

# NEGOTIATING COMPETING EDUCATION VALUES: EQUALITY, EQUITY, QUALITY AND INDIGENOUS RIGHTS



**Peter Buckskin**  
PSM FACE

*University of South Australia*

*Professor Buckskin is a Narungga man from the Yorke Peninsula in South Australia. He is currently the Dean: Indigenous Scholarship, Engagement and Research at the*

*University of South Australia. As an educator and professional bureaucrat for more than three decades, Professor Buckskin's passion has been the pursuit of educational excellence for Aboriginal students. In 2007, he was elected as a Fellow of the Australian College of Educators. In recognition of his work, Professor Buckskin has received the Commonwealth Public Service Medal (2001), the Frank G Klassen Award for Leadership and Contribution to Teacher Education from the International Council on Education for Teaching (2003); and the National Deadly Award for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education (2005). In 2011, Professor Buckskin was awarded a \$7.5 million grant to increase the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander teachers and leaders in Australian schools.*



**Gary Thomas**

*Queensland University of Technology*

*Associate Professor Gary Thomas is the Associate Director, Academic Indigenous Knowledges in the Learning and Teaching Unit at the Queensland University of Technology.*

*Gary has worked at the University of Southern Queensland, the University of Melbourne and La Trobe University. Prior to commencing at QUT, Gary held dual Directorships in Indigenous Education and Equity and Student Support Services at La Trobe University, and performed the role of Acting Pro Vice-Chancellor (Equity and Student Services) for 10 months.*

*Gary has made significant contributions to Indigenous education at both national and international levels over many years. He is the National Secretary of the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Higher Education Consortium (NATSIHEC AC). He has been instrumental in the development of the first taught programs of the World Indigenous Nations University. He was an Honorary Auditor for the Australian Universities Quality Agency (AUQA) and is currently a Registered Expert for the Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Authority (TEQSA).*



## Zane Ma Rhea

Monash University,  
Victoria

*Dr Zane Ma Rhea has worked with Indigenous people over the last 35 years in various capacities. She is recognised internationally for her expertise in comparative education and for improving the quality of*

*education and other human services for Indigenous people using a rights-based framework, focusing on organisational change management, professional development and the recognition and preservation of Indigenous knowledge in mainstream organisations through meaningful partnerships with Indigenous families and communities.*

*She teaches across Indigenous education, leadership, and sustainability programs at Monash University and undertakes research in Indigenous education, Indigenous studies and organisational development.*

## Abstract

This panel will examine the ideals of educational equality, educational equity and Indigenous *sui generis* rights using the Australian higher education system as the working example. The ideals of educational equality and educational equity are laden with inherent contradictions when considering power relations and the rights and needs of traditionally marginalised peoples across the world under conditions of globalisation and postcoloniality.

Within the neo-liberal economic reform agenda globally, there has been significant focus on raising the general standard of higher education through productivity and accountability measures. These measures have exposed the failure of states to recognise the aspirations and meet the higher education needs of Indigenous and other minority populations. This paper examines the arguments for both educational equality and educational equity in consideration of newer international legal mechanisms that are recognising the unextinguished rights of Indigenous peoples after colonisation.

Through undertaking an analysis of the concept of, and theories underpinning, both educational equality and equity using Australian higher education as the example, panellists will bring a wealth of evidence-based work to the argument for the need for a fundamental reformulation of the engagement of the higher education system with Indigenous people through a remobilised concept of commensurability enshrined in a concept of 'both ways' educational choice for Indigenous students.