Citation of Merit Award for Research
Peter Freebody
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“For me, however, the opportunity to work with these teachers reminded me again of the extraordinary and unpredictable diversity of the settings in which teachers must work, and of the doggedness, innovativeness and optimism that must, now more than ever, characterise the professional educator. These are heartening and important reminders as we contemplate the place of research in teaching and the place of teachers in research.” Freebody (2011)

Peter Freebody is a Professorial Research Fellow at the University of Sydney, based in the Faculty of Education and Social Work. He is a Fellow of the Academy of the Social Sciences in Australia. His research and teaching interests include literacy education, educational disadvantage, classroom interaction and research methodology. He has published widely in each of these areas and contributed numerous invited entries in international handbooks and encyclopedias on literacy, critical literacy, and research methodology, and is on the editorial boards of eleven Australian and international journals. Peter has served on many Australian state and national advisory groups in the area of literacy education and curriculum design. He was evaluator of the Australian national on-line curriculum initiative conducted by the Australian Curriculum Corporation, a co-founder of the Centre for Research in Pedagogy and Practice at the National Institute of Education, Singapore, and lead author of the framework paper for the Australian Curriculum: English. He is currently a member of the New South Wales State Ministerial Advisory Group for Literacy and Numeracy and is the Australian Commonwealth Government’s nominee on the National Literacy and Numeracy Expert Group.

Peter’s research and writing is at the cutting edge of literacy and literacy pedagogy, classroom interaction more broadly and research methodology. His work has been highly significant for educators in Australia and internationally. For example, with Professor Allan Luke he developed the “four resources reading” model which has been used in all Australian states, the UK, New York, New Zealand, Singapore and Ontario. The model has also been adapted for application to mathematics and foreign language curriculum. As lead author of the Framing Paper for the Australian Curriculum: English, Peter has led discussions on opportunities and challenges associated with each stage of development of the Curriculum around the country.

For many years, Peter has generously shared his knowledge, research and expertise with teachers. He has also provided advice to ALEA as a critical friend on many important literacy issues.

Peter has kept Australian teachers at the cutting edge of literacy development through close connections both through the ALEA network and work with the various state Departments of Education. Direct personal input has been hugely influential in Tasmania with frequent visits state-wide where he has personalised the learning for the context in Tasmania. His reputation for presenting current research and challenging teachers’ thinking has ensured teachers constantly return for his sessions. He has been a keynote speaker at state and national conference over many years. Peter helped to shape the national ALEA/AATE conference in 2009 when it was held in Hobart…. Peter has been a strong advocate for ALEA and the teaching profession with a preparedness to speak to the media.

Christine Topfer and Margaret Luckman (2012)

The ALEA reading comprehension action learning project is another illustration of Peter’s input and critical support for ALEA. The project, titled Reading Comprehension: Taking the learning deeper, was designed to give teachers an opportunity to undertake their own inquiries into teaching reading comprehension using design-based research (DBR). Peter introduced this relatively new collaborative research method to the participants, outlined the empirical and theoretical background for the study and supported the shaping of the research plans of the teachers.

It is therefore with great pleasure that ALEA recognises Peter Freebody’s outstanding contribution to literacy research with our prestigious Merit Award for Research.

Robyn Ewing
President