

# Newsletter October 2020

Cairns  
Singapore  
Townsville



JAMES COOK  
UNIVERSITY  
AUSTRALIA

Celebrating  
**50**  
YEARS  
1970-2020



## Welcome!

The Cairns Institute supports JCU's strategic intent to create a brighter future for life in the tropics world-wide through graduates and discoveries that make a difference. [www.jcu.edu.au/about/strategic-intent](http://www.jcu.edu.au/about/strategic-intent).

The Cairns Institute's location in tropical north Queensland and proximity to neighbouring countries in the Pacific and South East Asia offers unique opportunities to enhance human life in the tropics and contribute to a brighter, more equitable and enriching future for its peoples. The Institute is committed to understanding and informing critical processes of social and environmental transformation in the tropics.

As the world's tropical zones face immense social, economic and environmental challenges, the Institute aims to provide innovative research with local, national and global applications. The Institute's core business of research, training and dialogue is embedded in commitments of excellence, social justice and engagement with the societies in which we work. Our unique profile is built on the following key concerns:

- Creativity and innovation
- Cultural and linguistic transformations
- Indigenous futures
- Social and environmental justice
- Sustainable development

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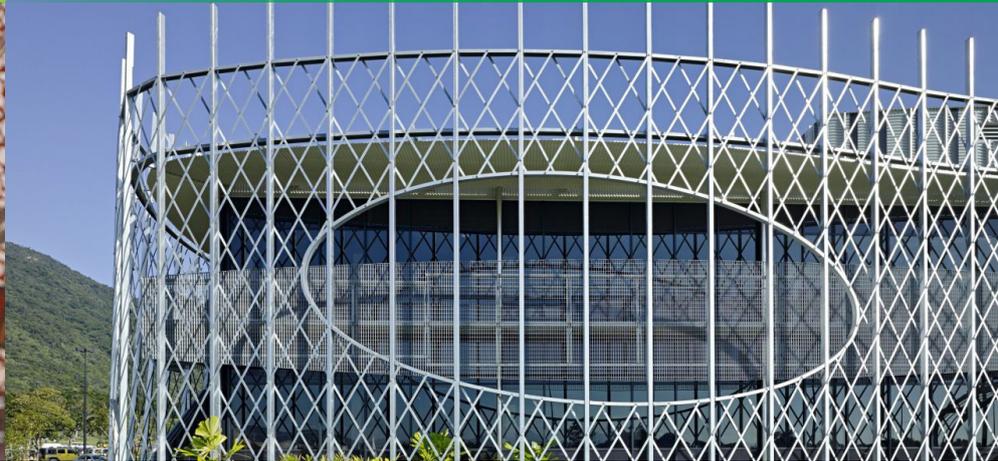
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## Celebrating Dr George Skeene

On Wednesday 28 October 2020, together with the College of Arts Social Sciences and Education's Anthropology, The Cairns Institute hosted a presentation for Dr George Skeene OAM, for 25 years of teaching and research support with JCU across Education, Indigenous studies and Anthropology.

George is a Yirrganydji elder who is very passionate about documenting his people's cultural heritage and stories within the Wet Tropics. He contributed to TCI's Native Title Masterclass for Anthropologists for five years and volunteers at the Cairns Historical Museum.

In 2013, in recognition of his outstanding service and distinguished public contribution to the northern Queensland community, and his exceptional service to the University across a number of disciplines, George was awarded an Honorary Doctor of Letters at James Cook University's graduation ceremony.

In 2016, George was awarded the Medal of the Order of Australia in recognition of his outstanding services to the indigenous community of Cairns. George's love of recording Yirrganydji cultural heritage has led George to write about his own journey in his autobiography. His book *Two Cultures* is an invaluable historical resource for JCU staff and students, as it is the only history available of the Cairns town camps, and one of only a tiny handful of biographies by Aboriginal people in the Far Northern region.

The certificate of appreciation presentation was attended by JCU colleagues, his daughter and granddaughter, Dawul Yirrangdji Rangers, staff from Cairns Historical Museum and Cairns Airport.

Images courtesy of Helen Clarkson. Continued on page 22.





Image courtesy Matt Howard



## Tokua Fenu Tuvalu Project

Tuvalu is the smallest Pacific Island state, with a population of less than 13,000 people, predominantly Polynesian, located to the north of Fiji and immediately south of Kiribati. The former British colony is a series of nine coral atolls, of which eight are inhabited. None is more than 1.5 metres above sea level. Consequently, Tuvalu is extremely vulnerable to rising sea levels.

Cairns Institute Post Graduate Fellow Betsy Misiaga is a Tuvaluan student working on a Masters in Global Development degree to help her home country, supported by Cairns Institute Director, Distinguished Professor Stewart Lockie, and Adjunct Research Fellow, Simon Towle. While her project Tokua Fenu Tuvalu has been disrupted by COVID-19, Betsy has been able to maintain relationships with the Tuvalu government via Zoom, partnering with the Queensland Children's Health Good Start program to produce a resource for schools in the Tuvaluan language.

Tokua Fenu Tuvalu is a community-led project founded on three research themes; Olaga lei - Health, Tuu Mo aganu – Culture and education and Atufenua – Environment. The main outcomes of the research will result from collaborations with the people of Tuvalu in a climate adaptation project designed to improve health and nutrition, preserve culture, raise awareness of climate change, and improve environmental management. An important component of the project is to provide mentoring to empower young Tuvalu (and other Pacific Island leaders) to assist them to make informed decisions to better prepare for an uncertain future.

Olaga Lei - the health and nutrition component of the project – is designed to reduce the incidence of non-communicable diseases such as diabetes and cardiac issues. It will also focus on healthy children and healthy families, and will involve developing culturally appropriate resources in language. The project uses traditional Tuvaluan motifs, such as Pulaka the taro leaf, which will feature in a guide to healthy eating, health and physical activity, and diabetes management.

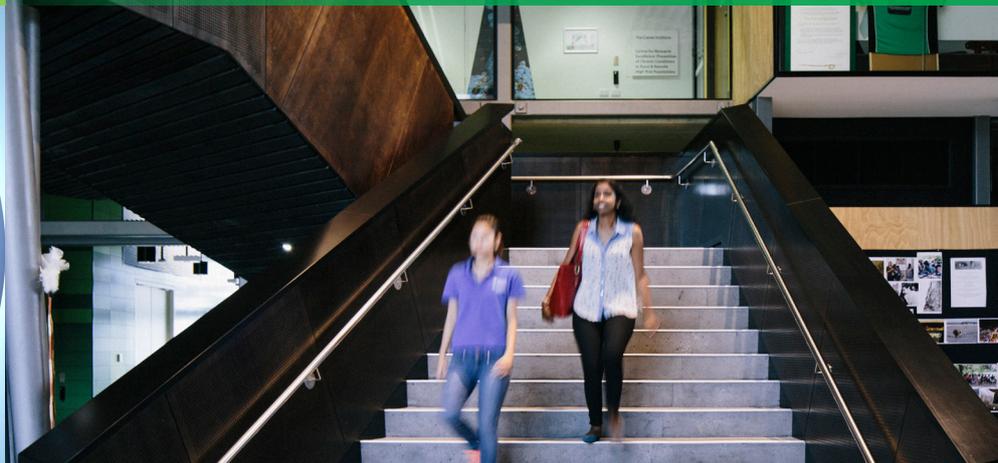
Atufenua - the environmental theme - incorporates a focus on waste management, addressing the issue with a zero-waste philosophy, re-purposing waste material wherever possible, and seeking low cost solutions and better policy outcomes wherever possible.

Education and Culture - Tuu mo Aganu – comprise the third element of the project, embracing a culturally appropriate health and nutrition framework, the Leadership Program for young people, and strengthening, recording and preserving cultural heritage.

Tokua Fenu Tuvalu is a long-term project designed to assist the island nation's leaders to prepare for a cultural transition to new homes in response to rising sea levels, while enhancing health and environmental literacy and numeracy in the meantime.

Another important feature of Tokua Fenu Tuvalu involves strengthening relationships between the people living on Tuvalu and the diaspora of Tuvaluan communities living in Australia and New Zealand. The aim is to raise the profile of Pacific Island issues in Australia and New Zealand. It is a long-term project that will involve collaborations with many partner organisations. Future collaborations will likely include CSIRO, the New Zealand Government, International and Pacific NGOs, Pacific universities and agencies, such as the South Pacific Regional Environment Program (SPREP).





## Tokua Fenu Tuvalu Project cont.

## JCU scoops the pool in national video comp



Toku Fenu Tuvalu will involve a series of collaborations with the Tuvalu Government, Queensland Health (in the development of Olaga Lei resources in Tuvalu language), The Cairns Institute and JCU Connect.

Picking up their cameras to answer the question “What is Anthropology?”, JCU postgraduate students took out two out of three prizes in the Australian Anthropological Society’s Engaged Anthropology Instagram competition earlier this year.

Due to COVID-19 travel restrictions, Betsy is currently exploring the possibility of trialling a pilot Toku Fenua project in the Torres Strait, which also has issues with rising sea levels. As with the Tuvalu proposal, this would be a community-led project in three Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander groups with resources in local languages. Potentially this project could include Thursday Island and inner Torres Strait islands with resources in Kaurareg language, Badu Island in the western Torres Strait with resources in Kala Lagaw Ya, and Murray Island with materials produced in the Meriam Mir language.

The People’s Choice went to Victoria Baskin Coffey and Sebastian Lowe, curators of the art-anthropology collective, Otis Makers, while the Australian Network of Student Anthropologists prize went to Alicia Wheatley who made her short film while in lockdown in Costa Rica.

The Toku Fenua Tuvalu project is still in its planning phase and they are seeking funding. A detailed funding proposal is currently being prepared, and if successful, the pilot project could commence early in 2021.

This is a fantastic outcome for these members of Visual, Digital, Material research group, a TCI initiative promoting experimental and non-text modes of social research and analysis. We hear that these films are already being used to introduce first year students to the discipline in Australia and beyond.

Image courtesy of Alicia Wheatley

Images are courtesy of Venu Pedro from Deep Illusion Photography and Matt Howard.



## Feral Atlas: The More-Than-Human Anthropocene

A digital experiment in multispecies storytelling, has just been released by Stanford University Press as an open access, interactive website. [feralatlasc.org](http://feralatlasc.org)

Feral Atlas invites you to explore the ecological worlds created when nonhuman entities become tangled up with human infrastructure projects. Stretching conventional notions of maps and mapping, it draws on the relational potential of the digital to offer new ways of analyzing—and apprehending—the Anthropocene. Playful, political, and insistently attuned to more-than-human histories, Feral Atlas does more than catalog sites of imperial and industrial ruin. While acknowledging danger, it demonstrates how in situ observation and transdisciplinary collaboration can cultivate vital forms of recognition and response to the urgent environmental challenges of our times.

## 16th Istanbul Biennial

In September last year the 16th Istanbul Biennial officially opened, unveiling its theme of 'The Seventh Continent' to a packed room of cameras and international Press. The Cairns Institute's Theme Leader for Creative Ecologies, Associate Professor Jennifer Deger, spent six weeks working in Istanbul preparing for this opening, invited to exhibit her latest transdisciplinary project, "Feral Atlas: The More-than-Human Anthropocene", and proudly representing James Cook University and The Cairns Institute at what was arguably the most highly anticipated international art event of the year.

The Istanbul Biennial marked the first exhibition and public presentation of this major transdisciplinary work-in-progress. Feral Atlas brings together more than a hundred scientists, humanists, designers and artists to examine the un-designed effects of human infrastructures. Creating a transdisciplinary view of Anthropocene processes, the collective shows how

ordinary, taken-for-granted infrastructures, such as plantations, shipping routes, factories, dams, power stations and drilling rigs, produce 'feral effects'. These effects, Feral Atlas argues, are the Anthropocene.

JCU PhD candidate, Victoria Baskin Coffey, a member of the Visual Digital Material research group, co-curated the Istanbul exhibition. The JCU team selected a number of reports from the atlas to put on display, each focusing on a particular 'feral entity'. These include a mud volcano that emerged next to a drilling rig in Indonesia, water hyacinths that have affected the Bengal Delta as a result of 19th century railway infrastructure, underwater noise pollution in the Arctic, and marine plastics in the Pacific Ocean.

The Biennial was entirely free to the public and the Feral Atlas exhibition alone welcomed over 10,000 visitors on its first opening weekend. Jennifer and Victoria were also invited to co-curate Feral Atlas for the Inaugural Sharjah Architecture Triennial in the United Arab Emirates later in the year.

These exhibitions showcase the exciting potential for the future of Environmental Humanities at James Cook University and The Cairns Institute. They ask how might we bring different methods and disciplines together in order to not only see the world differently, but to find ourselves located in new and urgent relationships with more-than-human worlds. They explore how a re-envisioning of the relationship between art, anthropology, and science might result in the refracting of multiple points of view—and so enable new ways to see, recognise and potentially address the urgent environmental challenges of our times.

Feral Atlas: The More-than-Human Anthropocene has just been published as an open access, peer reviewed website by Stanford University Press, edited by Anna Tsing, Jennifer Deger, Alder Keleman Saxena and Feifei Zhou.



## Feral Atlas: Images from the Istanbul exhibition





## Call to smarten up Northern Australia's agricultural supply chains

Northern Australia's agricultural supply chains need an urgent shake up to fully capitalise on the region's economic development opportunities – a new Cooperative Research Centre for Developing Northern Australia (CRCNA) report has found.

The Reframing smart supply chains in Northern Australia report found there is significant potential for economic growth in Northern Australia across different industries, if supply chains can be strengthened, trade volumes intensified, digitally smart technologies adopted and a more targeted market approach taken, particularly regarding exports to our ASEAN neighbours. The project also pointed to the need for stronger multi-sectoral supply chain collaboration across Northern Australia to spearhead a post-COVID19 economic recovery.

Project lead and report co-author James Cook University (JCU) Professor Hurriyet Babacan said despite the uncertainty caused by the COVID19 pandemic, Asian markets remained critical to Northern Australia.

"We identified synergies in supply chains between Northern Australia and our neighbouring countries which could be further strengthened by establishing sub-regional trading strategies or blocs for Northern Australian producers. This could include shared supply chain and value chain hubs with ASEAN nations to enable aggregation, processing and enhanced market access."

As part of the information and data gathering activities, the project team held roundtable discussions and interviews with industry and government stakeholders. These sessions identified common challenges facing northern agricultural producers, businesses, logistics providers, importers, exporters and consumers.

Topping the list of concerns was a lack of a clear vision about where, when and how agricultural development should happen and the impact the lack of clarity has around planning and investing in supply chain infrastructure and systems. Professor Babacan said a clear pan-northern vision for agricultural development would support the prioritisation of supply chains.

"COVID19 has caused significant disruptions to domestic and international supply chains and shown the critical role they play in our lives.

"The challenges have highlighted the need to shift our supply chain thinking to look at ways more sectors and supply chain participants can work together – to create scale, resilience and persistence in the market.

"A new demand-led approach is needed to drive critical mass and optimisation of the entire supply chain network."

CRCNA CEO Jed Matz said the project highlighted a re-think of northern supply chains is needed to address the cost of freight and transport.

"These are big issues to overcome and can't be resolved in isolation of other challenges identified in this report. Taking steps to reframe Northern Australia's supply chains requires a transformational approach.

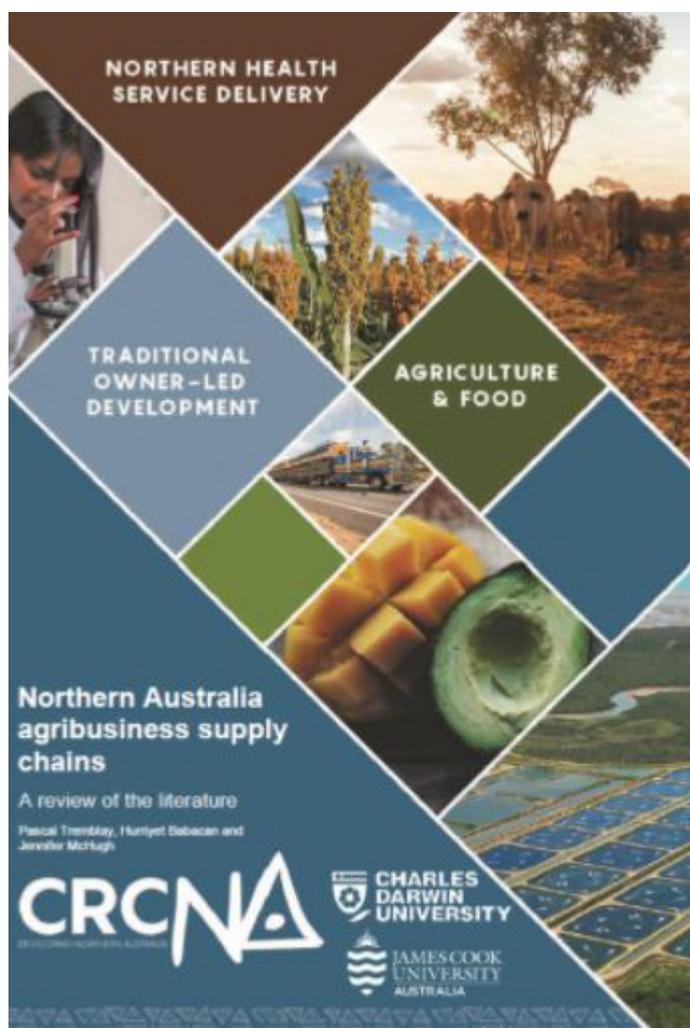
"This is why the CRCNA strongly supports calls for the establishment of a Northern Australian supply chain fund which would support the identification, prioritisation and development of freight and non-freight business case options or models.



## Call to smarten up Northern Australia's agricultural supply chains cont.

"The fund would focus on building stronger supply chain collaborations at the right scale and test the feasibility of these investments."

Mr Matz said it makes sense the Federal Government consider investing in a Northern Australian supply chain fund as part of its COVID19 economic recovery plan.



The reframing smart supply chains project has the broad support of industry, with the Australian Logistics Council (ALC) backing the report's call for urgent action.

ALC CEO Kirk Coningham said the north's vast potential is being choked by a lack of clarity and vision.

"The enormous global opportunity in the COVID-19 'new normal' will only be realised if we get supply chains right. And the timing is perfect to leapfrog into a new future embracing a sophisticated, collaborative, connected approach powered by technology and a sense of urgency.

"If we get this right now, Northern Australia will earn a reputation as a reliable supplier of the quality produce the world craves. That will serve the North, and Australia, for decades to come as we trade our way out of the COVID-19 recession," Mr Coningham said.

The CRCNA is progressing with their next research investment to drive the key recommendations from the reframing study with work underway to build a cross sectoral supply chain collaboration with key stakeholders from the various regional supply chain projects.

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A Literature Review is also available for viewing



## Mossman Botanic Gardens taking shape

A new Australian national tropical botanical garden is taking shape in Mossman, north of Port Douglas, with strong links to The Cairns Institute and James Cook University.

The Mossman Botanic Garden (MBG) will be located at the epicentre of biodiversity in Australia. Uniquely, Mossman, bounded by the Daintree National Park, is the only place in the world where two natural World Heritage areas - the Wet Tropics Rainforests and the Great Barrier Reef – exist side-by-side. The Douglas Shire is the most biodiverse local government area in Australia.

Globally, rainforests contain more than fifty per cent of the world's non-marine biodiversity yet occur on less than five per cent of the world's land surface. It is estimated tropical rainforests are disappearing at the rate of a football field every two seconds. In Australia, tropical rainforests cover just 0.26 per cent of the continent, yet are home to sixty five per cent of our fern species, thirty per cent of our orchid species and nearly 3,000 plant species from 221 families of which 576 species and 44 genera are endemic, including the greatest number of primitive flowering plant families found anywhere on earth.

Mossman Botanic Garden emphasises conservation through understanding by bringing together the world's old living rainforest with one of the world's oldest living cultures, working closely with the Eastern Kuku Yalanji people on every aspect of the Garden's design and development. The Garden's charitable purpose is the protection and enhancement of the natural environment, focusing on tropical rainforest flora; and the provision of research, learning, training, education and information about the natural environment, focusing on tropical rainforest botany.

James Cook University continues to play a pivotal role in the development of the Mossman Botanic Garden project. Professor Darren Crayn, Director of the Australian Tropical Herbarium, and his staff at James Cook University, are working closely with the Gardens on design, biosecurity and appropriate planting regimes. The Garden has just commissioned the Herbarium to

develop and prepare the botanical and horticultural plan for the Garden. The Plan is being developed to position the Garden as a global contributor to botanical knowledge, filling the international gap in Australian wet-tropical, lowland rainforest flora. The Plan is based on Australia and New Zealand's Decadal Plan for Systematics and will align with plans of gardens such as RBG Kew in Europe, Fairchild in the USA and the public botanical garden sector in Australia. Further, the Plan will set out the relationship between the Garden and the Herbarium, with the Garden providing a living collection and the Herbarium providing a preserved collection, with the living collection recorded and

The Vision & The Master Plan  
April 2016



Botanic Garden  
**MOSSMAN**



## Mossman Botanic Gardens taking shape cont.

indexed as if it was a preserved collection in a herbaria.

The Cairns Institute Adjunct Research Fellow Simon Towle has been on the garden's board of directors since 2017 and was recently re-elected for a further term. In an earlier role as Director of Conservation Programs for the World-Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) in New Zealand, Simon managed a large scientific research program, and substantial curriculum-linked botanical education program in collaboration with Wellington City Botanic Gardens. He is planning a similar program for the Mossman Botanic Gardens.

Despite the impact of COVID-19 on the Australian economy, the financial year ending 30 June 2020, has been one of quiet but consistent preparation and development behind the scenes for the Mossman Botanic Gardens. During the year, the board of directors and management have strengthened governance, management, risk planning and quality assurance including successfully completing the transition from an incorporated association under Queensland law to a company limited by guarantee under Commonwealth law, secured forward commitments of nearly \$1 million in funding and cemented strategic relationships with the Australian Tropical Herbarium, Jabalbina Yalanji Aboriginal Land Corporation and Douglas Shire Council. Australian Tropical Herbarium, Jabalbina Yalanji Aboriginal Land Corporation and Douglas Shire Council.

The Mossman Botanic Gardens now has a growing membership and financial supporters committed to the vision for the gardens. The largest donor is the philanthropic Calvert-Jones Family and the John and Calvert Jones Foundation.

Images courtesy of MBG: the Visions & Master Plan, secondary students taking part in planting, along with Jabalbina group, and a google map of the area designated for the MBG.





## Examination of the Bradfield Irrigation Scheme

Professor Allan Dale has been appointed to a three person panel to conduct a comprehensive State government examination of the Bradfield inland irrigation scheme. The panel will be chaired by Professor Ross Garnaut and also include Queensland Farmers Federation chief executive officer Dr Georgina Davis.

Premier Anastacia Palaszczuk said that “Projects like this have the potential to support a new generation of farmers, landholders and regional communities if it’s done in a way that is realistic and affordable.”

“By continuing to have a strong health response, we’re able to look towards the future with exciting projects like this and keep delivering on Queensland’s plan for economic recovery.”

Engineer Dr John Bradfield devised the Bradfield Scheme concept in the 1930s. He proposed to use the floodwaters, and a portion of the normal flow, of the Tully, Herbert, Burdekin, Clarke and Flinders River to create a new permanent river that would “traverse Queensland” from near Hughenden to Windorah and the Queensland border. The goal was to intensify agriculture and population in the south-west.

Dr Bradfield’s original concept also envisaged hydroelectric power generated to pump water. The scheme would require a number of water storages, as well as a tunnel and an aqueduct through the Flinders Range. Read Dr Bradfield’s 1938 article in the Courier-Mail.

The panel is due to report back to within a year.

## Collective Impact July Forum

Led by Professor Allan Dale, the Cairns South Collective Impact Project, continues to connect and collaborate to improve outcomes for children in Cairns South. In July we held a forum including a presentation by a representative of the Department of Child Safety, Youth and Women.

The forum provided a platform for service providers and community groups to have a better understanding and to ask questions concerning Child Safety legislative roles and responsibilities and also changes to legislation since the Carmody report. The forum also discussed the outcomes of a report produced by the Collective Impact team, following in-depth conversations and data gathering, as part of the Cairns South Needs Risk Project. The Need/Risk Project aims at building a ‘village’ to support families raising younger children.

During the COVID-19 restrictions the project team facilitated regular digital meetings so that service providers, government departments and community groups could discuss changes to service delivery and look for solutions to address gaps.

For more information, email us at [collective.impact@jcu.edu.au](mailto:collective.impact@jcu.edu.au)





## COVID-19 and Young Australians: The long term effects of a pandemic

Don't take a gap year, stay engaged, work or study, was the advice from University of Melbourne researcher Dr Jenny Chesters for young people wondering what they should be doing to build positive futures for themselves despite the social and economic disruption of 2020.

Dr Chesters joined Distinguished Professor Stewart Lockie on 7 September for a special Social Sciences Week webinar on COVID-19 and Young Australians. Her presentation drew on data from the Life Patterns Project; a longitudinal study that has been tracking school leavers since 1991, following them through multiple life transitions and providing insight into the consequences of economic recessions on peoples' long-term wellbeing.

During and following the 1983 and 1992-93 recessions and, more recently, the Global Financial Crisis, unemployment rates among young Australians were far higher than those for the general workforce. Dr Chesters explained how, even decades later, people who left school during these contractions experience lower life satisfaction and poorer mental health than other cohorts.

Reflecting on the likely implications of the COVID19 pandemic,

Dr Chesters drew attention to the increasingly precarious nature of many jobs and the challenge this poses for those without vocational qualifications or higher education. A number of Life Patterns Project participants, some who have been in the workforce for some time, are returning to education to improve employment or promotion prospects or to change careers.

Dr Chesters advised school leavers not to risk unemployment and to strongly consider higher education. She drew attention too to the broad skillset school leavers would need to thrive in the 21st Century labour market – skills such as cross-cultural competency, the ability to transform and interpret information in new ways using technology, to critically assess information and data, work in teams and support co-workers, build on social and emotional intelligence and interpersonal skills, identify and solve problems, and be able to extend their knowledge independently.

More results from the Life Patterns project are available in *Youth and the New Adulthood: Generations of Change*, co-edited by Johanna Wyn, Helen Cahill, Dan Woodman, Hernan Cuervo, Carmen Leccardi and Jenny Chesters and published by Springer, 2020.



## THE FUTURE OF AGRICULTURAL TECHNOLOGIES

HORIZON  
SCANNING

## Agricultural futures: growing with technology

Drought, climate variability, biosecurity, global competition and consumer preferences are some of the greatest challenges facing Australian farmers, their impacts threatening our position among the most efficient primary producers in the world. However, Australia's primary producers have a long history of embracing innovation and adopting technology to improve productivity and adapt to harsh conditions.

The Future of Agricultural Technologies report released today by the Australian Council of Learned Academies (ACOLA) identifies and discusses the technologies that could address these challenges and bring about both incremental and transformational changes to increase the profitability, sustainability and productivity of our agriculture industry.

The report was commissioned by Australia's Chief Scientist Dr Alan Finkel AO on behalf of the National Science and Technology Council, with support from the Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment. It is the fifth report in ACOLA's Horizon Scanning series, which draws on the expertise of Australia's Learned Academies and the Royal Society of Te Apārangi.

Professor Stewart Lockie, one of the Chairs for the ACOLA Expert Working Group, noted that "Advanced technologies open possibilities for Australian agriculture beyond incremental gains in production and labour productivity. These include genuinely transformational approaches to managing capital, plant and livestock, natural resources, biosecurity and supply chains to better deal with climatic and market variability. They include possibilities to commercialise new products, differentiate Australian produce in the global market, verify its provenance and quality, and lift the profitability of agriculture while protecting social, cultural, health and environmental values".

"There is a great deal to be optimistic about but there are risks too that should be managed. Perhaps the most obvious of these are consumer resistance to products perceived as unethical. Farm businesses must always play the balancing act between rates of return on capital and investment into new technology and this is particularly difficult for less profitable industries."

For further details on this report: <https://www.cairnsinstitute.jcu.edu.au/agricultural-futures-growing-with-technology/>



Image courtesy of ACOLA - Full Report



## Dances with Cranes

Dr Tim Nevard has recently joined the Cairns Institute as an Adjunct Professor. His career has encompassed roles in corporate governance, business development, sustainability, policy and communication within the consulting, development, tourism and conservation sectors. Most recently he has been involved in the inception, development and implementation of sustainable 'nature-friendly' supply chains in the agrifood sector.

Following an early career with the World Bank, he co-founded the RPS group and was founding director of the Centre of Tropical Urban and Regional Planning at James Cook University; executive Director of Conservation Grade farming; and board Advisor to the Jordans & Ryvita Company. Tim has also worked with nature conservation NGOs such as BirdLife International, the RSPB and the International Crane Foundation to help them achieve strategic development and conservation goals.

Tim's current research interests encompass the ecological, societal and economic roles of Australasia's native and naturalised wildlife, particularly Brolgas and Sarus Cranes. Through the Cairns Institute and in partnership with the Ok Tedi Development Foundation and International Crane Foundation, he is currently working on a large-scale multi-disciplinary project in the Trans Fly region of Papua New Guinea, linking conservation and sustainable development.

The first step in this project has been a survey by local people identifying key waterbird habitat; which, subject to Coronavirus restrictions, will be followed-up with a reconnaissance survey in the first half of 2021 and work to identify robust and culturally-appropriate ecological parameters for forthcoming rural development in the region.

Images courtesy of Tim Nevard





## Reuniting a linguistic family: From the Ancient Taino of the Caribbean to the Modern Tariana of the Brazilian Amazon in times of COVID19

COVID 19 has swept across the world, wreaking havoc and affecting the most vulnerable and unprotected. With a 'tropical Trump' for a president and a precarious health care system for those who cannot afford expensive private health, Brazil is one of the top runners for the highest number of COVID19, next to India and the USA. The state of Amazonas — home to about four million people and several hundred indigenous languages — has seen more than 100,000 active cases with at least 4,000 deaths and sadly, the count continues.

There is no doubt that a catastrophic pandemic is having destructive effect, however there is a contrasting trend — it has brought people together in an effort to counteract the damage; transcending linguistic and geographic boundaries. This is a story of how speakers of distantly related languages have been brought together — giving an intimate flavour to the concept of language family.

More than three thousand ethnic Tariana live on the margins of the Vaupés River, a major tributary of the majestic Rio Negro, which flows off the mighty River Amazon. Only about seventy of them speak their ancestral Tariana language, valued as a mark of identity and belonging. The Tariana say: 'those who speak the same language as me are my siblings'. Professor Aikhenvald explained "My connection with the Tariana people and their language goes back a long way. Since 1991, I have been working with the remaining speakers on documenting their language, putting together a grammar, a dictionary and teaching materials, and helping organize a teaching programme — now successfully operating in Iauaretê, a mission centre with a majority Tariana population. I have been adopted into the Tariana community — and given a name, Kumatharo (literally, duck)".

The Tariana in the Amazonian north-west, stretching towards the border with Colombia. The capital, São Gabriel da Cachoeira (formerly known as São José do Rio Negro and then as Uaupes) dates back to 1759, and counts about 23,000 inhabitants. It is known as the most indigenous town in the whole country (with nine out of ten people being indigenous). More than 6000 cases of COVID 19 and 50 deaths have been recorded so far. Most Tariana — independently of age and gender — have survived the onslaught of COVID 19. Many have been left weak and destitute, unable to work to sustain their families. Now that travel outside Australia is next to impossible, Professor Aikhenvald receives news from the Tariana on a day-to-day basis via WhatsApp and Facebook. The Tariana language has become the third most-used one in her household — after English and Portuguese. She questions how best to help the whole community to continue their existence.

The Tariana language belongs to the Arawak language family, the largest one in South America, spilling over into the Caribbean. About 40 languages, Tariana among them, are still spoken. Several hundred have fallen into oblivion, thanks to the impact of the European invasion. As a linguist, one of Professor Aikhenvald's focus is to work on the Arawak family, recovering the patterns and the forms shared by the many languages, living and dead, from Puerto Rico and Guyana to Brazil, Colombia, Peru, Bolivia, and formerly Argentina.

Arawak languages played a special role in the conquest of South America. As Christopher Columbus reached the island of Hispaniola, in the Caribbean archipelago known as Greater Antilles in 1492, thinking it was the East Indies, the first indigenous group he ran across were the Taino. They spoke a language from the same family as the Tariana — the Arawak family.



## Reuniting a linguistic family cont.

Within the next two centuries, the language of the Taino ceased to be actively spoken. Its legacy survives in a fair number of words which Spaniards purloined, to refer to new objects, foodstuffs, and natural phenomena. Quite a few of them are part of our linguistic repertoire — every speaker of English will know hammock, barbecue, guava, tobacco, and hurricane. The descendants of the ancient Taino are keeping their heritage alive, trying to resurrect the language and the tradition.

Jorge Baracutei Estevez — a former boxer now working as a curator in the Smithsonian Institute in Washington — is a major proponent of the Taino revival, and creator and resurrector of the ancient tongue. Jorge hails from Kiskeya (the original name of the island of Hispaniola) in the Dominican Republic — the hotbed of the Taino revival. Over the years, there has been much interaction; discussions on the grammar, the words of Arawak languages which survive in the existing Taino word lists and for those to be made available for people to start using the language again.

For Jorge, just like for the Tariana, language is the badge of identity. Those who speak a related language are brothers and sisters. To help his Tariana relatives, Jorge organized a Gofundme page through the Taino organization Higuayagua in June 2020. This has yielded donations of money, clothing and shoes — all gratefully received by the Tariana of north-west Amazonia and distributed across the community of speakers through Rafael da Silva Brito, the youngest speaker of Tariana and a member of the local council.

The newly established Tariana-Taino connection has done more than feed a few people. The Tariana language is as close to Taino as English is to Welsh. A few shared forms easy to recognise include kamu for sun and heat, kabu for hand, and mahite 'toothless'. The Tariana speakers are now learning more and more about their language and its history, and have recognised the Taino as their linguistic siblings. The existence of a linguistic family — the Arawak family — has become a reality for the

descendants of the Taino and the Tariana. Two peoples, long disconnected, have been brought together by common care and defense against a common disaster. Reconstructing what the proto-Arawak language was like is not solely a task for academic linguists — its recognition and importance has become a key point for community engagement, and survival, across the Americas.

The advent of COVID 19 has affected the ways in which the Tariana speak about diseases. Traditionally, a disease would be inflicted by a powerful shaman. It 'grabs' a person and may spread — unless another powerful sorcerer makes it diminish and finally disperse. The way of talking about COVID 19 is different — it 'appears' as if coming out of nowhere, and then goes away by itself. It has agency of its own, like a powerful wind and unlike any other known disease. The next task is to translate a COVID-19 information brochure into Tariana and other languages of the family, exploring the ways in which new phenomena is conceptualised and discussed.

Images courtesy of Alexandra Aikhenvald & Jorge Baracuti Estevez





## Cairns Early Years Conference Planning

With the ever-changing COVID-19 situation, the conference committee members from the various sectors involved across the Early Years landscape came together for a full day of planning at The Cairns Institute.

This conference is the culmination of a multi-sector cross-collaboration and aims to bring the latest research and innovation to professionals in the Early Years field. First held in 2009 and now heralding its tenth conference, the Act For Kids organisation has joined The Benevolent Society, Queensland Department of Education, Queensland Health, The Cairns Institute and the Department of Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services.

Pictured above (L-R) are Cassy Bishop, Margaret Osmond, Tamara Stafford, April Schipke, Melissa Akmentins, Vyvyen Wong, Jean Henle, Rebecca Giacomo and Natasha Bartlett.

Further details of the conference can be found on [www.earlyyearsconference.com.au](http://www.earlyyearsconference.com.au)

Images courtesy of Lokes Brooksbank

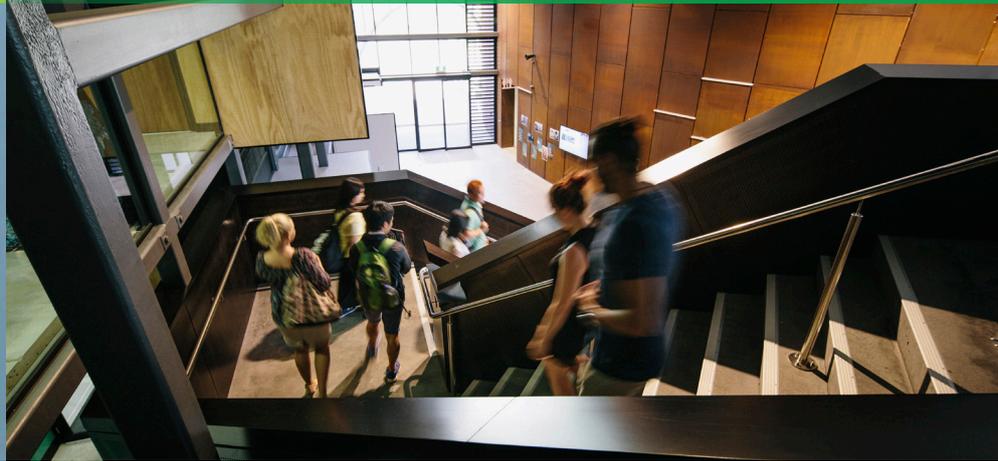


## PhD Introduction Kirstie Broadfield

Kirstie is a PhD student with JCU Social Science; supervised by Associate Professor Glenn Dawes, as well as Dr Mark David Chong and Professor Chris Cunneen. Her PhD investigates the extent to which unequal relations of power contribute to forms of violence experienced by Indigenous Australian people in the criminal justice system. The aim of the research is to include the previously silenced voices of Indigenous Australian people to gain their perceptions and understanding of their lived experiences of the criminal justice system. In order to think outside the box on Indigenous incarceration as suggested by Tom Calma in 2009, she is using the theory of necropolitics as a theoretical framework.

Kirstie started with a Bachelor of Town Planning, however, after completing two Indigenous Studies subjects, she found she was deeply troubled by both the historical and contemporary social injustices faced by Indigenous Australian people. Kirstie decided to switch to a Bachelor of Arts in Indigenous Studies, then did honours in Anthropology with an Indigenous Australian focus for which she was awarded the University Medal. During her honours year she came across the theory of necropolitics and found it very useful in the examination of the treatment of Indigenous peoples and minority groups by the criminal justice system across post-colonial countries. An essay written on this subject for her honours coursework 'created a fire in her that could not be put out' because she truly believes that the number of Indigenous deaths in custody and the growing levels of Indigenous incarceration are a humanitarian crisis that deserves far greater investigation, and more specifically action, than it is currently receiving.

She said this was the final push she needed to put forward her application to undertake a PhD. She is committed to seeing action, change and implementation of policy as a result of this research. She believes that Indigenous lives do matter and that this is not only a fight against unjust relations of power, but that



## PhD Introduction Kirstie Broadfield cont.

it is also a watershed moment for social justice in Australia. This project has national significance because it emphasises some of the current failures to address pervasive issues in Indigenous incarceration, such as over-representation, as well as enhancing an understanding of how violence across the criminal justice system can be addressed.

The project is mixed-method with quantitative data allowing her to interrogate the official government statistics and reports to provide a contextual setting for the Indigenous voices that are heard through semi-structured interviews and through the examination of coroner's reports. All interviewees are Indigenous Australian and former offenders that have experienced the journey through the criminal justice system, and all have battled with some form of alcohol or drug addiction. The majority of the interviews were conducted at the rehabilitation centre known as Shanty Creek in Mareeba, which is run by Lives Lived Well. Kirstie said, "The men and women who shared their stories with me, some of whom are close friends, and the people who have died in custody are the reason I keep going, even when I am having a hard day, I dig deep and think of the people who

want me to get their stories and their experiences out. It is a responsibility I take very seriously and one I want to do right."

The perceived outcomes of this project are that it will spotlight some of the current failures to address pervasive issues in Indigenous incarceration, as well as deaths in custody. Furthermore, it will enhance the understanding of how violence within the criminal justice can be curtailed because it is hoped that the research will contribute to changes in policy and practices across the three branches of the criminal justice system, as well as external agencies that work alongside the criminal justice system. Most importantly, it aims to demonstrate that in order to gain an accurate understanding of the complexity of Indigenous incarceration by non-Indigenous Australians, a deeper engagement with Indigenous Australians must occur, one that provides a platform to elevate the voices, lived-experiences and perspectives of Indigenous Australian people.

She hopes to do pre-completion in early 2021 with submission late 2021. Kirstie added that she is married and is a mother to an eleven year old boy with Asperger's Syndrome.





## Phone and Spear

Right in time for Open Access week, Phone & Spear by Miyarrka Media has gone digital. It is now available to everyone as on MIT's Knowledge Futures Group platform Pubpub.

The book stretches genres in both academic publishing & Yolngu visual art to create a collaged world of voice, story and images.

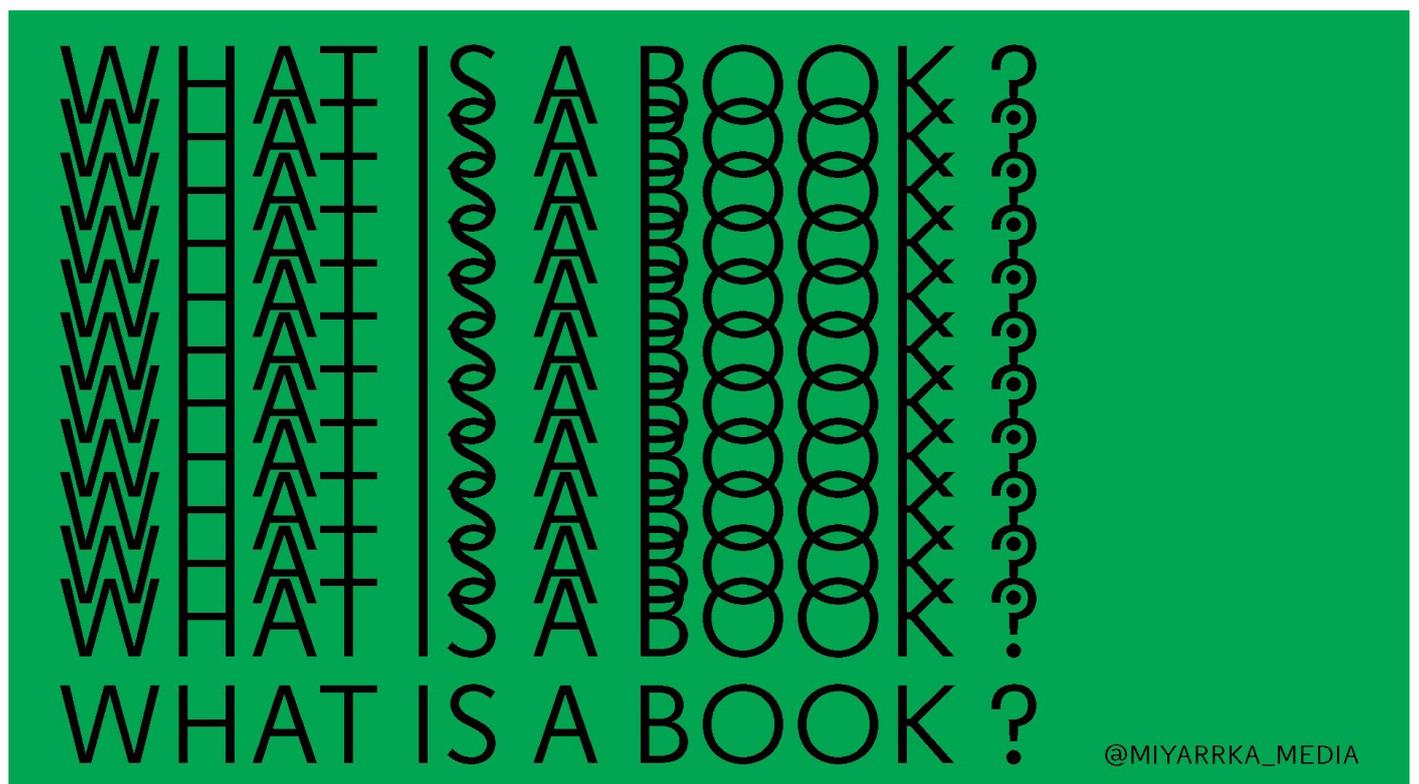
We hear that the book is already being taught in anthropology and media classes around the world. Congratulations to the entire Miyarrka Media team: Paul Gurrumuruwuy, Jennifer Deger, Enid Guronulmiwuy, Warren Balpatji, Meredith Balanydjarrk, James Ganambarr, Kayleen Djingadjingawuy.

Miyarrka Media's co-founder, Jennifer Deger, is Theme Leader, Creative Ecologies at The Cairns Institute.

Images courtesy of Jennifer Deger & Miyarrka Media



Miyarrka Media is an arts collective based in the Yolngu community of Gapuwiyak in northern Australia.



## What's happening in the Institute?

Details for these events can be found at: [www.cairnsinstitute.jcu.edu.au/upcoming-events/](http://www.cairnsinstitute.jcu.edu.au/upcoming-events/)

### Event

### Date & location

#### [Deep History of Sea Country](#)

CABAH/TARL Seminar | Jonathon Benjamin

30 October

The Cairns Institute

#### [Re-visualizing the Past, Imagining the Future:](#)

#### [Governance and Development in PNG](#)

HASS Research Focus Workshop | Rosita Henry & Vincent Backhaus

4-6 November

B1 & The Cairns Institute

#### [SESNA 2020](#)

Social Enterprise Network Tropics

6 November

Virtual summit

#### [Celebrating Indigenous Voice](#)

HASS Research Workshop

25-27 November

The Cairns Institute



Barbara Dover, *Decoy*, 2018, 35 x 35 x 25 cm, recycled squid hooks



## Celebrating Dr George Skeene cont.

