

# Annette Patterson (1948–2015)

Many of you will remember teacher, writer and academic Annette Patterson, who died in Sydney recently. Her death is a deeply felt personal loss to her many friends, colleagues and ex-students, and a professional loss to English Education and Teacher Training. Throughout her career, in varied roles, she worked in schools and universities, and on committees and boards, to improve the teaching of English and Literature and the training of teachers.

For some years Annette was based in Western Australia, where her contributions as a teacher, writer, administrator and mentor were highly valued. She arrived in Perth from Queensland in the early 1980s, and held appointments as an English teacher first at Mt Lawley Senior High School and later, at Methodist Ladies College. While at MLC, she completed a first-class Honours degree in Education at UWA on the reading habits of Year 11 students, winning an APA scholarship for fulltime PhD study at UWA. Her research challenged the conventional wisdom that there were no gender differences in readings constructed by adolescent boys and girls—a finding that helped initiate a wave of awareness and further work on the issues of gender and reading in English. She also wrote for Chalkface Press, a small, newly formed publishing company producing classroom resources for English and Literature. Her creative work was paralleled by often-provocative academic contributions to *Interpretations*, and by popular presentations at local ETAWA conferences.

Annette's appointment to Murdoch University provided her with the opportunity to shape the development of future teachers of English and Literature in Western Australia. One of the many gifts for which her students could be grateful, alongside her formidable knowledge of the field, was that she taught the value of critical thinking and encouraged the challenging of orthodoxies. Annette's intellectual rigour and honesty did not allow her to rest easily within a particular paradigm. She was a voracious reader of literature, literary theory, history, and educational theory and practice – and she subjected all positions, including her own, to critical scrutiny. Beyond her teaching responsibilities and research interests, she contributed on committees and in leadership roles within the university and in the English teaching community, providing help and encouragement to colleagues, students and friends.

Annette's move to James Cook University, and then to Queensland University of Technology, was a loss at the local level; but it opened the way for contributions on the national stage -- with the Australian Association for Research in Education (<http://www.aare.edu.au/>), whose journal, *Australian Educational Researcher*, she edited for some years, and in many other federal educational contexts.

Annette also worked in the USA, where her incisive intellect and breadth of knowledge made her a valued and admired colleague. She had continued to publish in Australia and the UK; now her work became known and highly regarded in America. In 2012, QUT recognised her contributions to Education with the title of Emeritus Professor, whilst the Faculty retained her expertise as an Adjunct Professor.

This brief catalogue of Annette's academic and professional achievements reflects only one side of Annette. It does not mention her personal influence on people's lives, her irreverent and sometimes caustic sense of humour, or her capacity to make people feel that they were special. Annette's friends and colleagues from across Australia and around the world have written praising her formidable intellect and her professional contributions, but all remember, too, her generosity and kindness, her sense of humour, and her sparkling wit.

The following are only a few of the memories friends and colleagues have recorded.

Hilary Janks (University of Witwatersrand): "I remember Annette for her sense of humour, her willingness to take on difficult ideas, to engage in robust discussion and for her creative energy. Her work was always at the cutting edge and although she worked with us in critical literacy, she also challenged us and pushed us to think about our work differently. In particular, her critique of critical literacy as a new reading regime made us all think differently about our work. For that sharpness of mind and intellectual honesty, I will always admire her. But Annette was more than an academic. Her family and her friends were important to her and she was always there for us. You had only to ask."

Ian Hunter (Griffiths University): "I shall always remember Annette as the loveliest and brightest of people, and feel privileged to have known her. We last spent time together during the course of my retirement event, and I found her to be as engaging and lovely as ever, and of course, as generous. I'll remember Annette as a serious person with a strong sense of responsibility about learning and teaching, but also as witty, ironic, and slightly mischievous. That was a cocktail that made her such wonderful company."

Judith Green (University of California, Santa Barbara): "I am ... greatly saddened by this news Annette was a wonderful colleague and person, who ... framed a way of taking academic action for children and teachers in ways that are a model for all of us. She will be missed, but her heritage and contributions are with us now and will be in the future."

Lesley Rex (University of Michigan): "You might take a look at the Chalkface Press series I worked on," Annette said. And like that everything irrevocably shifted –the ways I framed English Education and research into teaching and learning. Annette's informed matter-of-factness was her gift to me. ..In her presence, complex concepts appeared ordinary and difficult challenges seemed the obvious things to tackle. What a legacy.

Wayne Martino (University of Western Ontario), an ex-student of Annette's: "I don't know how I would have made it in the academic world without her. She was an amazing human being and scholar with so much integrity. I will always remember her."

Brian Moon (Edith Cowan University): "Annette Patterson's passing is a tragic loss for all who knew her. She was a kind and generous colleague and mentor, an intelligent and independent thinker and researcher, and a model of academic integrity. She was also funny and wise and refreshingly unpretentious. I will miss her wickedly sharp emails as much as her intellectual guidance. Her absence will long be felt."

Catherine Belsey, (Cardiff University, Wales; University of Derby UK): "What sad news. I'm so sorry to hear it: Annette is a serious loss. I loved Reading Stories and went on using it and its strategies for years. I think it made a real difference to my way of teaching. I feel a slightly proprietary interest in her career because...I examined her PhD... and had no hesitation in recommending that it be awarded.

Annette aroused professional and personal admiration and affection in many, many people. Teachers, students and colleagues will long continue to benefit from her contributions to Education. Her friends will remember her always: she has joined, as George Eliot wrote, the "choir invisible" and will live on in the minds and hearts of all who knew her and were "made better by her presence."

Bronwyn Mellor

Marnie O'Neill