

Jawun Research Centre

# SEMINAR SERIES

Communication, Health, and Social  
and Cultural Well-Being



## Seminar 45: Writing Across a Cultural Interface: A Guide for Non-Indigenous Writers

*This multidisciplinary seminar series aims to create a forum centered in Jawun. It is for researchers at CQUniversity, across Queensland and all over the world, as a forum to share their research findings and establish potential synergies, leading to joint grant applications, and partnerships that endeavour to advance knowledge in various disciplines.*

### Date and Time

**Wednesday, 5 June 2024**

3:00pm – 5:30pm QLD time

Light refreshments provided.

### Locations

Room **3.27**, CQUniversity Cairns Campus

Corner Abbott Street and Shields Street

Or via [Zoom](#) Passcode: 436372



### Speaker

**Dr Elizabeth Smyth**

Research Associate  
Roderick Centre for  
Australian Literature  
and Creative Writing  
James Cook University

### BIO

Elizabeth Smyth is a research associate at the JCU Roderick Centre for Australian Literature and Creative Writing, and book reviews editor for JASAL. She is published in Meanjin, JASAL, TEXT, Tropical Writers anthologies, and Georgic Literature and the Environment: Working Land, Reworking Genre. She was awarded a Medal for Excellence for a Research by Higher Degree Thesis for her PhD thesis titled Re-Imagining the Australian Farm Novel: Writing Magic Realism into the Georgic.

In 2023, she helped build the ARC-funded National Newspaper Fiction Database. Her most recent short fiction was published in Meanjin's Autumn issue 2024.

### Abstract

In recent years non-Indigenous writers have grappled with inclusion and representation of Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in creative works. Historically, and at times in contemporary fiction, writers have misrepresented, marginalised, or omitted Indigenous people as characters. Writers who craft regional and rural settings perhaps bear a greater onus than their metropolitan peers to characterise Indigenous people due to an expectation of a greater extent of unbroken Indigenous connections to Country beyond the dense infrastructure of cityscapes. With the rise of First Nations authorship and authority, non-Indigenous writers are often advised to either avoid writing Indigenous characters or to get to know traditional owners and refine their writing skills to achieve authenticity. In this seminar, I offer my experience as a non-Indigenous writer crafting a farm novel that situates Aboriginal characters at the centre of the farm and the narrative. My writing process required constant awareness of a cultural interface and an approach that I hoped would recognise yet not impinge on Indigenous knowledge, beliefs, and authorship. My experience led to the development of seven guidelines that may be useful to other writers.

**RSVP** to JRC Administration via email:

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