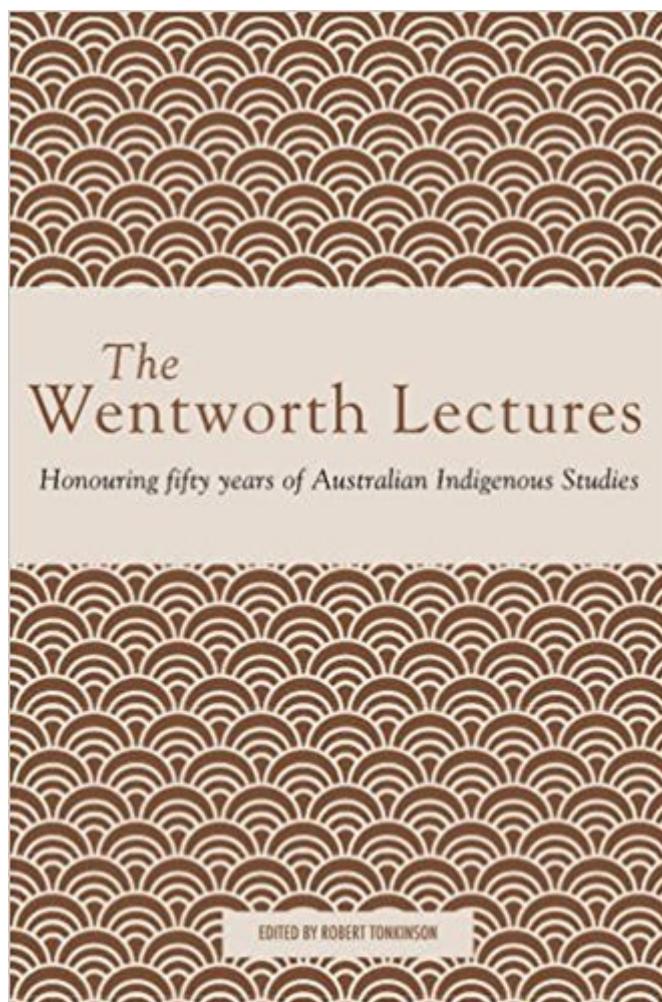


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The Wentworth Lectures: Honouring Fifty Years Of Australian Indigenous Studies



Synopsis

The Wentworth Lectures are a reflection of the changing values in Australia's society and the evolution of ethical research in Australia. They are a fitting symbol of Australia's maturing nationhood and respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as the first peoples of the land. As well as their resilience and journey to reclaim and preserve their identity, their histories, their cultural heritage and their stories. There have been eighteen Wentworth lecturers, all of whom have been given full rein as to the topic and content. A veritable who's who of Australian Indigenous studies, all deal to some extent with wider political, social and economic, and in some cases, religious, factors prevalent at the time of their writing. In effect the Institute's founding father, Bill Wentworth's vision has been acknowledged since by every Wentworth lecturer. His was a major contribution to what has become by far Australia's most important institution for the promotion of the cultures and achievements of Australia's Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islanders. In the early 1960s the common view was that something like a 'rescue mission' was needed; to make haste and 'get it all down' before it was 'too late'. People's overriding perception was of a continuing and accelerating loss of culture, and a general decline in the face of assimilatory pressures. However, in 1978, by the time of the inaugural Wentworth Lecture, delivered by eminent prehistorian, Dr Rhys Jones, the multidisciplinary field of Aboriginal Studies or Australian Indigenous Studies, was burgeoning, as it still does today. Mirroring that change, AIATSIS is now a world-renowned research, collecting and publishing organisation for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, traditions, languages and history. Taken together, they provide a wellspring of ideas and a trajectory of the evolution of Indigenous Studies from the leading Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander and non-Indigenous intellectuals in the field. They include: Dr Rhys Jones; Ms Margaret Valadian; Professor Ronald Berndt; Professor Les Hiatt; Professor John Mulvaney; Mr Ken Colbung; Professor Nic Peterson; Professor Marcia Langton; Professor Mick Dodson; Justice Robert French; Dr Raymattja Marika; Professor Pat Dodson; Professor Peter Sutton; Professor Martin Nakata; Professor Bob Tonkinson; Ms Terri Janke; The Hon. Michael Kirby; Dr Megan Davis.

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Editor Bob Tonkinson was Professor of Anthropology at the University of Western Australia before retirement in 2004. He has had a fifty-year association with Western Desert's Martu people.

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