



## Guest Edited Edition

**Jennifer Rennie and Beryl Exley**

‘T’was a warm and dry winter in July 2014 when hundreds of English and Literacy educators gathered on the red soil of the Larrakeyah people in the city known as Darwin in the governance area of the Northern Territory to continue their conversations and learnings about their field of practice. The AATE/ALEA conference planning committee, led by Helen Chatto (ALEA NT State Director) and John Oakman (ETANT President), invited national and international keynote speakers to hold court about the conference theme of ‘aNTicipating new territories: building strong minds, places and futures’. Eight articles within this volume of the *Australian Journal of Language and Literacy* (AJLL) are written recounts of these keynote sessions delivered by Peter Freebody (University of Sydney), Kathryn Glasswell (California State University, USA), Jennifer Rennie (Monash University), Janet Scull (Monash University), Lisa Kervin (University of Wollongong), Beryl Exley (Queensland University of Technology), Jill Spector-Lewis (New Jersey City University, USA) and Robyn Ewing (University of Sydney). An additional article by Jeffrey Wilhelm (Boise State University, USA) is included, although his conference keynote was not delivered due to an unexpected and rather serious personal matter which precluded him from travelling to Darwin in July 2014.

It’s not always easy to take a live 60 minute presentation delivered in person using a raft of media to re-present, or as Janks, et al., (2014) would say ‘re-design’, as a two dimensional paper-based or electronic article for an audience of AJLL readers who may not have been present for the conversations that built over the period of a conference. However, these nine keynoters did not shy away from this not unsubstantial challenge. Each toiled away on the written re-presentation of their area of interest, sometimes expanding the writing team to include those involved in the research projects of which they speak and at other times narrowing the focus to prioritise internal coherency and research rigour. We are indebted to the nine keynote speakers and their co-authors Tim Allender (University of Sydney), Parlo Singh (Griffith University) and Stuart McNaughton (University of Auckland) for their commitment to this special edition. Further, on behalf of the authors, we are indebted to the numerous reviewers who offered very detailed and constructive feedback on the papers during the double blind review process.

These nine keynotes have added significance, as their topics provided fertile ground for a new task ALEA National Council had set for itself and the greater membership. As is customary, ALEA National Council conducts its mid-year meeting during the two days which precede the AATE/ALEA National Conference. It was at the July 2014 ALEA National Council meeting that then-President Robyn Ewing tabled the idea of a declaration about literacy practices and pedagogies in the 21st Century. Unanimous support was given for such a proposal, but the enormity of the task was not lost on the council members. Conversations and contestations with other session presenters and conference delegates over the three days of the Darwin conference cemented support for the document which would become known as ‘The ALEA Declaration’. Over the next fifteen months, outreach to ALEA elders, ALEA Local Council

teams and indeed individual and institutional ALEA members has given rise to the newly released ALEA Declaration. The hallmark of this declaration is, in our opinion, the notion that ‘meaning making is at the heart of all literate practices’ (see <http://www.alea.edu.au/aboutus/alea-declaration>). We see this notion of ‘meaning’ present itself time and again in the collection of articles which follow. Allender and Freebody (Article 1) document how teachers from within the disciplinary field of Senior History prioritise meaning-making practices in a disciplinary specific way. Glasswell, Singh and McNaughton (Article 2) examine the disparate forms of meaning inherent in co-inquiry pedagogies. Wilhelm (Article 3) challenges us to harness the potential of allowing young adolescent readers to prioritise meaning making via the selection of reading material. Rennie (Article 4) theorises reading pedagogies where students and teachers share in the meaning making act so as to advance the reading outcome. Scull (Article 5) discusses the importance of locating literacy instruction within a context which has meaning for the child learner. Kervin (Article 6) delves into the life worlds of young children and the meaning-making potential of digital media. Exley (Article 7) overviews the ‘new’ grammar of the *Australian Curriculum: English* that provides a shared language for talking about how meaning is made in children’s literature. Spector-Lewis (Article 8) argues that a focus on meaning making has the potential to realise a more engaged citizenship, an outcome that serves as a win-win for society and individuals alike. Finally, Ewing (Article 9) advocates for a creative approach rather than a traditional approach to pedagogies designed to enhance children’s meaning making practices.

We trust you enjoy this volume – we certainly enjoyed bringing this collection to you.

Jennifer Rennie & Beryl Exley  
Guest Editors

#### Reference

Janks, H., Dixon, K., Ferreira, A., Granville, S. & Newfield, D. (Eds.). (2014). *Doing critical literacy: Texts and activities for students and teachers*. New York: Routledge.