

## New WELL Resources

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The Workplace English Language and Literacy (WELL) Program provides funding for the development of nationally relevant language, literacy and numeracy resources. In 2010 The Learning Workshop completed two resources for the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander adult education sector.

### MOVING AHEAD

In 2008 The Learning Workshop was funded through the Workplace English Language and Literacy Program (Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations) to develop a resource to assist Community Development Employment Program (CDEP) participants, many living in remote communities, to transition into employment.



Research indicates a wide gap exists between the Language Literacy Numeracy levels of Indigenous and non-Indigenous people in Australia. This gap increases for Indigenous people living in remote and isolated communities. By the age of 15, more than one-third of Australia's Indigenous students lack adequate skills and LLN knowledge in reading literacy to meet real-life challenges and may well be disadvantaged in their lives beyond school.<sup>1</sup>

The development of Language Literacy, Numeracy is critical to the improvement of long term, meaningful employment outcomes for CDEP participants. Many Indigenous CDEP participants lack the underpinning literacy numeracy skills to take advantage of these opportunities or to succeed in a mainstream work environment.

CDEP participants living in remote communities often demonstrate;

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<sup>1</sup> De Bortoli, Lisa and Cresswell, John, "Australia's Indigenous Students in PISA 2000 : Results from an International Study" (2004). *Indigenous Education*. [http://research.acer.edu.au/indigenous\\_education/1](http://research.acer.edu.au/indigenous_education/1)

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- Little understanding of a mainstream work environment
  - Limited exposure to role models of employment
  - Limited secondary education experiences
  - Limited vocational qualification or work experience
  - Geographical isolation
  - Minimal or no computer skills.

Mainstream products associated with Training Packages, and qualifications at Certificate I and II often do not meet the specific literacy and numeracy learning needs of CDEP participants particularly those with limited knowledge of mainstream workplace culture including, how to:

- Communicate in a mainstream work environment. For example: direct instructions maybe misinterpreted as bossy or angry.
- Complete simple written workplace tasks.
- Request assistance. For example participants will often leave a work task undone rather than ask for help.
- Understand the significance of each workplace task such as understanding why message taking is important and the business implications of not recording and or passing on of information.
- Develop confidence to overcome feelings of 'shame' or inferiority related to LLN skills levels.
- Problems solve communication issues in a work environment.

WELL funded The Learning Workshop to develop a culturally appropriate and relevant literacy/numeracy learning resource designed to support Indigenous CDEP job seekers. The interactive resource, Moving Ahead is mapped to BSBCMM101A Apply Basic Communication Skills contained in BSB10107 Certificate I in Business in the BSB07 Business Services Training Package. The generic content of unit has application across a range of industries and occupations. Moving Ahead has customised the unit's content to reflect the experiences of Indigenous CDEP participants.

The aim of the resource is to, address the literacy skills required to communicate and operate effectively in a work environment, increase employability skills and promote successful transition into mainstream employment. The resource is an interactive CD containing video scenarios and related interactive activities. It introduces learners to real workplace situations, addresses some of the communication skills required in the workplace as well as relevant legislative and organisational requirements.

The video scenarios are based on situations experienced in training, the workplace and communities. The interactive activities following each scenario provide opportunity to practise skills. Voice over is used throughout the resource to assist learners navigate the activities and develop reading skills. The resource has application as a self paced learning resource, or group face to face learning situations.

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## THINKIN WRONG WAY THINKIN RIGHT WAY

In 2009 The Learning Workshop was funded through the Workplace English Language and Literacy Program (Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations) to develop a resource to assist teachers and trainers conduct effective, culturally appropriate English language, literacy and numeracy core skills assessments of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who live in regional and remote locations.



English language acquisition is the means for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to access mainstream choices and opportunities and to improve outcomes in education, health and governance. Vocational education is taught and assessed in Standard Australian English and a lack of vocational qualifications and skills is a significant barrier to accessing employment and raising standards of living for remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people come from a strong oral tradition, have no history of written literacy in their own culture and may have had very little exposure to mainstream education and often have little practice or need to use written English. Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander people may speak Standard Australian English as a fourth or fifth language. In Bottomley and Wyse (measuring NYA Learning Gains) identified that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people can be described as pre literate learners who “are from cultures with a strong oral culture and little or no formal education”<sup>2</sup>. Although they have a strong oral tradition they may not be able to read or write in any language.

As well as speaking one or more local languages, these Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people may use Aboriginal English or Torres Strait Islander Creole as their mainly language for communication. Often a remote community person will speak a range of languages and participate in language and code switching depending on who he or she is communicating with. They may speak Standard Australian English to a white service provider, speak their own language within their family and clan group, and Aboriginal English or Kriol with other community members. An Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander person who still uses their traditional language may “think in their own language” and need time to respond in English.

Communication and language in this context are situated in the social and kinship relationships and ties within the community. Often remote community people will have only communicated with the people they live with, all of whom they are connected to through some form of kinship tie.

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<sup>2</sup> Bottomley, Y and Wyse L, 2008, *Measuring NYA Learning Gains, LLLNP Innovative and research project, Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations*

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Adult literacy, numeracy and English as Second Language teachers need to collect information about the learning needs and skill levels of Indigenous community people so they can plan for their training. It's important to make this process comfortable for students, and to use the assessment process as the first important step in building a trusting learning relationship.

The resource uses the Australian Core Skills Framework. This resource includes activities for assessing learners who may not be able to demonstrate competence at level one on the ACSF. In this resource learners at this level will be described as at "pre level one". Learners at pre level one will have usually developed some limited but important skills in learning, oral, reading, writing and numeracy. Identifying these skills will provide core skills teachers with the information to accurately develop knowledge, skills and gaps, and to plan meaningful programs for their learners. Effective core skills' teaching relies on the identification of existing skills as the basis for developing future skills.

This resource provides information on some strategies to use when interviewing and assessing community peoples for their learning needs, and some of the cultural protocols, expectations and experiences they may encounter when working in remote communities.

Some of the reasoning behind the construction of the assessment tool assumes that:

- Instructions to complete tasks will move from explicit (complete this form by filling in all the sections) to abstract (create a budget for the NAIDOC event) as learners move from pre level one to level three.
- The assessment materials should move from the known and familiar (write a short sentence about your family) to the unknown (what difficulties or challenges are you likely to experience when working towards your training/career goals?) as the learner moves from pre level one to level three.
- That the concepts in the assessment tool will be concrete or real at Pre level one (money, clocks) to the abstract at level three (remote allowances, superannuation).
- Learners will require substantial support from the assessor to complete tasks at pre level one, but should be able to work more independently at level three.

The resource has:

- A sample literacy, language and numeracy assessment tool
- A cultural, and literacy, language and numeracy assessment induction handbook
- A DVD that tells the story of a teacher who travels to a remote community for the first time and the experiences of both the teacher and the student during the assessment process.