

# Indigenous Education Update archive (2013-2016)

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Volume 2  
Number 2 *Indigenous Education Update 2 -  
January 2014*

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Article 1

1-2014

## Indigenous Education Update 2 - January 2014

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### Recommended Citation

(2014, January 01). Indigenous Education Update 2 - January 2014. *Indigenous Education Update archive (2013-2016)*. 2(2) <https://research.acer.edu.au/indigupd/vol2/iss2/1>

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# Indigenous Education UPDATE

Edition 2 January 2014

## Empowerment for improvement

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Welcome to ACER's *Indigenous Education Update* – a window into the work that we undertake in research and development in Indigenous education.

In October ACER welcomed Tony Dreise as a Principal Research Fellow, Indigenous Education. Tony is currently nearing completion of his PhD at the Australian National University, where he is studying the relationship between Australian philanthropy and Indigenous education. The study is an Australian Research Council Industry Linkages Project and will culminate in the development of a framework to help steer future collaboration between philanthropy and Indigenous education.

Tony has two decades of professional leadership experience in Indigenous education, public policy and research, having served in a number of high-level national Indigenous education and Indigenous public policy leadership positions, including as a senior executive within government. Earlier this year, he contributed content for ACER's Leading Learning in Education and Philanthropy Dialogue Series about Indigenous education and philanthropy. Tony will be based in ACER's Brisbane

office. His full profile will feature in the next issue of *Indigenous Education Update*.

In this issue, we shine a light on ACER's partnership with Dare to Lead to undertake research and the development of professional learning resources for teachers and school leaders. We illustrate our research into transitions to work for Indigenous learners, report on the Yiramalay/Wesley Studio School journey, highlight the latest additions to Learning Ground – ACER's Indigenous education research portal – and examine the maths achievement of Australia's Indigenous 15-year-olds.

This issue also celebrates the launch and implementation of ACER's Reconciliation Action Plan and reflections from a kinship presentation delivered to our staff by Lyn Riley, Chair of ACER's Advisory Committee on Indigenous Education. We also pay tribute to, and reflect on, the contribution that the late Dr Nola Purdie made in Indigenous educational research.

We look forward to keeping you up to date with our work to improve Indigenous learning and research.

**Gina Milgate**

Indigenous Liaison Officer

To learn more about ACER's Indigenous Education services, visit <[www.acer.edu.au/indigenous](http://www.acer.edu.au/indigenous)>



# Latest research

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## Listening to the school community

*The collated voice of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, their parents and carers and staff tell a very compelling story about the quality of schooling for our students, as **Gina Milgate** explains.*

Engagement with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and their parents and carers can assist 'places of learning' to implement policies and practices that meet their needs.

However, the voices of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are sometimes silent or not heard and, as a result, they may feel disengaged from the place of learning. Existing research provides minimal evidence focusing on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander parents' and carers' insights into effective places of learning for their children.

Since 2011, ACER has worked in partnership with the Principals Australia Institute on a Dare to Lead project that provides a culturally safe, engaging and empowering way for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, and their parents and carers to share their insights into what makes an effective school.

The Dare to Lead Collegial Snapshot collects point-in-time data from the entire school community in relation to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education. A confidential process conducted for the profession by the profession, it involves the school principal inviting Dare to Lead into their school to gather both evidence-based and anecdotal data to make informed decisions about planning in

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education in their school.

To date, more than 670 Collegial Snapshots have been conducted across Australia, involving more than 2100 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander parents and carers, and around 5000 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. ACER and the Principals Australia Institute have collated the findings of 173 of those Collegial Snapshots in order to share the research with the wider education community through professional learning events and resources.

The research illustrates that parents and carers of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students have a very high regard for their schools and the teaching that takes place in them. Parents and carers want to see:

- principals who are visible to the community;
- teachers who are culturally sensitive and aware;
- Aboriginal staff who connect and relate to the entire community;
- a curriculum that contains the local cultural history and heritage;
- open and honest policies about racism and behaviour management; and
- aspirational approaches that provide students with career pathways and knowledge about their future destinations.

The research also clearly demonstrates that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students want to have strong relationships with teachers who care for them, understand their home and family connections, know of their heritage, recognise their likes and



dislikes, and understand the way they learn and their desires for the future.

The wealth of data collected from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, and their parents and carers, complemented by the school data, has provided a foundation to build evidence to inform future analysis, policy and practice in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education.

### Find out more:

This article draws on the paper presented at the 2013 American Educational Research Association (AERA) Annual Meeting, '**Creating an effective school for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students,**' by National Dare to Lead Schools Coordinator, Brian Giles-Brown, and ACER Indigenous Liaison Officer, Gina Milgate (pictured above).

Further information about the Dare to Lead Collegial Snapshot is available at [www.daretolead.edu.au](http://www.daretolead.edu.au)

See page 4 for more on Collegial Snapshots.

## Indigenous student maths achievement in context: Findings from PISA

*The 2012 Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) provides an opportunity to examine the achievement of Australia's Indigenous 15-year-olds in national, global and long-term context.*

Around 2000 Indigenous students were included in the sample of almost 14 500 participating Australian students. These Indigenous students were from all states, and a variety of metropolitan, provincial and remote locations.

According to the lead author of Australia's national PISA report, ACER's Director of Educational Monitoring and Research, Dr Sue Thomson, the results show that little progress has been made in 'closing the gap' and improving outcomes for Indigenous students.

In mathematical literacy, Indigenous students performed at a significantly lower level than non-Indigenous students, and significantly lower than the OECD average. Similar results were found for both reading and scientific literacy.

In terms of number of years of schooling, on average, 15-year-old Indigenous students are performing at a level that is about two-and-a-half years behind their non-Indigenous counterparts. Dr Thomson said the ramifications of this for post-schooling outcomes are substantial.

'In the competitive labour market, it is more likely that Indigenous students will be passed over simply because of

their lower level of skills,' Dr Thomson said. 'Similarly, this lower level of skills will preclude many Indigenous students from entering TAFE or university courses, and for those who do achieve entrance, the lack of substantial numbers of other Indigenous students means that they may feel culturally marginalised.'

Looking at achievement over time, in mathematical literacy, the performance of Indigenous students remained stable between PISA 2003 and PISA 2009 before falling in 2012 by the equivalent of more than two-thirds of a year of schooling. In comparison, the achievement of non-Indigenous students has been in decline since 2003, but at a much slower rate such that it is equivalent to only around half a year of schooling.

The report shows that, in mathematical literacy, 40 per cent of non-Indigenous students and 77 per cent of Indigenous students are not achieving at the nationally agreed baseline of performance of proficiency Level 3, which is described by the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority as a challenging but reasonable expectation of student achievement.

Dr Thomson said our understanding of Indigenous performance in PISA and other similar assessments is 'somewhat muddled' by socioeconomic background and by school location.

'Research using PISA has shown that students from low socioeconomic backgrounds do not achieve as well as those from high socioeconomic backgrounds, and these differences are also in the range of two-and-a-half years of schooling,' Dr Thomson said.

'These students often do not have access to the educational resources that they need to succeed, including quiet spaces to work, books, school bags and other basic needs, as well as adequate food and sleep. They are also more likely to attend schools in which there are many other low socioeconomic students, and the effects of attending such schools have been shown to have a huge impact on student achievement. Many Indigenous students come to school with layers of such disadvantage.'

In addition to completing the PISA assessment, students also completed a questionnaire to provide information on their family background, aspects of motivation, learning and instruction in mathematics, and general context. Responses show there is no difference in the proportion of Indigenous and non-Indigenous students who are interested in maths, who enjoy it, and who understand that it is important for their future.

However, Indigenous students on average show much lower levels of confidence in mathematics in general, and much higher levels of maths anxiety than non-Indigenous students. Other differences include responses to individual items – for example, asked whether 'Family demands or other problems prevent me from putting a lot of time into my school work', 53 per cent of Indigenous students compared to 41 per cent of non-Indigenous students agreed to some extent.

The full report, *PISA 2012: How Australia measures up*, is available from [www.acer.edu.au/ozpisa/pisa2012](http://www.acer.edu.au/ozpisa/pisa2012)

# Featured resources

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From ACER and partners:

## Collegial Snapshot professional development booklets

ACER in partnership with Principals Australia Institute has produced two professional learning booklets for school leaders, particularly leaders of schools with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander student enrolments.

Titled *The Voices of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Students* and *The Voices of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Parents and Caregivers*, these workshop-based activity books contain fascinating quotes from anonymous respondents to the Dare to Lead Collegial Snapshot. (See page 2 for more information.)

Designed to be used in professional learning activities that focus on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander learners, perspectives and knowledges, the booklets illustrate the voices of the thousands of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, and their parents and carers who participated in the Collegial Snapshot process in 2011. While the information in the booklets is not representative of all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, parents and carers, it does provide school leaders with insights into the visions and actions that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples would like to see in their schools.

The booklets are divided into six themes that can support the improvement of outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students which emerged from the data collected through the Collegial Snapshots:

- cultural environment
- quality of teachers
- community partnerships

- health and wellbeing
- curriculum
- school leadership.

Each section of the booklets illustrates statements and recommendations from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, and their parents and carers about each of the themes. There is also a series of 'questions for reflection' for school leaders to consider in light of the comments from the community to develop strategies and actions for their school contexts.

The booklets have been produced for staff development sessions including workshops facilitated by the Dare to Lead team across Australia. In producing the booklets, ACER and the Principals Australia Institute aim to develop an evidence base that will inform the development of appropriate professional learning resources and opportunities for leaders in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education.

These resources are available for purchase through the Dare to Lead website <[www.daretolead.edu.au/DTL08\\_Resources\\_Main](http://www.daretolead.edu.au/DTL08_Resources_Main)>



From ACER's Cunningham Library:

## Learning Ground

*Learning Ground* is a place where everyone can locate the most up-to-date research in Indigenous education.

Previously known as Indigenous Education Research Database, *Learning Ground* is more than just an information repository: *Learning Ground* is an interactive online community where Indigenous scholars and others in the educational research community can connect and share research, and Indigenous knowledges and methodologies.

The database contains details of more than 8000 books, articles, conference papers and reports on various aspects of Indigenous education from publishers in Australia and overseas. *Learning Ground* also includes links to more than 116 journals and newsletters on Indigenous education, as well as links to relevant organisations, publishers and websites.

*Learning Ground* is created and maintained by staff of ACER's Cunningham Library, in consultation with ACER's Indigenous Liaison Officer. Material in the database is drawn from the Australian Education Index (also produced by staff of ACER's Cunningham Library) with additional material sourced from a variety of international organisations and publishers. Updated monthly, articles are selected and indexed by qualified librarians. New additions to the database can be followed on **twitter@LearningGround**

Access to *Learning Ground* is free via <[www.acer.edu.au/learningground](http://www.acer.edu.au/learningground)>



# Featured resources

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## LEARNING GROUND

### INDIGENOUS EDUCATION RESEARCH DATABASE

#### Recent additions

Hazard, Helen. **Belonging, being and becoming: learning within early childhood education in a remote Aboriginal community.** *Learning Communities* n.12 p.3-8, April 2013. Refereed article. Includes bibliographical references. ISSN: 1329-1440

**Abstract:** This article describes the author's participation in a project for resourcing remote area preschools and childcare centres. ... As the observer-analyst within the childcare centre and preschool the author was tasked with the job of ensuring quality control. She had expectations of a conventional set of conditions; she took the presence or absence of those conventional conditions as signs of whether or not that centre promotes 'belonging, being, and becoming', and whether the teachers therefore would meet the national standards. This shorthand assumption operates on the view that all children be, belong, and become more or

less identically. This Aboriginal-run childcare centre challenged all that. [Author abstract, ed]

Whalan, Frances & Wood, Kerin. **Action learning based professional development: being more responsive to Aboriginal cultures and histories.** In 'Indigenous education : a learning journey for teachers, schools and communities' edited by Nina Burridge, Frances Whalan and Karen Vaughan, pages 23-32. Rotterdam Netherlands: Sense. 2012. Includes bibliographical references. ISBN: 9789460918872 (hbk) 9460918875 (hbk) 9460918867 (pbk) 9789460918865 (pbk) 9789460918889 (ebook)

**Abstract:** A range of intervention initiatives have failed to close the educational gap between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal student achievement and outcomes despite policies to match or better the outcomes of the broader community. While targeting and monitoring educational outcomes continue to be a focus for national and state

governments and education systems it would be misleading to suggest that all Aboriginal students suffer low achievement and compromised educational outcomes. This chapter provides a contextual background for whole-school approaches to not only challenging perceptions about Aboriginal education in the 21st century but also enriching learning contexts for all teachers and students to engage with the richness of local Aboriginal cultures and histories. [Author abstract, ed]

Ah Chee, Donna; Beetson, Jack; Durnan, Deborah; & LeBlanch, Jose Chala. **An Aboriginal adult literacy campaign pilot study in Australia using Yes I Can.** *Literacy and Numeracy Studies* v.21 n.1 p.5-32, 2013. Refereed article. Includes bibliographical references. ISSN: 1441-0559

**Abstract:** In 2012, the remote Aboriginal community of Wilcannia in western NSW hosted the first Australian pilot of a Cuban mass adult literacy campaign model known as Yes I Can. ... Building on an intensive community development process of 'socialisation and mobilisation', 16 community members with very low literacy graduated from the basic literacy course, with the majority continuing on into post-literacy activities, further training and/or employment. The pilot was initiated by the National Aboriginal Adult Literacy Campaign Steering Committee consisting of Aboriginal leaders from the education and health sectors, and managed by the University of New England, working in partnership with the Wilcannia Local Aboriginal Land Council as the local lead agency. ... [Author abstract, ed]

# Revisiting the research

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## Remote school's first graduates

*A curriculum partnership between ACER and Wesley College to provide Aboriginal students in the Kimberley region of Western Australia with a senior years program has celebrated its first cohort of secondary school graduates.*

The Yiramalay/Wesley Studio School, located about 400 kilometres from Broome on the Leopold Downs Cattle Station via Fitzroy Crossing, was the first full-time study opportunity for Years 10, 11 and 12 in the Fitzroy Valley when it was established in 2010.

In the lead up to the school's opening, ACER worked with Wesley College in Melbourne to develop a new senior years curriculum to be delivered on location at the Yiramalay/Wesley Studio School during terms two and three – the dry season – and in Melbourne for the remainder of the year.

Known as the Senior Years Learning Framework, the curriculum provides a broad learning experience integrating personal development and academic skills with an extended practical workplace component as a requirement for satisfactory completion. The industry learning focus at the Yiramalay/Wesley Studio School is on the Australian cattle industry, agri-business, eco-tourism, mining management and the arts.

The Yiramalay/Wesley Studio School offers a framework for cross-cultural learning and the development of intercultural competence among students and adults with different backgrounds. The school provides a

relevant and authentic educational experience for the Aboriginal students and their families, and exemplifies how communities across Australia can collaborate.

Executive Director of the Yiramalay/Wesley Studio School, Ned McCord, notes that the Yiramalay program is dedicated to 'Two Way Learning', where students and staff as well as family members and the wider community learn from each other. Mr McCord said the school is a partnership that is respectful of the people, culture, language and land, no matter where the location – Kimberley, Melbourne or on country.

The Senior Years Learning Framework allows students interested in moving directly to work or further vocational education to do so by completing a training package in either a specific vocational area or a more generic package while still at secondary school. Those students considering going on to university complete their final years of school with an accredited course within

the vocational and personal framework specified by the Framework.

Depending on the level of study, students who graduate from the Yiramalay/Wesley Studio School receive an accredited qualification in either Certificate II in Work Preparation, VCE, VET, WACE or an IB Diploma. A graduation ceremony was held earlier this year for first five students from Fitzroy Crossing to complete Year 12 through the program.

Another recent achievement for the Yiramalay/Wesley Studio School is its registration in Western Australia last year as independent school number 1489. This registration provides the school access to federal and state funding plus Abstudy.

Further information about the school is available from [www.wesleycollege.net](http://www.wesleycollege.net)

The Senior Years Learning Framework is available for implementation at other schools and institutions. For further information visit [www.acer.edu.au/tests/sylf](http://www.acer.edu.au/tests/sylf)



# Revisiting the research

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## The post-school transitions of Indigenous learners

*Through its involvement in surveys, reviews and analysis at the state and national level, ACER has gained insights into the pathways available to, and taken by, young Indigenous Australians after they leave school.*

From 2008 to 2012, ACER conducted the annual *On Track* survey of Victorian school leavers, reporting on the post-school destinations of all school leavers one year on. In addition to the annual survey there was a longitudinal component, the most recent of which tracked students who left school in 2007, surveying them in 2008 until 2011. Twenty-four Indigenous Year 12 or equivalent completers and 36 Indigenous early school leavers were tracked across all four years of the study, all of whom were engaged in work or study in 2011. Of the school completers, 14 were undertaking some form of education and training, including six who were at university; 10 were in the labour force. Of the early school leavers, 14 were undertaking some form of education and training, including seven who were in an apprenticeship; 22 were in the labour force.

The *On Track* longitudinal study notes that, despite national and Victorian trends indicating improvements in the

past decade, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students historically have not attained Year 12 at the same levels as their non-Indigenous peers. Related to this, the Productivity Commission's 2011 *Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage – Key Indicators* report shows that Aboriginal people are over-represented in the Victorian VET sector relative to the size of the Victorian Aboriginal population. Conversely, ACER analysis of the 2011 Australian Bureau of Statistics Census shows that, while national growth in the number of Indigenous university student enrolments between 2006 and 2011 was significantly larger than the overall growth during this period, Indigenous students are still considerably under-represented in Australian higher education relative to the size of Australia's Indigenous population.

The recently-released *National Report on Social Equity in VET 2013*, prepared by ACER for the National VET Equity Advisory Council, reported that 22 per cent of Indigenous Australians between the ages of 15 and 64 were participating in VET study in 2011, which is more than twice the rate for all other Australians. But while overall participation was higher, many of the courses studied were at Certificate II or below.

Analysis of the Longitudinal Surveys of Australian Youth conducted by ACER in 2005 showed that, by the age of 22, Indigenous young people were engaged in full-time work to a similar extent

as their non-Indigenous peers but were less likely to be in full-time study or part-time work. Overall, the proportion of young Indigenous people who were not working was higher than for non-Indigenous young people from the same cohorts.

Findings such as these highlight the need to focus attention on improving the success of post-school transitions for Indigenous students. A report produced by ACER in 2009 for the Department of Planning and Community Development identified the key success factors associated with programs that have improved transition outcomes for young Indigenous people.

The report found that implementation of a successful transitions program would require a coordinated effort using a whole-of-government approach characterised by cross-agency collaboration and close contact with the local community. It would also need monitoring and reporting against target outcomes, in order to help bring about continuous improvement and enable an evidence base to be built to help future policy and program development.

Further information about ACER's work to support successful post-school transitions for young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students can be found in *Making a Difference: Improving outcomes for Indigenous Learners*, available at [www.acer.edu.au/indigenous/making-a-difference](http://www.acer.edu.au/indigenous/making-a-difference)



# In profile

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## Vale Nola Purdie (1945-2013)

Principal Research Fellow

*In this issue we pay tribute to Dr Nola Purdie and the substantial contribution she made to Aboriginal education through research. Dr Purdie passed away in August 2013.*

Nola had a great passion for Aboriginal education and her publications in Aboriginal education and health are testament to her great commitment to this area of education. She made an enormous personal and professional contribution to the education and wellbeing of Indigenous children and young people.

Nola was lead researcher of many reports that have had an impact on policy and practice, including in the areas of literacy and languages. She produced new resources to support the education and health community in their efforts to meet the needs of Aboriginal communities.

In 2008, Nola led a national report about Indigenous language programs in schools across Australia and in 2010 co-edited *Working Together: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander mental health and wellbeing principles and practice* which is a resource for health practitioners to meet the needs of Indigenous Peoples. Then in 2011, she was co-editor of *Two Way Teaching and Learning: Toward culturally reflective and relevant education* which is a resource for teachers to support their pedagogy and teaching in schools. These publications exemplify the passion and commitment that Nola had in Aboriginal education and

her professional leadership in the educational field. She was a member of the *Scientific Reference Group* for, and a contributor to, the *Closing the Gap* clearinghouse.

In 2003, Nola was the recipient of the Australian Association for Research in Education's Betty Watts Award, which recognises outstanding research in Australian Indigenous education and is intended to encourage and support research about Australian Indigenous education. This was reward for and recognition of Nola's research pertaining to Indigenous students' self-concepts.

Nola was a valued colleague at ACER and it was a privilege for those who

had the opportunity to work with her. She was a professional in every respect. She worked with many researchers across Australia, who describe her as a wonderful, caring and great person and researcher to work with. Nola's contributions were extensive, and many people were deeply influenced by her passion for excellence and persistence of vision. Her contribution to Aboriginal education and her research will continue to be respected and used by current and future scholars in education.

The selected works of Dr Nola Purdie can be viewed at [<works.bepress.com/nola\\_purdie/>](http://works.bepress.com/nola_purdie/)



# Reconciliation at ACER

## Reconciliation Action Plan

As part of its commitment to developing a culturally conscious workplace, ACER has over the past year held a number of events that encourage staff to be inclusive of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives.

In 2012 a committee was formed to develop ACER's Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) which consisted of staff members Gina Milgate, Steven Dover, Sarah Buckley, Stephanie Armstrong and Cathy O'Shannassy, with Lynette Riley, the Chair of the ACER Advisory Committee on Indigenous Education.

In May 2013, ACER's first RAP was launched at a special morning tea to acknowledge and celebrate Reconciliation Week. ACER Indigenous Liaison Officer Gina Milgate spoke about the importance of the RAP being a significant milestone in ACER's

pursuit of improving Indigenous learning. ACER Chief Executive, Professor Geoff Masters, spoke about the background to the RAP development and the focus areas and actions that ACER would undertake in its reconciliation endeavours over the coming year.

Participants in ACER's 2013 Leadership Development Program will undertake a project that will focus on the connection between Reconciliation and ACER's Leadership Behaviour Framework.

A copy of ACER's RAP is available to download at [www.acer.edu.au/indigenous/reconciliation-action-plan](http://www.acer.edu.au/indigenous/reconciliation-action-plan)

Paige Porter (Chair, ACER Board of Directors), Geoff Masters (ACER Chief Executive), and Lynette Riley (Chair, ACER Advisory Committee on Indigenous Education) launch ACER's Reconciliation Action Plan.



## Kinship Presentation

In May 2013, 35 ACER employees participated in a cultural workshop facilitated by Lynette Riley, Chair of the ACER Advisory Committee on Indigenous Education. The workshop focused on Aboriginal kinship and the relationships that exist within and between Aboriginal nations. After the workshop, participants shared their learning and experiences by reflecting on four questions. The workshop will be repeated in 2014 for staff who were unable attend the first time. Overall, the feedback from the workshop indicated a strong impact on participant learning and self-development. A selection of comments appears below.

*I liked the way it pulled people from all over ACER, from different groups and different jobs at different levels together,*

*and for that time during the workshop, we viewed each other very differently.*

*For my work it is the recognition that there are very complex underlying structures that underpin what it is to be an Indigenous person to Australia. In our work we are often drawn into making generalisations from data etc and this helps provide some perspective and gave me an opportunity to step back a bit.*

*I studied Koorie Studies at university but never went into this level of*

*depth regarding kinship. It was amazing how complex (and complicated) it is! I really have a new level of understanding and complete appreciation for the Aboriginal culture.*



Lynette Riley teaches ACER staff about the Aboriginal Kinship system.

## Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER)

The Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER) is an independent not-for-profit organisation. ACER's mission is to create and promote research-based knowledge, products and services that can be used to improve learning across the life span.

ACER is involved in the collection, analysis, interpretation and use of reliable information to assist educational decision makers – from individual teachers to system leaders and policy makers – in two ways: to help them help learners by identifying educational progress and challenges, and to help them identify and implement effective policies and practices on the basis of good evidence.

ACER was established in 1930 and has since built a strong reputation as a provider of reliable support and expertise to education policy makers and professional practitioners. As a not-for-profit organisation, independent of government, ACER receives no direct financial support and generates its entire income through contracted research and development projects and through products and services that it develops and distributes.

ACER has experienced significant growth in recent years and now has more than 340 staff located in Melbourne, Sydney, Brisbane, Perth, Adelaide, Dubai and New Delhi. In 2012, 122 of ACER's staff held Masters Degrees, 63 held Doctorates, and 120 held a teaching qualification.

### Statement of Commitment

ACER is committed to improving learning across the life span and has identified the improvement of outcomes for Indigenous learners as an organisational priority. ACER recognises the importance of respecting Indigenous peoples and their cultures in its work in Indigenous education. ACER understands that this is an important part of developing a culturally conscious workplace for its employees.

### Organisational Goals

ACER provides assistance in data gathering and action planning in four major areas of educational practice:

#### 1. Learners and their Needs

*Identifying, understanding and addressing the needs of Indigenous learners.*

#### 2. The Learning Profession

*Enhancing and assessing the capacity of teachers and leaders to improve outcomes for Indigenous learners.*

#### 3. Places of Learning

*Creating more supportive and effective places and modes of learning for Indigenous learners.*

#### 4. A Learning Society

*Supporting and monitoring systemic and government efforts to close gaps in life expectancy and educational achievement for Indigenous learners.*

The ACER *Indigenous Education Update* is published by the Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER). Editorial support by Megan Robinson.

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ISSN: 2201-5930  
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