



**Kathryn Irving, Lee-Ann Monk, Ross Jones**

### **Legacies of Eugenics in Australia: a roundtable**

Since Francis Galton coined the term “eugenics” in 1883, its meaning has been far from stable. While eugenic rhetorica chieived broad international support in the twentieth century, its impacts on the ground were highly contingent on local factors. Although many scholars come at eugenics through its association with race and ethnicity, it is also central to histories of disability and labor, medicine and public health, genetics and the social sciences, gender, sexuality, and reproductive rights ...Eugenic logic is not confined to the past, but continues to shape debates about ideal personhood – from molecular genetics to public policy.

This roundtable brings together historians from diverse backgrounds to add complexity and richness to historical analysis of eugenics. Rather than suggesting that eugenics can be “anything to anyone,” we use intersectional approaches to argue that analysis of eugenics requires historical specificity. We reflect on our historical research, public engagement, and teaching work; we will also draw on the experiences and expertise of our audience.

Lee-Ann Monk explores the gap between policy and practice,w here child welfare and lunacy laws were used in 1920s Victoria to incarcerate so-called “feebleminded” citizens, despite the political failure of laws aimed at involuntary institutionalisation.

Ross Jones highlights the challenges of shifting language,tracing historical continuities between classical eugenics and cutting-edge medical science in post-war Melbourne.

Kate Irving reflects on the distinctions between nineteenth century institutionalisation and contemporary genomic testing fordisability.

The roundtable will demonstrate how using multiple lenses allow us to more accurately define and describe the various eugenics movements of the long twentieth century, and highlight the sometimes unexpected connections among eugenic advocates. Finally, we will consider the historian's role in contemporary debates about racial justice, reproductive choice, disability rights, and genetic technologies – these are the legacies of eugenics.