Bray Park State School were excited to hear they had taken out the special prize for schools. Their inspiring original composition *BRING IT ON*, was written to reflect the school's innovative reconciliation program of the same name that promotes cross-cultural knowledge and builds understanding through the arts.

Bray Park's song features talented students from the school's choir and ukulele group, formed as part of the *BRING IT ON* program. Students in the 150-strong ukulele group are immersed in a range of music and learn to analyse, write and perform material that has both personal and cultural significance.

Proud Focus teacher, Jo Reid-Speirs, says the *BRING IT ON* program actively involves parents and community members and has a wide-ranging impact within the school, where 15 per cent of students are of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander descent.

"The creative strategies of using visual arts, drama and music has allowed us to embed Indigenous perspectives across our school, improve academic outcomes, promote a sense of community and build strong foundations for our future," she said.

"The ukulele was identified as valuable tool to build literacy skills, promote cross cultural

understanding and engagement, bring people together through the universal language of music and build pride within students."

Bray Park entered the *Sing Loud!* competition to have their voice heard and to encourage others to hear their noble plea to come together as one.

"We believe reconciliation is about everyone—it's about 'you and me'. When our whole school sings this song together, it is very moving. There is an overwhelming sense of unity as well as great respect and admiration for our Indigenous students," Jo said.

The school plans to use their prize from the competition to purchase equipment for a new drumming initiative that can be incorporated into their reconciliation program. This will add to the success of the homework club run by Indigenous parents and volunteers, the native garden, yarning circle, and visual and performing arts activities which form the *BRING IT ON* program. All bringing us closer to reconciliation.

Kylie Kain was awarded best original song in our *Sing Loud!* competition with *Stompin' the Ground*. Kylie has been writing and performing music for the last 20 years and was asked to enter the competition by her good friend Kim, a Malyangapa/Barkindji woman, who features in the song.

**The ukulele group and choir of Bray Park State school, winner of the schools' prize.**

For many years, Kylie's music has been a form of outreach and expression with many different groups of people—a voice to express their lived realities, viewpoints and to workshop practical ways forward. She wanted her *Sing Loud!* entry to be one of hope and determination and based the lyrics on actual conversations with Kim.

Thirteen-year-old Jemma Cher won the best cover category of our *Sing Loud!* competition with an impressive version of *Time to Get Serious* written by Robert Beattie. Jemma entered *Sing Loud!* to come together with other performers and believes that like she did, others can benefit from learning more about the difficult and important parts of our history.

Jemma's entry included a video filmed at the 400-year-old Corroboree ('Ngargee') tree in St Kilda Junction. The tree is a symbol of the cultural heritage of the original Australians in the Kulin Nation. Jemma plans to donate half of her \$1,000 prize to an Indigenous organisation and use the other half to further her musical training.

Bray Park State School's winning song, along with all entries to the competition, can be heard on our website at

[www.reconciliation.org.au/nrw/sing-loud](http://www.reconciliation.org.au/nrw/sing-loud)



L-R: Jemma Cher, winner of best cover song. Kylie Kain and her band, winner best original song.



# Walking the talk on Kokoda

by Jodie Belyea\*

Tahlia Lloyd and Jacqueline Gibbs at the grave of Aboriginal soldier Private Harry Saunders at the Bomana War Cemetery in Port Moresby at the end of the trek. (Image courtesy Rob Walls and Royston Prasad)

**In June this year, 20 Indigenous young leaders and mentors from around Australia—participants in the Jobs Australia Foundation’s Indigenous Youth Leadership Program (IYLP)—and 30 Legends (porters) from Papua New Guinea tackled the Kokoda Leadership Track. The 96 km walk tested our spirit and taught us lessons in humility, patience, respect, endurance, courage and mateship—the same lessons that our forefathers learnt in the Kokoda Campaign during World War II.**

Established in 2010, the IYLP targets young Indigenous Australians aged 18 to 25 who have shown an ability and desire to lead change in their lives and their communities. It provides them with a two-year program of intensive leadership training leading to a Certificate IV in Community Development.

A defining feature of the program is that the young leaders and mentors are expected to walk the talk. Theory is tried and tested across six residential training blocks which includes two immersive adventures: a cultural experience held in the Northern Territory and the Kokoda Trek. Each training block is designed to stretch and strengthen a participant’s personal awareness, inner resources and leadership potential.

Our 50-strong group was a culturally diverse mob with ancestors drawn from Indigenous Australia, Papua New Guinea, England, Scotland, America, Uruguay and Italy to name just a few. We were led by Aidan Grimes from Our Spirit, an Irishman who told the history of the Kokoda Campaign with incredible passion and reverence leaving many of us feeling a little ashamed at our lack of knowledge and understanding of our history.

Much like the Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians who worked with the Fuzzy Wuzzy Angels on the track in 1942, our multicultural group had come together 70 years later to achieve a goal.

We trekked across the track in the same spirit of reconciliation as our forefathers, united by a common desire to complete the journey, and along the way learnt about the battles lost and won. We used the stories of mateship, sacrifice, courage and endurance to motivate and inspire us as we took each step on the muddy terrain battling the humidity, rain and our own fatigue and pain.

Tahlia Lloyd, Ngarrindjeri woman from Murray Bridge, South Australia, commented that “The trek taught me many things not only about myself but about another Indigenous

culture, about how little I know about the war and Australian soldiers both Indigenous and non-Indigenous, about how much more I want to learn and how more history needs to be taught not only in classrooms but at home and in our communities.”

This recognition and respect for the past helped us achieve our goals both as individuals and as a group. We returned home more resilient, courageous and determined, and keen to tackle anything that came our way.

Looking back on her achievement, Jacqueline Gibbs, a Goodooga woman who lives in Bathurst, NSW remarked “Walking across the Kokoda Track was amazing, absolutely incredible and I think it’s highly important that we recognise the Australian soldiers, in particular the many Aboriginal diggers who so bravely fought for our country. I carried the thought of Indigenous soldiers, men like Private Harry Saunders with me across the track to inspire and motivate me through the tough times.

“Completing the IYLP Kokoda Track has made me understand the importance of knowing Australian history before and after colonisation, getting educated and ensuring I am healthy and well. My hope is that we, Aboriginal people of Australia, keep focusing on developing our knowledge and our skills and looking after our health and wellbeing to show the diggers that what they fought for was not wasted or taken for granted.”

As I reflected on all I had learnt on my second trek of Kokoda, I sensed a parallel with the Recognise Campaign. The Campaign seeks to help reconcile

Australia by recognising our true ancestors—Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders. It’s a rare opportunity for us to unite and come together, just as our group did on the Kokoda trek when we acknowledged the diggers and Fuzzy Wuzzy Angels. They too embraced difference and diversity and together achieved something remarkable in World War II.

Afterwards Tahlia remarked: “Walking the trek with my amazing Legend who became my friend gave me the opportunity to understand how rich and diverse the culture is in Papua New Guinea. Trekking with people of different nationalities allowed us to learn how to work effectively with people no matter where they are from and walk in the spirit of reconciliation by respecting everyone’s culture, beliefs and values.”

Jacqueline agreed saying: “We are so lucky to have the country we have today thanks to the Australian diggers from cultures far and wide and their selfless acts of bravery. Each generation of Australians needs to remember our history... and help share the stories that make Australia what it is...Lest We Forget!”

My own experience on the trek ignited my deep belief that it is both possible and time to reconcile and recognise that all cultures have contributed to making this country the AMAZING place it is. But officially recognising this land’s First Peoples—our nation’s ancestors—will be a defining moment for our nation, just as Kokoda was for our forefathers, and Australia, all those years ago.

*\*Jodie Belyea is the Manager of the Jobs Australia Foundation and can be contacted on [jbelyea@ja.com.au](mailto:jbelyea@ja.com.au)*

**The group pictured at the Isurava Battlefield memorial on day 2. (Image courtesy Rob Walls and Royston Prasad)**



# The culture of mathematics



**Dr Chris Matthews is from the Quandamooka people of Minjerribah (Stradbroke Island) in Queensland Australia. Chris has received a PhD in applied mathematics from Griffith University and is currently a Senior Lecturer at the Griffith School of Environment, Griffith University. Chris has undertaken numerous research projects within applied mathematics and mathematics education. More recently, he was the patron and expert advisor for *Make It Count*, a large mathematics education project coordinating education research within clusters of schools across Australia with the specific aim of improving mathematics education for Indigenous students.**

**Chris was the Co-chair of the Griffith University working party to develop and implement an Indigenised curriculum across the whole University. Currently he is the chair of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Mathematics Alliance (ATSIMA) which aims to improve educational outcomes in mathematics for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander learners.**

'All Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander learners will be successful in mathematics.'

That's the vision of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Mathematics Alliance (ATSIMA), a new organisation headed by Dr Chris Matthews.

To realise this vision, Dr Matthews says ATSIMA will focus on networking all stakeholders that have a vested interest in the educational success of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander learners, i.e. industry, government, educators (at all levels) and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

"From these networks, we are looking at connecting aspirations and ideas to create innovative projects that focus on understanding and improving educational outcomes in mathematics," Dr Matthews said.

"An important aspect of this network is Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities whose voice has not been privileged within these debates/discussions. Usually, mathematics education projects have been delivered 'to' Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples via the education system rather than 'with' Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and communities.

"I would assert here that to work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities you must first recognise that mathematics is a cultural practice and has many cultural expressions, both oral and written, from around the world. In addition, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students come to school with extensive cultural knowledge that can be used as the basis for mathematics education.

"The introduction of the National Curriculum includes Indigenous perspectives as a

cross-curriculum priority. In other words, teachers have the option to include Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives in any aspect of the curriculum including mathematics.

"The inclusion of this mathematics perspective caused some debate early this year with several commentators seeing no cultural relevance in mathematics or science. But the main purpose of including Indigenous perspectives in the curriculum is to improve educational outcomes for both Indigenous and non-Indigenous students. Indigenous students will have a greater capacity to relate to the curriculum, and non-Indigenous students will gain a greater understanding, appreciation and respect for Indigenous people and culture.

"We should not forget that Australia was colonised on the premise of Terra Nullius (land belonging to no one), which, amongst other things, saw the silencing of Indigenous people and culture within the education system. At best we were referred to as a noble savage; a relic of the past whose culture and language has no relevance in modern Australia. So our education system must focus on overturning these ideas to allow a place for Indigenous people within the curriculum.

"Mathematics and science are culturally based so to include Indigenous perspectives in maths and science is not nonsense. For an example we need to look no further than the story of David Unaipon (1872 – 1967). Mr Unaipon was an Aboriginal man from the Ngarrindjeri people who held provisional patents for 19 inventions. Using his cultural knowledge of the boomerang, Unaipon invented the rotary blade for the helicopter. This is a prime example of how the

marriage between Indigenous and scientific knowledge created something unique and before its time.

"Mr Unaipon also revolutionised the shearing industry by inventing the hinge that allows the shearing blades to be mechanically driven. Even though we learn that Australia's economic development rode on the sheep's back, an understanding of David Unaipon's inventions, in any sense, has not been part of Australia's education system.

"If we do not include an Indigenous perspective in the maths and science curriculum, we run the risk of students not knowing how Indigenous people managed the land for over 40,000 years or that scientists are now starting to build positive relationships with Indigenous people to be part of solutions for many pertinent environmental issues such as climate change.

"The idea of Indigenous perspectives in the Australian curriculum is new and needs further work on how best to implement these ideas. While it does not have to be included in all aspects of the maths and science curriculum, it needs to be constructed in a meaningful way for the benefit of all students.

"Let's not continue the silencing of Indigenous people and culture in the science and maths curriculum. Let's not write the inclusion of Indigenous perspectives off because it is 'too hard'. Let's construct an education for our children so that they can face the challenges of today and tomorrow together as Australians embracing our rich cultural diversity and the ideas that can spring from this diversity."

To join ATSIMA please visit <http://atsimanational.ning.com>. Details of the ATSIMA conference (10-11 November) are on the front page of the website.

In memory of our dear friend

## GAVIN STUART JONES

founder of the Deadly Vibe Group and the Deadly Awards,  
who tirelessly promoted and celebrated the achievements  
of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples  
for more than 20 years,  
inspiring them to be proud of who they are.

*12 August 1966 – 12 July 2014*



*'Indigenous Australia has lost a genuine icon  
and the giant footprints and enormous legacy he leaves  
should be celebrated and commemorated forever.'*

Dr Tom Calma, Co-Chair Reconciliation Australia