

Notre Dame Nulungu Talking Heads Seminar Series



A New Partnership, William Roe, 1994

Promoting Aboriginal Student Engagement and Success in Tertiary Education in Remote Locations

Wednesday 4th September 2019

Venue: NDB11/101

Time: 12:30pm – 1:30pm

Presenters: Sandra Wooltorton, Anna Dwyer, Judith Wilks and John Guenther



Abstract

Research was conducted with 40 students and staff who live, work and study in tertiary education in remote locations in the West Kimberley region. Using interviews and focus groups, the project addressed three overarching questions: How do remote Aboriginal students experience studying at or via a university campus? What are the key enablers and constraints to West Kimberley students' successful participation and engagement with tertiary education? What strategies might assist Aboriginal students living and studying in communities and towns in remote locations, to transition successfully through VET, into tertiary and/or through post graduate education?

All presenters are research fellows or adjunct research fellows with Nulungu Research Institute. John is a staff member of Batchelor Institute, and Judith is an adjunct staff member of Southern Cross University.

Biographies

John Guenther

John is the Research Leader Education and Training, with Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education, based in Darwin, Northern Territory. Over the last 16 years John has conducted research and evaluation projects which have focused on remote contexts, covering all states and territories of Australia. While his work has focused mainly on learning, the intersections between training and education with health, wellbeing, traditional knowledge systems, economic, natural resource management, mining and a range of social issues, feature in his work.

John's research expertise extends from an array of practical qualitative and quantitative methodologies for research and evaluation, through to a range of theoretical and philosophical perspectives. He is interested in the translation of empirical evidence to policy and practice settings. He has a growing publishing track record and regularly contributes to conferences and researcher forums to share his knowledge. He is currently working as editor on his fifth journal special edition, and actively encourages collaborations across disciplines to support high quality research.

John supervises and mentors several higher degree research students across Australia and supports networks and collaborations in several universities across Australia.

Judith Wilks

Dr Judith Wilks is Adjunct Associate Professor and Member of Emeritus Faculty at Southern Cross University and also Adjunct Associate Professor with the Nulungu Research Institute of the University of Notre Dame Australia. She is an experienced educator with a significant research, teaching and community engagement track record in regional education services delivery in both the higher education and schooling sectors.

Judith's research interests and publications stretch across a number of fields. These include the promotion of agency, resilience, and citizenship skills through participatory methodologies for children and young people in environmental education learning settings. Since 2011 Judith has also been an active member of national research collaboration (Nulungu Research Institute) that has sought to promote access, participation and success in higher education for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. In recent years she has undertaken considerable research work in the Western Kimberley region focusing on strengthening the learning experiences of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander higher education students living in remote locations.

Sandra Wooltorton

Sandra Wooltorton is Associate Professor and since March 2018 has been a Senior Research Fellow (Education) with the Nulungu Research Institute (Nulungu) at the University of Notre Dame Australia's Broome Campus. She has had a long education career and was a teacher educator at Edith Cowan University (Bunbury) from 1999 until 2013. In 2014 she taught in a remote school in the Fitzroy Valley. She was Nulungu Director from 2015 – 2017.

Sandra is an interdisciplinary researcher whose research includes cultural geography, environmental philosophy, Aboriginal language studies, wellbeing studies, environmental education and education studies. She is particularly interested in methodologies for social change and is Senior Researcher with the *Kimberley Transitions* project: <https://www.notredame.edu.au/research/transitions/researchers>. She is committed to social justice in education and gaining recognition of the significance of Aboriginal history and culture as education priorities for all Australians.

Anna Dwyer

Anna Dwyer is an award-winning Researcher and Associate Lecturer at the Nulungu Research Institute at the University of Notre Dame Australia's Broome Campus. She is a Karajarri Woman from Karajarri Country, 190kms south of Broome in the West Kimberley region of Western Australia. Anna's professional background is in Education and Linguistics. Anna has been a cultural educator and Aboriginal Researcher with the Nulungu Research Institute for 11 years. She is currently enrolled in a Master's Degree by Research through the School of Arts & Sciences at Notre Dame University. As guest lecturer she has taught in the Indigenous Studies and Diploma of Nursing programs, particularly around relationship to land and country, kinship, language and cultural protocols.

Anna is an outstanding researcher at Nulungu, producing and engaging in regional and national projects on topics such as Caring for Country, Health and Wellbeing, Language Maintenance and Education. Her interest is working closely with her people and doing research that will assist both her own people and the wider Aboriginal community. Anna is also a Director for the Karajarri Traditional Lands Association and continues to represent her people through her research on issues of Law and culture, health and Climate Change. In 2018, she won the Kularri NAIDOC Person of the Year award, as well as the Vice Chancellor's award for University Teaching. For further information on Anna's projects click on the following link: <https://www.notredame.edu.au/research/nulungu/staff/Anna-Dwyer>