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Research grants explore Indigenous gambling and cultural change

Two Research Fellows from Charles Darwin University have been awarded research grants totaling more than \$300,000 through the prestigious Australian Research Council to investigate the impacts of gambling and cultural change on Indigenous communities.

Human Geographer, Dr Martin Young together with the Northern Territory Department of Treasury will lead a three-year \$87,444.00 research project into the impacts of commercial gambling on Indigenous communities in North Australia.

“The research will advance our understanding of the implications for Indigenous people of our enthusiastic embrace of gambling as a national institution,” Dr Young explained.

“While there is considerable evidence from around the country and overseas to allow good practices to be developed for the population generally, there is virtually nothing for Indigenous people living in the variety of settings that exist in the Northern Territory.

“Exploring the different ways different communities have come to terms with gambling will enable us to develop more culturally appropriate frameworks for assessing the social impacts of commercial gambling, and to develop appropriate policy response. The grant also opens up further research opportunities within the University by offering an Australian Postdoctoral fellowship for researchers with less than three years experience.”

Anthropologist, Dr Ute Eickelkamp, has been awarded a three-year \$222,000 postdoctoral scholarship to examine the relationship between Indigenous children’s play techniques and cultural transformation.

“Based in a remote Indigenous community in Australia’s Western Desert, this ethnographic project will explore how difficult cultural transformation of a society and its self-image is manifested in children’s symbolic play,” Dr Eickelkamp said.

“Indigenous children’s social imagination has not been investigated previously, and the proposed research within a framework of psychoanalytic anthropology and phenomenology will advance the understanding of how childhood and cultural transformation intersect. The findings of this study will support the development of positive strategies for Aboriginal equality.”

Dr Young and Dr Eickelkamp joined Charles Darwin University’s Institute of Advanced Studies in early 2004 as part of the core research team for the newly developed School for Social and Policy Research. The School’s Director, Associate Professor Tess Lea, applauds the two researchers.

“It is fantastic that their efforts have paid off. Receiving an ARC grant is like being nationally recognised for all their hard work,” Dr Lea remarked. “Both researchers have identified significant research gaps and suggested original programs of work to meet those gaps. They are brilliant colleagues and the School is proud to be associated with their scholarship.”

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