



Fredericks, Bronwyn L. ***Aboriginal and Torres Strait Peoples in the Health Arena.***  
*In support of the Master of Public Health Program, Institute of Koori Education (IKE),  
Deakin University, Warun Ponds via Geelong, 21st April 2009*

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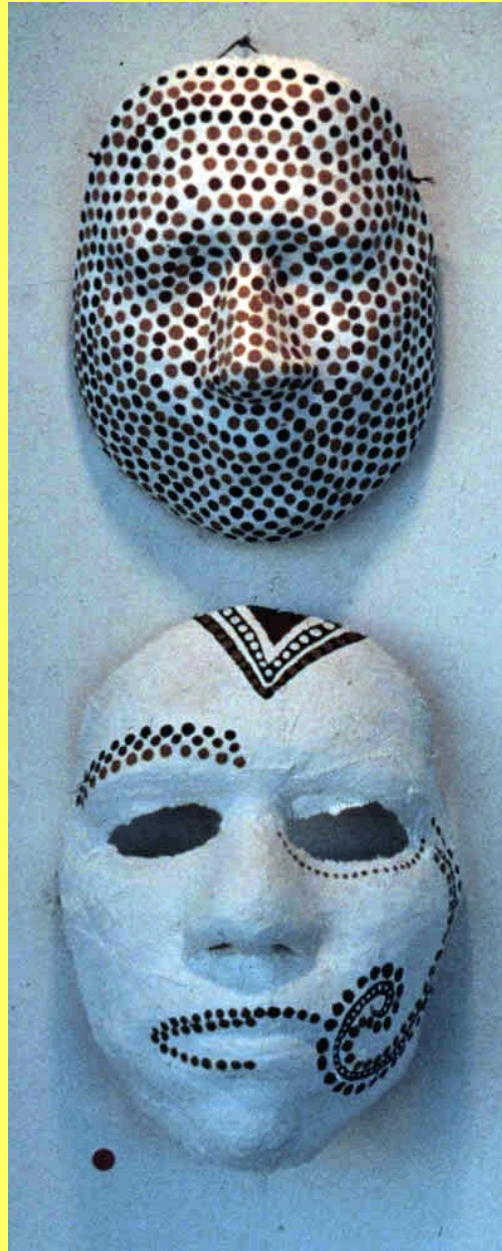
# Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples in the Health Arena

Bronwyn Fredericks

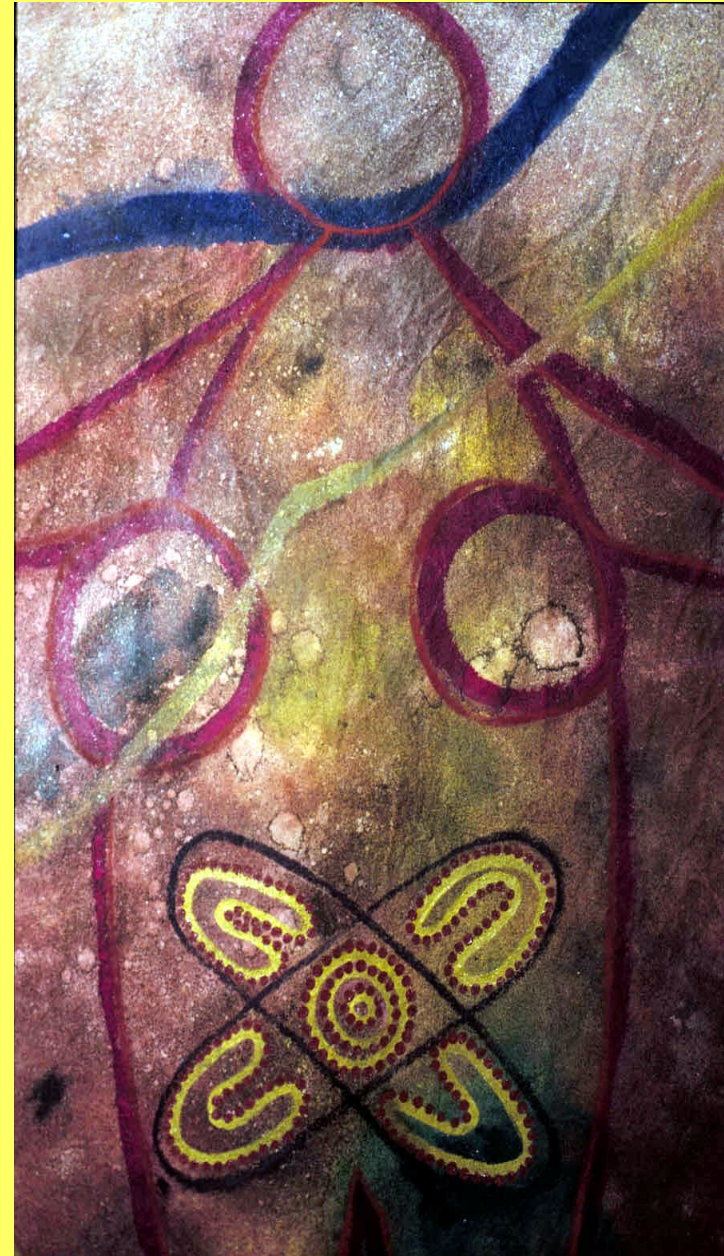
In support of the Master of Public Health Program  
Institute of Koori Education (IKE)  
Deakin University  
Warun Ponds via Geelong  
21<sup>st</sup> April 2009

- Me, who am I?
- Education, history, paid work, engagement.
- Research – some realisations.
- Me undertaking research - PhD
- Research – Post-Doctoral Studies
- Working in research environments

# Me



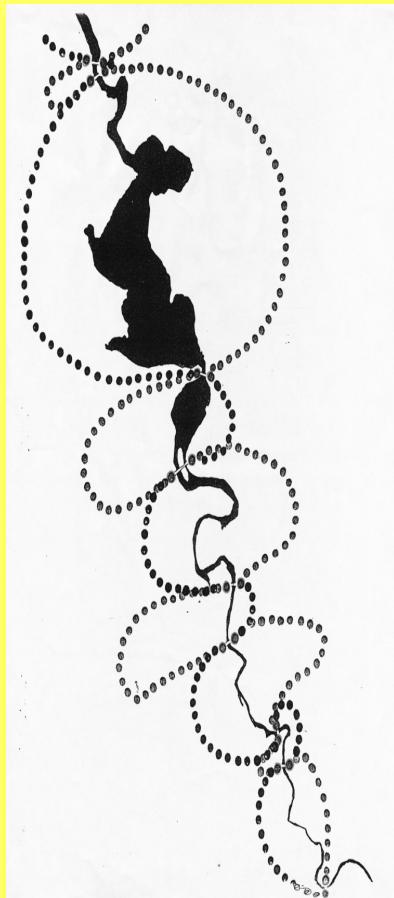
*Who Me* (Pamela Croft, 1988)



*Rivers flowing through me* (Pamela Croft, 2002)

# Place

Artwork: Pamela Croft,  
*Brisbane River* (1988) (below)  
and *Duality* (1990) (right)



Photographs:  
Brisbane City Hall  
and  
Brisbane River,  
Bronwyn  
Fredericks

# Education

- Schooling – State & Private
- University studies  
BCAE -Kelvin Grove  
QUT  
Uni of Tasmania and  
Central Queensland University
- Other qualifications – J.P. (Qual.),  
Reiki, Schichem, Reflexology.

# Paid Work

- Pharmacy Assistant
- Waitress
- Bar Tender
- Meat Worker
- Electoral Officer
- Tutor
- Teacher
- Lecturer
- Project Officer
- Public Health Officer
- Manager
- Consultant
- Chief Executive Officer
- Researcher

# Taking a risk...

- I moved away from the place I know.
- I moved to Rockhampton, Central Queensland – where the ‘beef meets the reef’.
- Rockhampton Region, Central Queensland, the lands of the Darumbal, Woppaburra and Gungalu.
- I had to re-establish myself away from my family, and from where my family are known.





# QUEENSLAND ABORIGINAL & ISLANDER HEALTH COUNCIL

ABN: 97 111 116 762

An Affiliate of the National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation







# Service Engagement (Volunteer)

- CQ Community Legal Service (1994 – 1997).
- Rockhampton Women's Health Service (1995).
- Aboriginal and Islander Community Resource Agency (AICRA)  
Aged Care, Disability Support, Public Intoxication  
Program, women's issues (1995-2002).
- Anglicare Central Queensland (2003-2007).
- Bidgerdii Community Controlled Health Service (1996-2005).  
Linked to Rockhampton Indigenous Health Forum,  
Central Highlands Primary Health Care Planning Group,  
Other groups as need be.

**RESEARCH?**

# Past Research in Australia...



From *The Sorry Wall*, by Pamela Croft (1998), Australian National Museum Collection

# Me and Research

- PhD ?



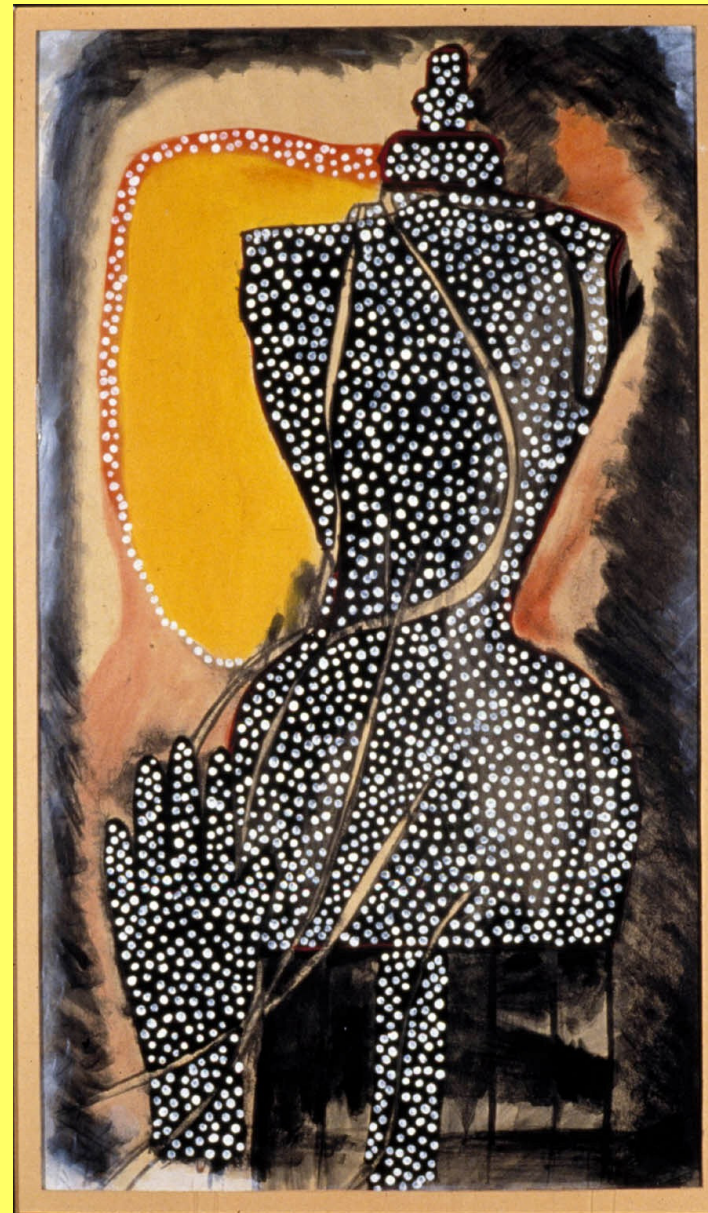
# Model of Research

- Rockhampton community.
- Aboriginal women.
- Empowering.
- Supporting women in the process.
- Educating.
- Sharing.
- Bringing people with me.
- Giving back.
- Linked to political needs.
- Linked to improvements.



# ‘Talk Up’

- Talk Up what is a PhD.
- Talk Up why I want to do a PhD.
- Talk Up what is involved.
- Talk Up who will own it.
- Talk Up the topic.



Once we Mount the Armour: 4 (Pamela Croft, 1988)

# Processes...

- Discussions to explore what women wanted me to do.
- Interviews, open ended questions.
- Use the power of witness
- On-going discussions.
- Inviting women and community members to all processes associated with the university.



# Topic

- How the relationship between health services and Aboriginal women can be more empowering from the viewpoints of Aboriginal women?
- The assumption underpinning this study was that empowering and re-empowering practices for Aboriginal women can lead to improved health outcomes.
- Re-empowerment was discussed from the viewpoint that Aboriginal women were once empowered as sovereign women who had control of all aspects of their lives.

# PhD

Finished the PhD

Disseminate – publication, presentations, seminars,  
Talk Up the issues.



Photo: Bicheno, Tasmania (Bronwyn Fredericks, 2006)

# My current activities...

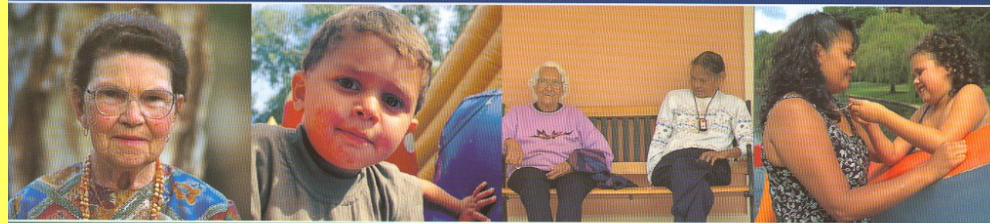
- NH&MRC Post-Doctoral Research Fellow via Monash University.
- Visiting Fellow at QUT.
- Research exploring perceptions of chronic disease risk.
- Research with QAIHC.
- Research with VACCHO.
- Commitment to working within communities, publication and putting Indigenous knowledges and understandings forward.





Australian Government  
National Health and Medical Research Council

INVESTING IN AUSTRALIA'S HEALTH



## **The NHMRC Road Map: A Strategic Framework for Improving Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Through Research**

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Research  
Agenda Working Group (RAWG) of the NHMRC

# Research Principles

- Identified Need
- Action Oriented
- Skills/ Knowledge Transfer
- Acknowledgement
- Consultation
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ownership of Information
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Ways of Working
- Community Control



# My Research Involvements Right Now

- On Being Big – chronic disease.
- What ‘em Risks – chronic disease.
- Urban issues for Indigenous peoples – varied contexts.
- History of QAIHC with others.
- History of Primary Health Care at VAHS with others.
- Health spaces / places – social geography.
- Other things that need doing or are of interest.

# Thinking about Ways of Working

- How do we change what we know we are doing to what we know we should be doing?
- How do we implement processes that do not give in to 'colonial ways'?
- Colonisation is a living process.
- Indigenous health is a political issue, whether you or we, like it or not.

# Health, Education & Research

I am trying to....

- Be concerned with accentuating pre-emptive and proactive actions rather than being reactive.
- Not be drawn into engaging with and justifying ourselves to the dominant society.
- Sort out what is real and what is not.
- Speak to the anti-intellectual and anti-academic talk within our communities – historically we have always been great knowledge holders and theorists.



# What I am asking about Research...

- How relevant is the research to Indigenous people? Who makes this decision? Or the decisions? Where did the idea / topic of the research come from?
- How does research for the 'public good' apply to Indigenous Australia?
- Why doesn't all research with 'people' in Australia have us (Indigenous people) included as standard practice?

How does Epidemiology see us?  
Situating us? Understanding us?  
Interpreting data about us? Who does  
this? Does it even involve us? Are  
we part of designing data  
collection? From whose frame are  
the questions asked? Do we  
interpret data? Is that data  
interpreted about us? For us? For  
the dominant culture?

Sometimes when researchers stick to strict disciplinary boundaries or specific methodologies they can distort our (Indigenous) knowledges, stories and understandings.

E.g.  
social geography  
&  
health spaces  
&  
health places



- In undertaking your work how will you work?
- Will you draw in your Indigenous worldview?
- Ask the questions?
- Name the issues?
- It is harder than you think but it can be done. It takes planning, knowing your work inside and out, up and down and using your work & the disciplines & fields of your work to talk back as to why or why not... we need to sometimes use the language & the knowledge of the dominant culture to talk back to it. In a sense combat it with itself, it's own reasoning.

# Future

- Work with other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, researchers and communities.
- Link research with political struggles.
- Link research with possible changes.
- Share our learnings in working towards addressing systemic discrimination, marginalisation and poor health.



“Acknowledge the struggles of those from before us. In not forgetting the struggle we have an obligation to continue in their honour for our children and our grandchildren and their grandchildren”.

Moana Jackson, 2007.

Aboriginal research is an opportunity for us to create innovation and change for our people. If we develop an approach to research which is unique and reflects our values and beliefs, we will be reflecting the spirit of our ancestors, the spirit of our people who are alive today, and the spirit of our Aboriginal children who are yet to be born.

Carolyn Kenny, 2002:148.

# Contact details...

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