

**Journalism Education Association Conference
Wollongong University, NSW, 2009, 1 December.**

**Student feedback on a one-month journalism
placement with Aboriginal communities
in Western Australia.**

Abstract

As a journalism educator, I am keen to promote engagement with the wider community. This talk discusses a new initiative between the Combined Universities Centre for Rural Health (CUCRH) and the journalism program at Edith Cowan University (ECU) that tries to promote engagement and better understanding of Aboriginal culture and communities in Western Australia. In July and October 2008, eight final-year journalism students at ECU were offered an opportunity by CUCRH to participate in a one-month journalism placement with aboriginal communities in various parts of Western Australia. After learning about their history, culture and traditions, the students were invited to write articles on health, indigenous and community news stories. At the end of the placement, the students were asked to prepare a brief written report on what they had learnt from the experience. The common response from a sample of replies revealed that the students had gained substantial knowledge and understanding of aboriginal people (and about themselves) and that this new awareness would influence future reporting on aboriginal issues. This is an achievement in itself since many journalists never meet or even talk with aboriginal people. The outcomes from this new placement initiative (which will be continued in January and July 2009) are linked to a number of learning theories such as authentic learning, engagement theory and learning by doing. However, the main thrust of this Talk is focused on student feedback and on what they thought they had learnt from the placement.

