

Professor Lester-Irabinna Rigney AM, PhD to deliver 2024 Alice Rigney Oration

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What is Education For? publicness, equality, superdiverse learners.

The inaugural SASPA 2024 Alice Rigney Oration will be delivered by Professor Lester-Irabinna Rigney AM, B.Ed, M.Ed, PhD, FAAH, MAIATSIS, an Aboriginal citizen of the Narungga Nation, Yorke Peninsula South Australia. He is esteemed Professor of Education and Co-Chair of the Pedagogies for Justice Research group in the Centre for Research in Educational and Social Inclusion, based in the Education Futures, Academic Unit at the University of South Australia. He has a long and distinguished record of researching with public schools for systemic, policy and pedagogical reform toward equality, social justice and democratic inclusion. As a researcher of school leadership and epistemology he is best known for theory of Australian Culturally Responsive Pedagogies and Indigenist Epistemologies. He was inducted as Fellow of Australian Academy of Humanities in 2023. He is Distinguished Fellow at Deakin University and previous Distinguished Fellow at Kings College, London. In 2021 Professor Rigney was appointed member in the General Division (AM) for significant service to Indigenous Education and to social inclusion research. He is a member of the Centro Loris Malaguzzi Scientific Committee, for the Foundation Reggio Emilia Children. One of Australia's most respected Aboriginal educationalists, he is well published and has led several research teams funded by the Australian Research Council and other competitive grants including: Indigenist Research Epistemologies; Addressing the Gap between Policy and Implementation: Strategies for Improving Educational Outcomes of Indigenous Students; and Towards an Australian culturally responsive pedagogy.

The Oration honors influential Aboriginal leader the leader late Dr Alice Rigney. The SASPA Board is proud to host this special event each year and we look forward to welcoming you to the 2024 Oration.

2024 Dr Alice Rigney Oration.

Morphettville Event Centre

Thursday 22nd August 2024, commencing at 2.15pm



About the Oration

SASPA has established in 2024 the annual Dr Alice Rigney Oration series named in honour of the late Dr Alice (Alitya) Rigney AO PSM DUniv. The aim of the Oration is to build and promote and Public schooling that contributes to South Australian culture, economy and democracy, and improving the life outcomes of children and young people.

The late Alice (Alitya) Rigney AO PSM DUniv was Australia's first female Aboriginal school principal and one of University of South Australia's most distinguished graduates. She devoted her life to education, teaching more than 5000 Aboriginal students, and mentored and inspired many more. Born at Point Pearce on the Yorke Peninsula, Rigney was an Elder and matriarch of the Kurna and Narungga



Aboriginal Nations of South Australia. Rigney was among the first cohort of Aboriginal teachers to graduate from the UniSA's De Lissa Institute. She one of the first Aboriginal employees of the South Australian Education Department and the first female Aboriginal school principal in Australia. She established the first urban Aboriginal school in Australia, the Kurna Plains Primary School. Now there are 20 such schools in Australia modelled on Kurna Plains. Before her groundbreaking initiative, there were no urban Aboriginal schools in Australia that taught Aboriginal children in their own language and culture. Her outstanding leadership and contribution to Aboriginal education has been recognised through several national awards. The University of South Australia awarded her an Honorary Doctorate in 1998. She received a Public Service Medal in the 1991 Australia Day honors and a United Nations Association of Australia, South Australian Division award in 2013. Post-teaching, Rigney took on significant roles in the South Australia's Guardianship Board and Aboriginal Education, Training and Advisory Committee. She was Ambassador for the Commonwealth Department of Education, Science and Training's National Indigenous English Literacy and Numeracy Strategy. Throughout her life she continued her strong connection with SASPA, Education Department and Public Schooling. Alice Rigney passed away in May 2017. In June 2018 she was awarded an Order of Australia (Posthumous) for her outstanding contributions to education.