



What Works. The Work Program

Improving outcomes for Indigenous students

A conversation about building awareness

This is the text of an interview with Rosemary Cahill and Glenys Collard. At the time of the interview, both were project officers for the 'Deadly Ways to Learn' project and both were working for the Education Department of Western Australia.

Rosemary is a *wadjela*, a non-Indigenous Australian, and Glenys is a *Nyungar* person from Kondinin, near Wave Rock in the south-west of Western Australia.

This article deals with a range of important issues, including

- the role of Aboriginal English in the school;
- Indigenous and non-Indigenous people working together;
- stereotyping; and
- Indigenous culture and studies in the school.

Here are some short quotes to give you the flavour of the article.

Glenys:

... the reality I found was that nobody was touching on the right now, where our kids were and where we were as Aboriginal people...

Rosemary:

... actually seeing that they [Indigenous kids] did bring a whole lot of really valuable stuff to school, that hadn't been widely recognised and wasn't valued ... the reason it wasn't being valued is simply it wasn't understood...

Glenys:

... do we know what wadjelas do? ... I know the ones I work with ... otherwise I hardly know anyone, and it goes both ways.

Rosemary:

... at the end of the day, it wasn't so much the strategy, what teachers did, that made the difference, it was what they believed. And the way to change what wadjela people believed was get them to engage in conversations with Aboriginal people.