

Max Hart

Max Hart was born at Mount Gambier on the 27th May, 1916. His father APC Hart was a teacher and Methodist layman whose commitment to education and church influenced Max in the direction of his life. Max's childhood years were spent in Renmark and Birdwood. Completing his secondary schooling at Birdwood Area School, he studied at Adelaide Teachers College. He began attending Holy Trinity Anglican Church in Adelaide. Having taught in South Australian schools from 1937, he offered for mission work with the Church Missionary Society and was employed training teachers in Uganda from 1939 to 1942. In 1941, Marjorie Newland, whom he had met at Holy Trinity, joined him in Uganda where they married. Marjorie contracted polio and they returned to Australia where Max taught at Prince Alfred College from 1943 to 1952.

With their two sons, the Harts returned to Africa in 1953. Max was appointed principal of a teachers training college at Butere in Kenya and remained there until returning to Adelaide in 1961. He taught briefly at schools in Adelaide before undertaking research studies which resulted in the award of a Master of Education from the University of Adelaide for a thesis on the education of Aborigines in South Australia. Further research at Flinders University under a Van Leer Foundation grant led to the establishment of Family Education Centres, based on a New Zealand Maori model, for Aboriginal preschool children and family members at Ernabella Mission and Marree. Pitjantjatjara women employed in the centre at Ernabella appreciated his guidance and support that extended to very practical matters. If he saw the need for bookshelves, he brought up a hammer and saw, obtained some timber and made a set. He was appointed a Lecturer in Education at Western Teachers College in Adelaide. During this period of research and lecturing and through his interest in the Church Missionary Society, he visited remote Aboriginal missions and communities in the far northwest of South Australia and Arnhem Land in the Northern Territory. It was on these visits that he began purchasing Aboriginal art, including bark paintings from Arnhem Land.

Max Hart met teachers involved in Aboriginal education and students preparing to go to remote Aboriginal schools who shared with him their concerns that they had no cross-cultural preparation for their special role. Through his experience in Africa and his research in Australia he recognised the need to respect Aboriginal cultures and values and to encourage the use of vernacular languages in schooling, which he saw in practice at Ernabella Mission School. Responding to the requests from students for an introduction to Aboriginal cultural studies he sought approval to teach a unit at the college. While his initial approaches were rebuffed, he eventually gained approval and taught a subject, Aboriginal Studies, in 1968. This was the first Aboriginal Studies subject to be taught at an Australian tertiary education institution, with twelve second-year students enrolled. This was followed by other Aboriginal Studies subjects in following years to cover the areas of traditional culture, contact history and contemporary issues. Field trips and attendance at University of Adelaide Pitjantjatjara Language Summer Schools were included in these courses.

In 1973, the Western Teachers College was amalgamated into the newly established Torrens College of Advanced Education (TCAE). In 1974, Max Hart's book, *Kulila: on Aboriginal Education*, was published. In 1975, an Advanced Diploma in Aboriginal Education was introduced. Three full-time and one part-time staff members were teaching in the discipline. In 1976, the Aboriginal Studies department moved to the new TCAE site at Underdale. In the first few years the subjects were offered as part of

teaching awards and almost all of the students were non-Aboriginal. Max was conscious of his own limitations as a non-Aboriginal person teaching in this area. To partly rectify this, he invited Aboriginal people to speak to the students about their experiences. These speakers included Lowitja O'Donoghue, Nancy Brumby, Jim Stanley and Ruby Hammond. In response to an increasing demand from people, other than teacher trainees, who wished to undertake studies in the area and for a course which would encourage Aboriginal people to engage in tertiary education, an Associate Diploma in Aboriginal Studies was accredited and first taught in 1978. The course included a subject in Aboriginal Art. Occasional visits to remote communities enabled him to add to both a College and his own collection of Aboriginal art and artifacts. These symbolic works were valuable aids in teaching. The initial intake into the diploma course included two indigenous persons. One went on to study Law at Adelaide University while the other became a tutor and then a lecturer in the course.

Until then, there were very few indigenous teachers trained and employed in schools. Max Hart was keen to see Aboriginal people entering this path of training. In 1978 an Aboriginal Teacher Education Program (ATEP) was established to provide indigenous students with additional assistance as they undertook the normal teacher courses. The ATEP program attracted Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students from several regions of Australia. As Aboriginal Studies was offered externally as well as internally, students from all states and territories were enrolled as it provided them with the only opportunity to enroll in an Aboriginal Studies course in Australia. In 1979 the TCAE was absorbed into the new Adelaide College of the Arts and Education (ACAE). In 1981 the Aboriginal Studies and Teacher Education programs were joined as one organisational unit as the Aboriginal Studies and Teacher Education Centre (ASTEC). Throughout these years the Harts provided hospitality for many missionaries and indigenous people from Africa and from Aboriginal communities when they visited Adelaide.

A few years before retirement, Max was diagnosed with Parkinsons Disease but remained enthusiastic in fostering the development of the Centre. In his final year he oversaw the development of a Graduate Diploma in Aboriginal Studies course. He retired at the end of 1981. A farewell function coincided with the meeting in Adelaide of a National Aboriginal Education committee. Aboriginal educators attending this paid tribute to his pioneering work, some referring to Max as the 'father' of Aboriginal Studies in Australia.

The visionary work instituted by Max Hart continued to develop after his retirement in the South Australian College of Advanced Education (SACAE) which was formed in 1982. A Bachelor of Arts (Aboriginal Studies) was introduced in 1983, the Anangu Teacher Education Program, which provides teacher training for Aboriginal people in Pitjantjatjara and Yankunytjatjara communities, commenced in 1984 and a Master of Arts course was accredited in 1991.

In 1991, the SACAE became part of the newly created University of South Australia. A new building, the Kaurna Higher Education Centre was opened at the Underdale campus by the former Prime Minister, the Hon. Gough Whitlam. A large entry room was dedicated as the Max Hart Gallery in which several of the bark paintings he had collected were on permanent display. With the closure of the Underdale campus and the transfer of the Aboriginal Studies program to City West Campus, the building with the Max Hart Gallery was closed. Since then the art works have been in storage. This

exhibition provides the opportunity for the further display of a valuable collection of Aboriginal art and to honour the pioneering contribution of Max Hart to indigenous education and Aboriginal Studies in Australia.

Despite limitations imposed by his medical condition, in retirement Max Hart continued his interest and research in Aboriginal affairs. His continuing visits to Aboriginal communities and interviews with Aboriginal Christians led to the publication of two volumes, *A Story of Fire: Aboriginal Christianity* (1988), and *A Story of Fire Continued: Aboriginal Christianity* (1997). Max Hart died in Adelaide on the 3rd March, 2000.

Bill Edwards

Rev. Dr. W.H. (Bill) Edwards was Superintendent of Ernabella Mission 1958-72 and remained in the area as Minister of the Pitjantjatjara Parish 1973, 1976-80. He lectured in Aboriginal Studies in 1975 at the Torrens College of Advanced Education and from 1981 until retirement in 1994 at the SACAE and University of South Australia. He remains an Adjunct Senior Lecturer in the David Unaipon College of Indigenous Education and Research at the University. He was awarded a PhD in history by Flinders University in 2008 for a thesis on Moravian Aboriginal Missions in Australia.