

Acknowledgment of AARE Honorary Life Membership

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I've been given four minutes to say a few words of acceptance, and I promise that nobody will need to play the get-off-the-stage music used at the Oscars when a winner goes on too long...

First, I must thank Martin for his kind and generous words in presenting this award. But the word that encapsulates my main purpose here is not 'thanks' but *acknowledgment*. Madeleine Grumet reminds us that, 'lodged in the middle [of the term acknowledgment] is the word 'knowledge'. An acknowledgment is an admission [that] none of us knows alone'.

So here I want to admit that any contributions that I have made to educational research and to AARE have been accomplished in collaboration with people who have supported, influenced and cared for me.

With respect to AARE, I acknowledge the support of all members of the Executive Committees with whom I worked between 2007 and 2009, and in particular Peter Jeffrey, whose confidence in me was sufficient to nominate me for President-elect in 2006. I was very pleased to present Peter's own award of Honorary Life Membership in 2008, although I must emphasise that his award was for his 30+ years of diligent service to ACER and AARE, and not just for his nomination of me!

In the twilight of my academic career, I must also acknowledge the support and care of my family: My partnership with Annette in both life and academia is well documented in our collaborative publications, but the influence of our children might be less obvious. In the acknowledgements section of my PhD thesis, I described our children, Kate and Simon, as providing resident 'reality checking' (the polite term for what Neil Postman calls 'crap detection'), given that each of them has a very different perspective on the world, which is now supplemented by that of Liam, our four-year old grandson.

Finally, I admit that I consulted QuickandDirtyTips.com on the subject of 'How to Make an Acceptance Speech', which recommends 'End with Gratitude or a Call to Action'. I will try to do both.

I am grateful that AARE granted me the privilege of being President in 2008. Our 2007 annual conference began on the day following the federal election that brought us 'Kevin 07' and I think it is fair to say that his decisive victory – coupled with some delight at seeing John Howard defeated and unseated – led many of us to approach 2008 with cautious optimism.

My optimism was short-lived, lasting only a month or two beyond the Rudd government's apology to indigenous Australians on 13 February 2008, for which I have unreserved respect. But on too many other matters that concern me deeply – especially in the areas of education, environment and the arts – the Rudd government's deeds fell increasingly short of the very reasonable expectations their words conjured. I sensed quite soon that some of my close colleagues were similarly underwhelmed. I recall that at an ARDEN meeting in March 2008, one outcome of a working group's deliberations on the determinants of possible futures for educational research asked: how long before Kevin Rudd becomes Tony Blair? Let us hope that we won't need to ask an even scarier question: how long before Malcolm Turnbull becomes Donald Trump? And what will that mean for education, research and AARE?