



## Educating Melitta

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Of the many presentations which were delivered at the Australian Association for the Teaching of English (AATE) conference held in July, one particular address caught the attention of the mainstream media. The presentation, entitled ‘subject English: A provocation’, was given by Melitta Hogarth, former schoolteacher, ‘Kamilaroi woman’, and Assistant Dean (Indigenous) in Education at the University of Melbourne. The upshot of Dr Hogarth’s disquisition was that English, being the language of the colonisers, ought to be changed to something a little less oppressive such as ‘Language Arts’, or ‘Languages, Literacy and Communications.’

‘It wasn’t enough that First Nations peoples had been disposed of their lands,’ Dr Hogarth proposed to her listeners. ‘Their children stolen but also their languages were silenced, and it was dictated within the government-controlled missions that English should be spoken... And so, I am left asking – is subject English just another act of assimilation?’ The irony of Dr Hogarth giving her talk in English to an audience consisting largely of people who are in the business of teaching English, thereby participating in the very act of assimilation which she condemns, was presumably lost on both speaker and attendees.

This story was picked up by the likes of *news.com.au* because it understands that there is a great divide between ordinary Australians and the academics who sprout this kind of nonsense. It knows that the sheer nuttiness and the total impracticability of wanting to rename our national language to 'Language Arts' will outrage the average reader who will naturally want to know more. It is, as they say in the industry, pure clickbait.

There were, however, a few other gems hidden in the conference, such as the pearls of wisdom offered to the audience by Twitter personality Benjamin Law, who proposed in his plenary address that his main beef with Australia's history is that it's just too white and too heteronormative. 'Colonisation nearly erased over 65,000 years of First Nations history' he opined. 'Most of Australian history is still told through the perspective of powerful white, heterosexual and able-bodied men.' He asked, 'How and why should we encourage each other – especially young people – to expand our idea of what the Australian story is, and could be... and what might happen if we did?'

Not to be outdone, the Victorian Association for the Teaching of English (VATE) will soon ponder some similarly profound themes and pose equally searching questions in its conference next month. In his presentation 'Moving beyond reader response criticism in the classroom: Teaching critical theory', Zachary Shinkfield of Woodleigh School, goes one step further than Melitta Hogarth and wonders why English is even being taught at all, given that 'it seems to smack of colonialism.... An understanding of post-colonial theory would suggest as much'. Meanwhile, keynote speaker Kate Manne, who currently inhabits the department of philosophy at Cornell University, promises to 'depart from the premise that an illicit sense of moral entitlement to women's sexual, emotional, reproductive, and material labor underlies a great deal of misogyny.' I wonder what Australian parents would make of all this.

But back to the stars of AATE, Melitta Hogarth and Benjamin Law. Both were billed by the conference organisers as being 'fascinating guests'. They may or may not be fascinating people. I do not know, as I am not personally acquainted with either of them. But this much is certain; neither of them has contributed anything even remotely interesting, let alone fascinating, to the field of education. They are simply spouting the same old, predictable, pessimist, post-modernist rubbish which has reduced the once great edifice of the humanities to a pile of smoking embers.

Melitta Hogarth typifies the worst of both university academics and the teaching fraternity. She, along with her colleagues, are spreading the same wicked nonsense about Australia's history, and indoctrinating generations of Australians with a fatal combination of critical race theory, climate change, cultural relativism and diabolical Marxist collectivism. In a paper 'Addressing racism in Schools', she suggests that 'schools are a part of a system of colonial rule that is not easily overwritten'. And by Jove, she is doing her darndest to overwrite it.

So too are the people behind the radical new National Curriculum which the Australian Curriculum, Reporting and Assessment Authority (ACARA) is attempting to foist upon unsuspecting parents. A Freedom of Information request from the Institute of Public Affairs revealed that members of the Indigenous and Torres Strait Islander Advisory Group which was



called in to consult on all learning areas of the National Curriculum, are unified in their belief that Australia was founded on white supremacy and that the teaching of maths is systemically racist.

This explains the appearance of the following paragraph in the proposed Health and Physical Education syllabus; 'In Health and Physical Education, students can explore the important roles that identity and connection play in the health and wellbeing of the oldest continuous living cultures in the world....Students gain insights into the impact systemic racism and discrimination have had on First Nations Australian Peoples, and investigate strategies that promote truth-telling and build cultural awareness to develop empathy and respectful relationships'. The activists writing our radical new national curriculum believe that while children are playing on the monkey bars, they should be pondering how they are oppressing and discriminating against indigenous Australians.

What future do our children have with these cultural nihilists at the helm? Australian children are already woefully behind their international cohorts when it comes to literacy and numeracy, with standards plummeting by the minute, despite the millions of dollars being thrown at the problem by a supposedly conservative government. Among this motley crew of activists currently masquerading as educationalists and in control of shaping young minds, we hear an awful lot about 'empowering' students and giving them a 'voice'.

Yet, what they are doing is disempowering Australians and rendering them completely voiceless by depriving them of the vital skills they will need to navigate this increasingly difficult life of ours and its real, rather than its imaginary problems.

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