

## EDITORIAL

### Special Issue: The “ness” of Environmental Education

*I came from the dream-time, from the dusty red soil plains  
I am the ancient heart, the keeper of the flame.  
I stood upon the rocky shore, I watched the tall ships come.  
For forty thousand years I've been the first Australian.*

*We are one, but we are many  
And from all the lands on earth we come  
We share a dream and sing with one voice:  
I am, you are, we are Australian*

*I came upon the prison ship, bowed down by iron chains.  
I cleared the land, endured the lash and waited for the rains.  
I'm a settler, I'm a farmer's wife on a dry and barren run  
A convict then a free man, I became Australian.*

*We are one, but we are many  
And from all the lands on earth we come  
We share a dream and sing with one voice:  
I am, you are, we are Australian*

*I'm the daughter of a digger who sought the mother lode  
The girl became a woman on the long and dusty road  
I'm a child of the depression, I saw the good times come  
I'm a bushy, I'm a battler, I am Australian*

*We are one, but we are many  
And from all the lands on earth we come  
We share a dream and sing with one voice:  
I am, you are, we are Australian*

*I'm a teller of stories, I'm a singer of songs  
I am Albert Namatjira, I paint the ghostly gums  
I am Clancy on his horse, I'm Ned Kelly on the run  
I'm the one who waltzed Matilda, I am Australian*

*We are one, but we are many  
And from all the lands on earth we come  
We share a dream and sing with one voice:  
I am, you are, we are Australian*

*There are no words of comfort that can hope to ease the pain  
Of losing homes and loved ones the memories will remain  
Within the silent tears you'll find the strength to carry on*

*You're not alone, we are with you. We are Australian!*

*We are one, but we are many  
And from all the lands on earth we come  
We share a dream and sing with one voice:  
I am, you are, we are Australian*

*There are so many heroes whose stories must be told  
They fought the raging fires of hell and saved so many souls  
From the ashes of despair our towns will rise again!  
We mourn your loss, we will rebuild. We are Australian!*

*We are one, but we are many  
And from all the lands on earth we come  
We share a dream and sing with one voice:  
I am, you are, we are Australian*

*I'm the hot wind from the desert, I'm the black soil of the plains  
I'm the mountains and the valleys, I'm the drought and flooding rains  
I am the rock, I am the sky, the rivers when they run  
The spirit of this great land, I am Australian*

*We are one, but we are many  
And from all the lands on earth we come  
We share a dream and sing with one voice:  
I am, you are, we are Australian  
I am, you are, we are Australian.*

*We are one ..... We are many ..... We are Australian!*

(Bruce Woodley and Dobe Newton, 1987)

In celebration of the 6th World Environmental Education Congress, this Special Issue (SI) of the Australian Journal of Environmental Education (AJEE) is dedicated to the “ness” of Environmental Education. The original title of the Special Issue was the “Australian-ness of Environmental Education”, but including the word “Australian” seemed somewhat Australian-centric at the completion of the Special Issue given the diversity of contributions that indeed speak to the “ness” of environmental education within, inside, outside and beyond the geographical confines of Australia. At the onset, the aim of this Special Issue was to highlight what makes environmental education distinctive. While this edited collection has achieved its purpose, it has also exceeded those expectations by revealing not only the compelling stories that research has to offer in 2011, but also provided openings and insights about the parallels and transferability of the “ness” of environmental education as it develops within place, space and time. This Special Issue, therefore, serves a local yet global interest in celebrating, valuing and understanding the “ness” of environmental education and its research.

The first four papers of this Special Issue speak directly to the Australian-ness of environmental education. They offer a rich historical perspective on policy, curriculum,

research (conceptualisation and contextualisation), place, language, colonisation and natureculture.

**Gough** (this issue), a founder and leader of environmental education within the Australian context, thoughtfully recounts and reflects on the past decade and the Australian Government's actions related to environmental education in the context of the broader Australian Curriculum. This analysis was inspired by Robottom's (1987) curriculum jigsaw puzzle metaphor, emphasising the triumphs and tribulations that environmental education has endured in the formal curriculum since the 70s; revealing the ongoing tensions and tussles between science education and environmental education.

**Stevenson and Evans** (this issue) follow Gough with a focus on how Australian environmental education research was conceptualised and contextualised in the 1990s. Stevenson and Evans begin with an important acknowledgement by stating that *"any story of the history of environmental education research depends on who is doing the telling"*. Taking a somewhat snapshot methodology, they analyse 67 articles published by Australian authors in the Australian Journal of Environmental Education (from 1990-2000). During this decade period, their analysis portrays Australian environmental education research as a provocateur in questioning and challenging prevailing environmental education conventions by critiquing and theorizing the social critical conceptual and curriculum framing of environmental education.

In **Stevenson's** second piece (this issue), he raises the question of whether a sense of place, or attachment to the Australian biophysical or cultural landscape, has shaped Australian environmental education research. Applying the same snapshot methodology as the latter paper, an analysis of the same 67 papers is undertaken which represents a time proceeding what some refer to as the *"(re)emergence of place-based education"*. Of those 67 articles only four addressed the author's or other Australian's sense of place. Stevenson offers several pertinent explanations for this finding, alongside discernibly calling for extended research on the current presence of place or sense of place in Australian environmental education research (2001-2011).

**Whitehouse** (this issue) argues that *"due to many tens of thousands of years of human settlement, the continent of Australia can be considered as a natureculture, a continuously inhabited country, owned, known, taught, farmed, fished, loved and feared"*. In accordance with the introduction of English as the dominant language of education with European colonisation, Whitehouse (this issue) astutely asserts that *"so arrived an ontological premise that linguistically divides a categorised nature from culture and human from 'the' environment"*. Drawing on published work from the Australian tropics, she employs a socionature method in making a philosophical argument for a more nuanced interpretation of language and culture (interface and interculture) in environmental education practice (and indeed pedagogy).

Whitehouse's paper notably gestures to the important issue of practice or pedagogy. Whilst Stevenson and Evans (this issue) identified pedagogy as an area lacking research focus not only in Australia but internationally (particularly during the decade from 1990-2000), the subsequent three articles speak directly to environmental education pedagogy offering unique insight about the pedagogy of environmental education in Australia, but also speak to the pedagogy of environmental education more broadly (transcending geographical borders).

**Stewart** (this issue) (re)emphasises the silence of pedagogy in Australian environmental education research (Stewart, 2006). He perceptively identifies that among such silences is the natural history of Australia (as a continent) in environmental education pedagogy. This is consignment with the current predicament that faces the speckled warbler. He adapts Deleuze and Guattari's (1987) philosophy *"becoming-*

animal” to reconnoitre “ways that the life and circumstances of the speckled warbler might inform natural history focused Australian environmental education research” and unquestionably pedagogy.

Following Stewart, **Bradley** (this issue) aptly utilises Johann Wolfgang von Goethe’s unique approach of “*delicate empiricism*” as an origin for rethinking and reimagining the practice of environmental education particularly as it applies to Australian ecologists. The context of Bradley’s research is an ecologically-degraded agricultural landscape in the Brigalow Belt of Queensland. She adopts “*delicate empiricism*” as a creative and sensitive process to landscape management which some could argue is more “*in sync with the environment*”.

**Nakagawa** and **Payne** (this issue) turn focus to place-responsive pedagogy in the context of the Australian beach. They do so in the broader framing of a semester-long undergraduate subject, Experiencing the Australian Landscape (EAL), as part of the Bachelor of Sport and Outdoor Recreation. Employing an interpretive combined method ethnographic and phenomenological methodology, the authors focus on study abroad students’ beach (as place) experience revealing their “*fluid sense of non-belonging, despite the EAL intention of fostering a place-responsive pedagogy*”. Nakagawa and Payne pointedly identify a disorientation or displacement which critically speak beyond the geographical boundaries of Australia to environmental education pedagogy applicable across/between place/s.

The final three articles of this section consider the “*ness*” of environmental education in other places: China, India and Taiwan. Interesting parallels are revealed (re) emphasising the importance of historical voices in environmental education pedagogy and curriculum which transfer across/between place/context.

**Ji** (this issue) explores Chinese educators’ environmental consciousness. She specifically focuses on their significant life experiences illuminating “*the Chinese-ness of environmental education from the angle of life experiences and reflections of environmental educators in mainland China*”. She identifies serendipity, 既来之则安之, and a strong sense of responsibility as critical elements in environmental educators’ consciousness.

**Almeida** and **Cutter-Mackenzie** (this issue) focus on the “*ness*” of environmental education in India. They consider the historical, present and future directions of environmental education in India through a close examination of practice, policy and research developments. Throughout and between these developments lies a historical voice about the “*ness*” of environmental education in India: “*live simply so that others may simply live*” (Gandhi). It is timely for environmental educators to remember that voice and as Gandhi predicted many decades ago: “*A time is coming when those who are in a mad rush today of multiplying their wants, will retrace their steps and say: what have we done*” (cited in Khoshoo & Moolakattu, 2009, p. 144).

**Yueh** and **Barker** (this issue) end this section by reflecting on the 1998 Taiwanese national curriculum revision where environmental education was identified as one of six new “*Important Issues*”. However, the authors’ study reveals that “*a pervasive nation-wide exam-driven, subject-dominated educational climate resulted in a somewhat truncated ‘Taiwan-ness’ in the environmental education that emerged*”. The latter developments resulted in environmental education being conceived as a minor priority which in some respects resonates with Gough’s (this issue) opening article as environmental education fights to survive (among the traditional disciplines) in the Taiwanese curriculum context.

The ensuing four articles of this new section of the Australian Journal of Environmental Education specifically report on practice initiatives and/or provide

commentaries attempting to cross or bridge the research-practice gap in environmental education.

**Salter, Venville and Longnecker** (this issue) present an Australian story divulging the journey of one Australian (Perth) primary school and their plight to embrace and embody sustainability. The school worked in partnership with Millennium Kids' Inc (community not-for-profit organisation) applying a collaborative approach connecting school, community and family as a means of engaging and empowering student voice. In doing so the authors reveal the tensions experienced in this journey which offer important insights for teachers-researchers as they "*plan and navigate their own sustainability journeys*".

**Wooltorton, Palmer and Steele** (this issue) report on the outcomes of the second action cycle of an ongoing project at Edith Cowan University (ECU) called *Transition to Sustainability: ECU South West* which is located in a small, single faculty regional university campus. Their study reflects an emerging movement in Australia to create social frameworks for embedding sustainability education initiatives in higher education.

**Smith, Collier and Storey** (this issue) report on the development of the Australian National Professional Development Initiative for Sustainability Educators (NPDISE) and how it was influenced by the Australian context. Using Vegemite as a metaphor, this paper re-tells the story of how four professional associations – Australian Association for Environmental Education, Waste Management Association Australia, Australian Water Association, and the Marine Education Society of Australasia – are working together to further and advance the field of environmental education.

**Eames and Barker** (this issue) in the final paper of this Special Issue provide a commentary (as invited by the Editor of AJEE) about the "*ness*" of environmental education in Aotearoa New Zealand (Australia's Trans-Tasman neighbour). They illustrate how environmental, sociocultural and political imperatives have shaped the development of environmental education in New Zealand. These imperatives reveal "*the natural history of the country, the connectedness within the worldviews of the indigenous Māori people, the pioneering views of some enlightened European settlers, and tensions between development and conservation*". They turn focus specifically to research on student learning as an apt example of the "*ness*" of environmental education in New Zealand.

The final section of this AJEE Issue presents three challenging book reviews (by **Ferguson, Oakley and Mair**) of recent publications highly relevant to the field of environmental education. These publications inadvertently speak to the "*ness*" of environmental education by identifying issues (topics) which have tended to remain silent or only discussed on the fringes in environmental education research, including animal well being and rights, sustainable production and consumption and slow travel/tourism. Perhaps this is a "*clarion call*" to environmental educators as Oakley (this issue) appropriately suggests.

Whilst in some respects it may appear at odds that this Editorial commences with the poem/song "*I am Australian*" (Woodley and Newton, 1987) given the revised title of the Special Issue. However, this is quite deliberate as whilst this song (often referred to as Australia's second national anthem and frequently played at citizenship and national ceremonies) is uniquely Australian it also evokes a poignant characteristic of the Australian spirit where all are embraced and celebrated as Australian. To that end, welcome to Australia and the 6th World Environmental Education Congress; *may it be an inspiring continuance in our learning of the "ness" of environmental education.*

## **Reference**

Woodley, B., & Newton, D. (1987). **I Am Australian**. Retrieved from <http://alldownunder.com/australian-music-songs/i-am-australian.htm>

## **Editor**

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