

Literacy Link

December 2001



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Celebrating 25 years of the Australian Council for Adult Literacy

This year marks 25 years since the Australian Council for Adult Literacy was established. Over this time we have experienced significant changes in government policies, in pedagogies, in new technologies and in our practices.

The Workplace English Language and Literacy (WELL) Program is also celebrating its longevity. 'It is a measure of WELL's success as a program that it has operated for nearly a decade... (it has) remained a best practice program. It has done this by staying abreast of changes in literacy practice and in the national training system.' (see *The WELL program—10 years old and still going strong* page 4)

In the September 1999 issue of *Literacy Link* a correspondent wrote in 'Soapbox' that the field of adult literacy is increasingly dominated by



Fred Peter (Far West Regional Council of Adult and Community Education) provided a splendid impromptu performance at the recent ACAL National Conference dinner in Surfers Paradise. Fred drove from Broken Hill to attend.

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middle aged females. Strong evidence of this is provided on page 2 of this issue in an article which provides excerpts from a recently published research report to DETYA called *Adult Literacy and Numeracy Practices 2001: a national snapshot*.

The fact that the profession is ageing is linked to a number of questions: is the growing casualisation of teaching generally making it difficult to attract people? and does the perceived lack of a secure career path mean new blood is not attracted to the field? An increasing section of the adult literacy client group these days is typically younger and male—are older female teachers facing an uphill battle here or does their gender and experience make them better suited to the task?

The final point raised by that September 1999 'Soapbox' correspondent grows more pressing: 'It would be nice to think that when we retire from the 'race' we could confidently pass the baton on to our replacements'. ACAL must maintain a strategic view of where the adult literacy and numeracy profession is headed to still exist 25 years from now.

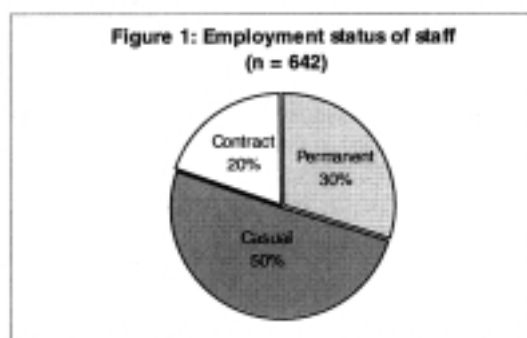
Our profession—a national snapshot

The following excerpts come from pages 17 to 25 of a recently published research report called *Adult Literacy and Numeracy Practices 2001: a national snapshot*. The report documents the findings of a study undertaken in 2001 by TAFE NSW - Access Division with funding from DETYA. The report provides a snapshot of national adult literacy and numeracy provision showing the range and diversity of current practice and provision and an analysis of current best practice.

This article reports on findings from some of the data provided by both managers and teachers on issues such as the number of adult literacy and numeracy teachers employed across Australia, conditions under which they are employed, their age, gender, and how they keep up to date in the field.

Thank you to DETYA and TAFE NSW – Access Division for their cooperation in reproducing sections from the research report for this article. The complete National Snapshot (139 pages) is available online at www.detya.gov.au/ty/litnet/resources.htm

The numbers and employment conditions of literacy and numeracy teachers have been affected by recent restructuring and downsizing by public providers with an attendant increase in casualisation of staff. Program managers were asked about the number and employment conditions of literacy and numeracy teachers in their centres. Teacher numbers represented by the survey responses totalled 642. Of this total, 50% are employed on a casual basis and 20% on a contract basis. The minority are permanent members of staff (30%). This is shown in Figure 1. below.



It is no surprise, given the casual nature of their employment, that 138 of the 642 teachers represented in the survey work for more than one centre, such as another literacy and numeracy provider or a university or in another area altogether. The casualisation of the workforce is mentioned later in the report under 'Issues and Challenges'.

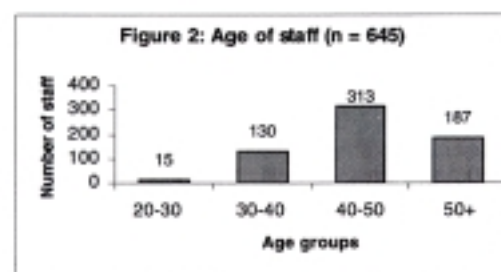
Gender

Of the 642 literacy and numeracy teachers cited in Question 1 of the survey, 85% are female. Historically more women than men have worked in the adult literacy and numeracy field, which has had a strong tradition of volunteerism (Searle 1997). The casual nature of employ-

ment also goes some way to explain the preponderance of women in the field. This preponderance is unlikely to change, given the uncertain nature of job prospects and the decreasing numbers of permanent positions. Such trends are also consistent with broader employment patterns.

Age of staff

What is also consistent with broader social patterns, is the ageing of the teaching workforce. Virtually half are in the 40-50 age bracket and 29% are in the over 50 bracket. At the younger end of the scale, 20% are in the 30-40 age group with only 2% of teachers under 30; shown in Figure 2 below.



This is reassuring if one believes that age brings wisdom and experience, but it is disturbing in terms of who will replace this ageing workforce. Where is the next generation of literacy and numeracy teachers coming from? At the same time, an increasing section of the client group is typically younger and male.

There is no evidence to suggest that older, female teachers may not necessarily be best suited to teach young males, but there is evidence to suggest that the 'right' sort of teacher is crucial (Brown & Mukherjee 2000). A number of respondents mentioned the ageing workforce as an issue for the future: ... *Workforce is ageing, can only offer casual work to new people, post-grad quals are expensive.*

Increasing casualisation of teaching

35% of managers put the increasing casualisation of teaching as their number three issue on the Extremely significant list, with 26% of teachers putting it seventh on their list.

Some providers employ only sessional teachers so this issue has little impact... However other providers are concerned at the high number of quality trainers leaving the industry... and the difficulty of attracting and retaining good staff because of poor industrial conditions... and lack of permanency... The lack of career paths for

staff also means that no new blood is coming into the field.... This ties in with the ageing of the workforce reported on earlier in the report. In rural areas permanent teachers are not being replaced by permanent employees but by casuals... There is increased pressure on fewer permanent teachers to do administrative jobs... The impact on learners can be significant if there is a lack of continuity of teachers.

Keeping up-to-date

Keeping up-to-date is another feature of best practice. Both groups of respondents listed informal networks, professional reading and conferences as the three most common ways of keeping abreast of current issues, resources and changes in the field. Managers put professional reading slightly ahead of informal networks, whereas for teachers it is the reverse.

There is a very slight variance between the two groups with the fourth and fifth most common strategy. Teachers rank formal organisational networks slightly ahead of the Adult Education Resource and Information Service (ARIS), whereas it is the reverse for managers. However the difference is negligible. The groups coincide again in their ranking of the final three factors - the Internet, professional associations and 'other'. This can be seen in Figure 6 which shows both managers' and teachers' responses, but has been ranked in order of importance from the teachers' responses, with informal networks coming first and 'other' coming last.

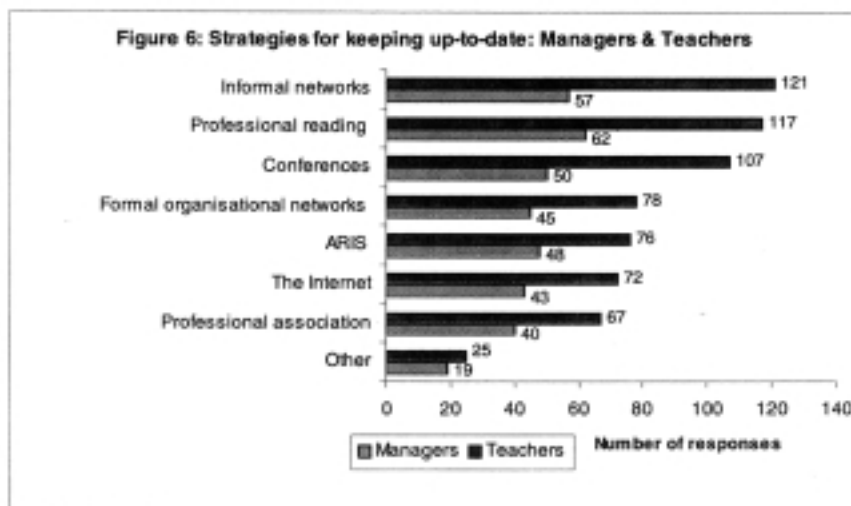
Informal networks are important ways of keeping up and sharing ideas and are used by teachers and managers alike, although lack of time was mentioned later in the survey as an issue that worked against networking.

Professional reading material is available in many staffrooms and includes publications like *Literacy Link*, the newsletter of the Australian Council for Adult Literacy (ACAL) which was mentioned by a number of respondents. As well, some state literacy council publications were mentioned. Also mentioned was material from the WA Catholic Education Office and Queensland Adult English Language Literacy and Numeracy (QAE LLN). There was no mention in the sample of more 'academic' journals such as *Literacy and Numeracy Studies*.

Formal organisational networks such as *Faculty meetings*, *NTETA newsletter*; *ACFE NMR - L&L network*; *Learning Partnerships Online*; *Institute based meetings* are more commonly accessed by permanent staff or program managers.

Conferences

Conferences, as mentioned previously, are important to respondents but funding is very much a factor in who, and how many people can attend. Cost and distance are very real factors particularly in rural and remote areas. Typically, those who attend conferences are required to report back to their colleagues so that the information is disseminated to as wide an audience as possible. Examples of conferences mentioned by respondents include: ACAL, South



Australian Council for Adult Literacy (SACAL), Victorian Adult Literacy and Basic Education Council (VALBEC), Australian Council of Further Education (ACFE), Language Education Research Network (LERN), ACE, regional conferences and the annual Access/ANTA conference. There was little mention of online conferences. ARIS plays an important information role for many respondents, particularly (but not only) those in Victoria and its newsletters are displayed in many staffrooms. Adult literacy and numeracy practitioners are encouraged to join professional associations and most of the state literacy councils were mentioned (QCAL; SACAL, NSW ALNC, VALBEC, NT Council for Adult Literacy). A number of other associations were also listed in the sample: *WA Catholic Principals*, *English Teachers Association*, *VATME*, *VATE*, *ALEA*; *SPELD*, *LD Association* and *Learning Links*.

The internet

One might expect, given the increasing dominance of technology, that the Internet would be a popular means of keeping up-to-date, and for some respondents of course it is; but not for all.

Some respondents use the Internet for: *sharing of good websites and other info*; *Learnscope*, *ANTA*, *always searching for relevant*

continued over

The WELL program—10 years old and still going strong

by Catherine Gyngell

In Australia the introduction of the Workplace English Language and Literacy (WELL) program has contributed significantly to the recognition of workplaces as important contexts for effective learning. The following article comes from a speech presented by Catherine Gyngell (Adult Literacy Section, Department of Education, Training and Youth Affairs) to the ACAL forum 'Literacy and Learning at Work' held 1 November at the Parkroyal Surfers Paradise, Queensland.

The WELL program was announced in 1991 in *Australia's Language, The Australian Language and Literacy Policy* in response to the increasing recognition that literacy skills training as well as ESL training were needed in Australian workplaces.

Funds from the English in the Workplace Program run by the then Department of Immigration, Local Government and Ethnic Affairs and the Workplace Literacy Program run by what was then DEET were combined to form the WELL program in 1992. The program was then jointly administered by the two departments until 1994, when DEET became solely responsible. The program has continued since, with roughly the same level of funding in real terms. In 2001-2002, \$12.068m is available.

I found the original guidelines are actually very interesting. The two components - ESL and literacy are dealt with separate allocations of funds (\$3.8m for ESL and \$2m for literacy).

From the beginning WELL was seen as contributing to increased productivity and improving workers' job security and career prospects as well as their access to training; their occupational health and safety and workplace communication.

The broader policy context for the program included:

- the industrial context—it was a time of workplace reform and award re-structuring—the

Training Guarantee was in place and employers were able to count their contributions to training under WELL as eligible expenditure;

- the education and training context—some of you may remember the training reform agenda, the introduction of competency based training etc;
- the social justice context; and
- the immigration context.

The program's objectives and underpinning principles are virtually unchanged today from those early years: the aim is still to provide workers with language and literacy skills to help them meet the demands of their current and future employment needs.

Even in those early years, while the training was not integrated, it was expected to complement other training programs and to have a vocational focus.

And the principles of WELL remain virtually unchanged:

- Training being conducted at the workplace,
- during normal working hours,
- by accredited trainers.
- Training being based on a thorough assessment of workers' needs;
- Employers contributing to the cost of the training and providing suitable accommodation etc;
- Worker participation to reflect the gender and ethnic balance of the group concerned.

A National Snapshot

(cont)

information; Access Gateway; looking for L/N resources especially 'Webquests' from the USA

Others find it too slow - frustrating.

Other ways of keeping up-to-date mentioned by respondents include:

tutor meetings to discuss issues, share resources and ideas; study groups; executive of SACAL, LL&N in VET consultative group;

liaison with DETYA and other LANT providers; QAELN newsletter and contact with DET; Verification Australia training; ACEnet cluster; moderation meetings - external twice a year; discussion in Learnscope teams of application of technology to literacy teaching esp. with regard to pedagogy.

This data provides valuable information for organisations who need to disseminate information as it is clear that professional newsletters, journals and conferences are the most effective ways of reaching adult literacy and numeracy teachers and managers.

These principles make WELL unique in that it has managed to remain flexible and able to operate so that each project can be designed to meet the specific needs of the workers at that particular workplace.

Change and development

It is a measure of WELL's success as a program that it has operated for nearly a decade and (it has) remained a best practice program. It has done this by staying abreast of changes in literacy practice and in the national training system.

One of the first changes to the program was combining the language and literacy elements of the training, which caused some consternation at first, particularly among the language teachers, but is now accepted practice.

The next big change for WELL was the integration of language and literacy training with workplace training and then, in the last year or so following the introduction of Training Packages, using these with their language and literacy competencies (either explicit or implicit) as the preferred training base for WELL.

Over the past few years much effort has gone into the integration of language, literacy and numeracy competencies in training packages. Both DETYA and ANTA have worked together to produce resources and other support materials to complement these training packages. A proportion of funds has been allocated to this strategic activity and also provided to industry training bodies to develop national communication plans for their industries.

Perhaps the biggest and most controversial change was the introduction in 1998 of compulsory reporting of language and literacy outcomes using the National Reporting System (NRS).

This was a complex and difficult innovation on many levels. For the Department a large part of the task was organising changes in the technol-

ogy to capture the data—how it would look, what we could do with it etc. But the real challenge was for the trainers. Many had no real understanding of the NRS, some were ideologically opposed to it, and most were unhappy at the increased reporting requirements.

But it was a necessary change if WELL was to survive in an environment where Commonwealth agencies were increasingly expected to show the outcomes achieved with taxpayers' money. With the integration of the training with vocational or workplace training there was also a need to demonstrate that literacy training was still occurring and that workers' literacy skills were improving. The NRS reports were the way to do this.

It is now three years since the NRS was first required and I am happy to report that 90 per cent of final reports now have useful NRS data. Our data base is now able to produce reports of NRS outcomes by level over time. These reports give us the ability to report on the WELL program's language, literacy and numeracy outcomes each year as part of the Department's budget statements and annual report to Parliament.

We are continuing to focus on improving the efficiency of the administration of Commonwealth programs, including through e-business approaches. At the moment we are working on making it possible for WELL applications and reports to be lodged via the internet.

In conclusion, my answer to the question 'Why is WELL such a successful program?' is because it has managed to be flexible and incorporate changes to align itself with the national training agenda and with literacy practice while at the same time continuing to adhere to its fundamental principles of meeting the needs of individual workers and employers.

Literacy Link (ISSN 0158-3026) is the newsletter of the Australian Council for Adult Literacy, a voluntary organisation set up in 1976 to support the development of adult literacy, numeracy and basic education in Australia.

ACAL promotes co-operation among interested organisations and individuals, both government and non-government, by undertaking and encouraging appropriate study, research and action.

Literacy Link is distributed free to ACAL members. Articles are available on-line on the ACAL Homepage: <http://www.acal.edu.au>
The email address is:
acal-discussion@edna.edu.au

Contributions to Literacy Link should be sent to email:
dicksond@labyrinth.net.au

Editorial Committee:

Jim Thompson (editor), Pat Hazell, Cinthia del Grosso, Liz Cooper, Tess

Were, Claire Gardner
Production by David Dickson

Correspondence for ACAL including membership should be addressed to:
PO Box 2283, Canberra ACT 2601
Ph: 03 9326 8369 Fx: 03 9326 8670
Email: acal@mira.net

Disclaimer

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Fighting fire with words—the Victorian Country Fire Authority's WELL program

This is the best thing that has ever happened to me.

That's the feedback from one of the firefighters taking part in the Victorian Country Fire Authority's (CFA) WELL program. The program, which is being conducted by Swinburne University of Technology TAFE, began in 2000 and is becoming an integral part of the training in the Yarra and Westernport Areas of CFA.

Workplace English Language and Literacy in Region 13 of the Country Fire Authority, Victoria.

The organisation

The Victorian Country Fire Authority (CFA) is responsible for providing fire and emergency services to rural, provincial and urban communities of Victoria. On average, CFA attends over 20,000 fire and emergency incidents annually, involving more than 30,000 turnouts by CFA Brigades.

Region 13 (Yarra Area) of CFA has responsibility for an area of over 3310 km² east of Melbourne, covering some of the most bushfire prone areas of the world.

Its people

CFA is one of the world's largest volunteer-based emergency services. It is made up of approximately 63,000 unpaid and 800 paid staff; 2750 of these people work in Region 13.

To provide the professional emergency response service expected of them, CFA firefighters need to have high levels of training. Since 1997, this training has become more formalised and firefighters throughout CFA are now expected to complete accredited training and formal assessments based on the Australasian Fire Authorities Council (AFAC) Fire Competencies.

Firefighters in CFA come from a wide range of backgrounds: a truck driver who left school at year 8 may be the officer leading a team that includes a shop assistant, a highly qualified mechanical engineer and a university English professor. They are all expected to undertake the same basic training and sit for the same assessments.

The need for literacy training

The Training Team at Region 13 recognised that the new need for accredited training, as well as providing increased opportunities for CFA personnel, also had the potential to cause difficulties for a number of firefighters. In particular, those people with literacy and numeracy difficulties may be 'put off' by the challenge of undertaking formal training and assessment and/or find it difficult to succeed in modules being delivered using large amounts of written material.

Mick Ryan, the Region 13 Manager of Training and Development, approached Swinburne, who were already working with CFA to provide training through their Emergency Service Training Initiative (ESTI), for their advice and assistance. Swinburne's Workplace Skills Access team, who deliver WELL programs in a wide range of industries, worked with Region 13 to prepare a successful submission for WELL funding for a pilot literacy program in 2000. A second submission for WELL funding in 2001 was also successful.

Some interesting points:

- the CFA is one of the world's largest volunteer-based emergency services
- firefighters need to complete accredited training to be able to 'go out on the trucks'
- literacy issues might affect their ability to complete this training
- this could lead to fewer firefighters able to respond
- increased confidence as a result of WELL training is being translated into increased confidence in approaching other brigade training

Participants

Four firefighters took part in the first WELL training group. They all had quite low levels of literacy, had a poor opinion of their own abilities and were seriously committed to improving themselves and maintaining their contact with CFA. All four attended 100% of the training sessions, and all four went on to take part in further WELL training provided in 2001.

In total, 19 firefighters took part in WELL training in 2000; 20 firefighters took part in the 2001 training (three took part in both training groups). Feedback from all those involved has been very positive.

ACAL forum—*Literacy and learning at work: achievements and challenges*

The ACAL forum *Literacy and learning at work: achievements and challenges* held 1 November at the Parkroyal in Surfers Paradise, Queensland focused on the increasing acknowledgement of the workplace as an appropriate setting for formal literacy learning.

An evaluation form was filled in by 49 participants—19 participants found the first panel session to be the most useful part of the day. This session was entitled *A decade of WELL(ness)* and focused on literacy and learning at work as realised through the Workplace English Language and Literacy (WELL) Program. The next most successful part of the day, nominated by 11 participants, was 'networking'.

The presentation *Fighting fire with words* (see opposite page) by Mike Ryan and Christine Hayes was very well received by those who elected to attend. It pointed to the tremendous potential volunteer organisations like the Country Fire Authority have for workplace literacy and learning. This is especially true in view of all governments recently avowed commitment to the important role volunteer organisations play in our community by building 'social capital'.

A benefit arising from forums such as this is the flagging of important issues that need to be dealt with by ACAL. There was energetic discussion in the workshop *Having your say about future directions in professional development for workplace literacy teachers* about minimum



International perspectives on workplace learning—panel at the recent ACAL forum Literacy and learning at work (left to right): Professor Glynda Hull, University of California, Berkeley; Ms Chris Holland, Lancaster University, UK, Dr Judy Hunter, Ryerson Polytechnic University, Toronto, Canada, Dr Adele Moodly, Eastern Cape Technikon, South Africa



The panel of session entitled A decade of WELL(ness) at the recent ACAL forum Literacy and learning at work (left to right): Ms Catherine Gynell, Adult Literacy Section, DETYA; Ms Debra Littlewood, Queensland Railway Training; Dr Geraldine Castleton, ACAL President; Ms Monica Mitchell, Consultant; Ms Cinthia del Grosso, National Industry Training Assistance Board Network

mandatory qualifications. ACAL is already lobbying for involvement in the review of the workplace assessor and trainer qualification to ensure that literacy and numeracy expertise is adequately addressed.

Program structure

The 2000 program had the following features:

- ten training sessions of three to four hours
- held on a mix of Sunday mornings and weekday evenings
- with breaks of a week or two every so often
- held at a venue chosen to be 'central' to the group members
- with technical content delivered by CFA instructors
- incorporated two one hour individual interviews/training sessions
- with 'take home' packages each week to aid application to the brigade context.

The 2001 program was similar, but took place on weekday evenings only.

Program content

The 2000 program was based on the AFAC

modules:

- 1.19 Communication Systems
- 1.24 Writing Skills for Work

The 2001 program was based on:

- 1.20 Computer Skills
- 1.24 Writing Skills for Work

Mick Ryan

Manager Training and Development

Yarra Area CFA

Email: m.ryan@cfa.vic.gov.au

Christine Hayes

Project Manager Workplace Skills Access

Swinburne University of Technology TAFE

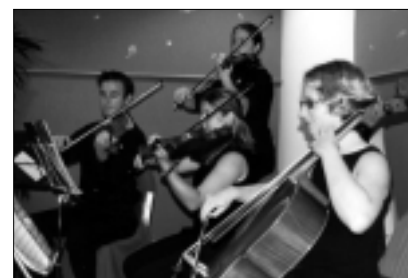
Email: chayes@swin.edu.au

Celebrating 25 years of ACAL

The gathering of literacy practitioners from all over Australia recently at the Gold Coast for the 2001 National Conference provided ACAL with an opportunity to celebrate its 25 years. Thanks to Jean Searle and Carol Bevan who provided the archive images below in a PowerPoint presentation "2001 A literacy Odyssey"



Cutting the cake to celebrate ACAL's 25 years were Pat Farmer, Daryl Evans and Rosa McKenna who have all contributed to adult literacy since the early days



Students from Bond University—entertainment at ACAL's 25th celebration



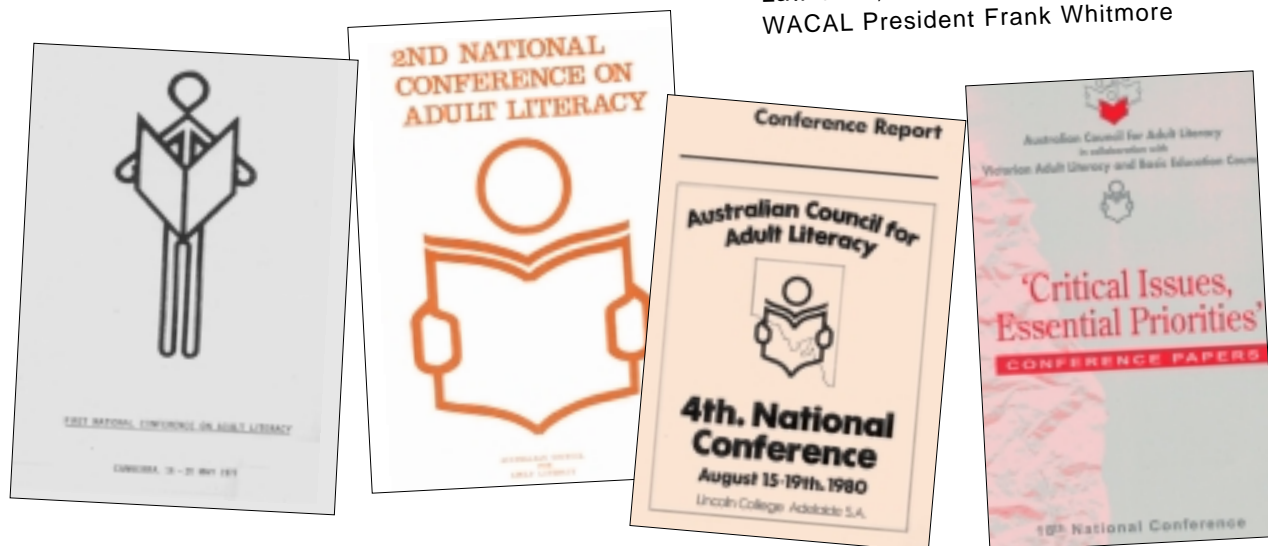
Arch Nelson, AM



Jenny Farmer & Heather Haughton



TAFE Director Peter Forrest speaking at the opening of the 11th National Literacy Conference. Seated left to right are Dr Carmen Lawrence, Noel Simpson and WACAL President Frank Whitmore





ena Morgan-Williams,
arolyn Ovens & Geraldine
astleton



nnette Carrigan, Margaret
agstaff & Carolyn
ildebrand



ca Mitchell, Jenny Farmer,
y Nicholls & Marian Norton



Joan Kirner, Ann Kelly and Daryl
Evans



Sandra Kessler & Rosie Wickert



Julia Zimmerman, Jean Searle,
Lindy Jones, Ann Kelly & Pat Cook



Senator Bob McMullen, Margaret
Whitlam A.O. Mrs Hazel Hawke—
launch preparations for ILY—1989



Back row: Neal Baudinette, Noel Simpson,
Sharon Coates, Doug Werrin. Middle row: Julia
Zimmerman, Roy Pugh, Linda Are, Heather
Haughton. Front Row: Aileen Treloar, Cherrie
Hawke, Rosie Wickert



Carol Hildebrand, Jenny Farmer
& Judy Mathison



I to r: Patricia Ward, Daryl Dymock, Rosie
Wickert, Linda Brodkey, Bobbie Hareveld, Peter
Holden, Len Cairns



ACAL Executive 1999 clockwise from left: Michael
Chalk, Christine O'Callaghan, Jennie Bickmore-
Brand, Jean Searle, Pat Beattie, Alex Tsakmakis,
Ann Kelly, Rosie Wickert, Suzanne Bozorth Baines,
Rosa McKenna, & Lynne Bray (standing in for Ruth
Trenerry)

An evaluation of the ANTA adult literacy innovative projects programme

In July 2000 the Adult Literacy Section within the Department of Education, Training and Youth Affairs invited proposals to conduct an evaluation of the Innovative Projects (1997-1999) component of the Australian National Training Authority (ANTA) Adult Literacy National Project. The purpose of the consultancy was to evaluate the effectiveness and efficiency of the Innovative Projects Programme conducted in 1997 (16 projects), 1998 (13 projects) and 1999 (14 projects) with the aim of determining if the projects were meeting a need in the adult literacy field and whether they were consistent with national objectives. Nexus Strategic Solutions, Subiaco WA won the contract from a field of 25 applicants. Below is a copy of the Executive Summary and Recommendations from the Final Project Report produced by Nexus.

We are reproducing this Summary now because we think that those people in the adult literacy field who were contacted by Nexus and asked to comment on the Innovative Projects Programme may be interested in the outcomes of the evaluation.

This is the Final Report from the Evaluation of the Australian National Training Authority (ANTA) Adult Literacy Innovative Projects Programme undertaken by Nexus Strategic Solutions between August 2000 and February 2001.

The Report outlines the key findings from the evaluation of past projects and the consultation with key stakeholders, then analyses these findings and makes recommendations for the future of the Programme. The attachments provide material for the use of the Department of Education, Training and Youth Affairs (DETYA) in implementing the Report recommendations.

The Report provides a summary of the issues raised in two previous reports: the Summary Report (November 2000) and the Progress Report (January 2001), both of which contain further details of the research methodology and findings.

Objective and Methodology

The objective of this study was to evaluate the effectiveness and efficiency of the Adult Literacy Innovative Projects Programme 1997-1999 and develop recommendations for improving the Programme.

A three stage methodology was used for this study. Firstly, all available material from the projects funded between 1997 and 1999 was reviewed and analysed using a series of matrices for the purposes of comparison.

The second stage of the study involved consultation with key stakeholders. Issues identified in the Project Brief and in the first stage of the study were formulated into a series of questions. These questions formed the basis of three different structured interview surveys for three different target groups.

The third stage of the study involved analysis of the findings and development of proposals for change to the Programme. These proposals were foreshadowed in the Progress Report and are elaborated upon in this Final Report.

Key Findings

The research demonstrated that this Programme had widespread support from key stakeholders in the literacy and vocational training fields. There is a general belief that the Programme helps to foster good practice in developing and implementing literacy and numeracy programs by providing funding for the exploration of new approaches and initiatives.

The evaluation of the materials available from the projects funded between 1997 and 1999 supports the view expressed by a number of stakeholders that the project outcomes have varied widely in their usefulness and quality. Some project outcomes are unlikely to be of continuing use in the field. However, a number of important and innovative projects have been undertaken through the Programme, and these have resulted in valuable resources and reports.

It is also evident that the major weakness of the Programme is the limited promotion and dissemination of both information about the Programme and the final products of the projects.

Conclusion

Whilst not a large amount of funding each year, this Programme is obviously of great importance in the literacy field, providing, as it does, the only opportunity for researchers and practitioners to explore new processes and develop new initiatives. Many of these new initiatives or processes have been used in other contexts and environments, thus acting to promote good practice in the field and increase the training

Driving change—redefining workplace literacy for truck drivers

by Cinthia del Grosso

TDT Australia is the National Industry Training Advisory Board for the Transport and Distribution Industry. The industry consists of the sectors of Road Transport, Warehousing, Rail, Stevedoring, Maritime and Aviation. The industry services almost all other industry sectors—if a product moves around Australia, internationally or is stored at any time, that process will fall under the work of the Transport and Distribution Industry.

Many of the workers have been in the industry for some time and were attracted to it by the fact that it did not require post secondary school qualifications. However, the changing face of the industry has required that workers understand and use new technologies, comply with a wide variety of regulations and policies and meet quality assurance procedures as part of their job functions.

In 2000, TDT Australia was granted funding by DETYA to develop and implement a national language, literacy and numeracy Strategy Plan for the industry. The Strategy Plan document *WELL Communicated* was developed by the end of the same year and implementation begun.

The Strategy Plan has 3 main objectives:

The first is 'to promote the inclusion of workplace communication as an integrated and essential element of training and skills development in the industry'.

The second objective is 'to develop partnerships with national and state industry bodies to monitor implementation in industry training and identify further initiatives'.

The third objective looks at 'the implementation of a communication strategy to keep the industry informed of strategies, projects and events in promoting workplace communication in training'. Addressing this objective has included the

Some 390,000 people are employed in the industry and truck driving is the single largest full time occupation for Australian males. The average age of workers in the industry is 45 and up to 40% (or 156,000) employees require support with literacy and numeracy at all AQF levels, to carry out their work competently.

preparation and dissemination of a bi-monthly newsletter fast faxed to the WELL Database of over 300 organisations.

Unpacking the Training Package for Communication Skills

Given that the nature of the Package determines that it be interpreted according to any given workplace, one cannot be prescriptive about what is read, written, listened to, spoken about or

continued over

community's ability to meet the literacy and numeracy needs of consumers.

Recommendations

Recommendation 1:

It is recommended that the ANTA Adult Literacy Innovative Projects Programme continues to be funded for another three years, with modifications as proposed in Recommendations 2-8.

Recommendation 2:

It is recommended that the Programme adopt a more rigorous approach to quality control of project outcomes.

Recommendation 3:

It is recommended that the Programme continues to fund around 10-15 projects each year.

Recommendation 4:

It is recommended that the Programme adopts a working definition of innovation and develops a number of categories under which projects can be

funded.

Recommendation 5:

It is recommended that the Programme guidelines be clarified in order to address the issues raised in this report, including issues of eligibility for funding and Programme selection criteria and processes.

Recommendation 6:

It is recommended that specific Programme goals be developed, based on the National Project goals.

Recommendation 7:

It is recommended that a Dissemination and Promotion Action Plan for the Programme is developed and implemented.

Recommendation 8:

It is recommended that consideration be given to improving the linkages between the Innovative Projects Programme and other national vocational and adult community education strategies and priorities.

TDT and WELL

(cont)

calculated. Rather, it is imperative that practitioners understand the process of unpacking and apply this process in the given workplace.

At the beginning of 2002, TDT Australia hope to publish a small document that provides guidance for this unpacking and gives templates for practitioners to work with.

Case Study 1. Pallet manufacturing and repair company

This case study involved three workplace trainers and 33 workers of the 65 workers who were all signed up as Existing Worker – New Apprentices working at a pallet manufacturing and repair company in Sydney. This company decided that by placing all of the workers on the one level playing field, they would better support the training of each worker in whichever manner necessary and were prepared to pay fee for service to do so.

In April of 2001, after an initial pre-training assessment, workplace trainers and management decided that there was a definite need to upskill 33 of their multicultural workers in literacy and numeracy skills as part of their New Apprenticeship training.

Most of these workers did not speak, read or write in English very well and the company is committed to training and wanted to ensure that they met all of their responsibilities in relation to OH&S and to Quality Assurance. The company paid their workers for two hours of literacy training per week which took place either before or after their shift work, in the training room, away from the noisy workshop environment.

The company used a set of criteria for selecting a literacy provider developed by TDT Australia to choose one of three literacy providers invited to do a presentation. The provider selected was open to negotiating with the workplace trainers, both on the times for delivery and on the training objectives. The literacy provider carried out a literacy needs analysis of each worker and together with workplace trainers decided on the following objectives:

1. To provide participants with a variety of learning activities which will develop literacy skills relevant to the company such as:

- Understanding the language of pallet repair
- Completing workplace forms such as leave forms, forklift checklist
- Reading instructions for equipment such as

- nail guns, pallet repair standards
- Reading safety signs

2. To provide participants with the opportunity to develop and practice oral communication skills and strategies needed for dealing with common workplace situations such as:

- Checking and clarifying information
- Explaining workplace procedures and requirements

Since beginning the project at TDT Australia it has become evident that many practitioners are unaware of how to 'unpack the training package' to identify the language, literacy and numeracy skills embedded in the units of competency.

- Reporting a work problem to their supervisor
- Explaining a safety breach

3. To develop the participants' skills for taking part in team meetings including:

- Expressing a point of view
- Agreeing and disagreeing appropriately

4. To ensure that participants have basic calculation skills required for the workplace.

Meeting these course objectives provided participants with the communication skills required for Pallet Repair Competency Profile in:

TDT E3 97A – Participate in Workplace Communication

TDT F1 97A – Follow Occupational Health and Safety Procedures

TDT E5 97A – Carry out workplace calculations

Over the last seven months, all but four participants completed the course. (Four left due to family commitments) Just last week they received their certificates and still highly motivated, requested if they could continue to have literacy training.

The workplace trainer has observed an increase in confidence among the workers in communicating on the job and has noted that some of the Chinese workers who would never speak with the trainer, now approach him comfortably and confidently.

Just recently, the workplace trainer gave a group of workers some information regarding the pallets and then requested that one bilingual worker, who often translated for the others, translate some information for the others.

The worker responded "there's no need – we

understand you"

For the workplace trainers, the project has increased their awareness and assessment of the terminology that they previously used – "workers had been told over and over to be careful of protruding nails in the timber – it was the literacy trainer who informed me that the workers didn't know what 'protruding' meant ". This raised an awareness among the workplace trainers of the importance of choosing words carefully when giving instructions.

At present it is difficult to get any quantitative data regarding the effect of literacy training—'they were doing their job anyway'. Although it is not possible to measure safe work practices, worker morale or contribution in consultative forums, management and workplace trainers agree that there has been a definite improvement in all of these. The most obvious improvements are seen in the motivation and confidence of workers as they participate in the workplace and carry out their work competently.

Case Study 2. Taxi Industry Literacy Project

The Taxi Industry WELL Project has assisted with the early stages of identification of the underpinning standards of literacy and numeracy required by the industry.

This has provided the industry with performance standards that can be used for new as well as existing drivers to identify issues with communication.

A primary outcome of the project has been the implementation of literacy and numeracy training for existing drivers in the industry.

Underpinning this has been:

- a refinement of processes for the identification and referral of existing drivers with communication problems,
- an understanding of the specific literacy and numeracy training requirements of the taxi industry, the development of an industry specific literacy and numeracy training course and
- growth of formal and informal relationships between TAFE and key industry stakeholders in the project.

There have been barriers to implementation and these came in two main forms—the drivers needing the most help—where the barriers were of a cultural nature (we don't need training!),

and the Registered Training Organisations fearing competition and/or incompetence themselves.

However, the Taxi Council has persevered and while a little slow, has made good progress.

Measuring Success

TDT Australia has been in the process of implementing the National Strategy Plan for almost eighteen months now. So one must ask, is it making a difference?

Systemic change does take time and it is only now that we are beginning to really see the results that the strategy is having upon enterprises that are putting training programs into place.

Employers are becoming selective about who they select to deliver the training and this includes language, literacy and numeracy training. They are evaluating and developing Plain English Policies with regard to enterprise paper-

work, they are accessing funding to develop support resources appropriate to the needs of their workforce, they are paying fee for service for literacy support and they contact the ITAB with a variety of questions regarding how best to support their workforce with appropriate language, literacy and numeracy training.

The following extract is from an email sent to me by the CEO of the Taxi Council:

One noteworthy outcome: a taxi driver (67 years of age) with English as his first language, had suffered with literacy barriers all his life (this was hidden from his taxi company employer and industry) and this held him back from achieving.

He now has a Certificate IV in Workplace Training (something he has always wanted to do) and takes some of the Swan Taxis Driver Training.

Literacy empowers, educates, emancipates and motivates the individual to 'make a difference' to his life and to his world. Improving literacy in the workplace context is, therefore, just as important to social justice as other types of literacy programs.

*Cynthia Del Grosso
National Project Manager (WELL)
TDT Australia Ltd*



The 2001 national literacy conference

The Queensland Council for Adult Literacy and ACAL hosted the 24th Annual National Conference on the Gold Coast in Queensland 1 - 3 November. The conference marked 25 years since the Australian Council for Adult Literacy was established.

After a year of planning by a subcommittee of QCAL, the conference proved to be very successful. The theme for the conference was a 'literacy odyssey'. This reminded us of the journey literacy has been travelling over the last quarter of a century and echoed Stanley Kubrick's 1970's cinema classic, *2001 A Space Odyssey*.

There was a very good response by people to present sessions at the conference and all those who nominated abstracts were featured on the program thus we were able to utilise six rooms at the excellent Parkroyal venue.

It was decided to loosely strand the topics of the presentations. Thus, those of you who attended would have noted that there were common themes that seemed to be running through sessions held in particular rooms. Some of these strands were more obvious than others, for example, the 'numeracy' strand.

We were also very pleased with the quality of the keynote speakers. Glynda Hull from Berkeley University in California is well known for her empirical studies in the field of adult literacy and in particular workplace literacy. Her

paper brought together recent work on new technologies, with concerns about a growing 'digital divide'.

Underpinning Glynda's well received presentation was a project to provide low-income communities in the San Francisco Bay Area with access to innovative job training in information technologies and within that project to highlight the role of multi-media composing as a new literacy and as a means of fashioning new working identities for the participants.

Glynda showed a number of her students' 'digital narratives'—these were similar to PowerPoint slide shows but they incorporated still photos, cartoon characters, magazine clippings and so forth, together with voice over and music effects. They were made by the students themselves. Later some of those attending the conference said they 'felt inspired' by Glynda's presentation. Moreover, as Daryl Evans pointed out in his workshop later that day, it is likely that the only pedagogically successful materials development that goes on in education is that which is undertaken by the students themselves.

The second keynote speaker, Betty Johnson, has been a tireless advocate for the equal positioning of adult numeracy within the field as well as a respected researcher in this area. It seemed fitting that she would present the annual Arch Nelson Address, this year focusing on the topic of numeracy. Betty traced some of



the links and stories behind the emergence of numeracy education over the last twenty years, especially in the context of teasing out what learning numeracy as a tool for social justice might mean.

The final keynote speaker at the conference was Bob Lingard from the University of Queensland. Bob shared with us his knowledge of globalisation and its implications for education and training. He spoke of documenting and understanding changes affecting educational systems in the context of globalisation which he said is most often read simply as neoliberalism. The changes include pressures upon the nation state and raise questions about educational institutions and the 'imagined community' of the nation. The changes also involve the new educational policy consensus of a new managerialism, the human capital approach to education and the related rise of a culture of performativity.

Issues traversed by Bob included definitions of social justice in the current policy context, and consideration being given to appropriate educational policies and pedagogical practices beyond

hollowed out postmodernist ones. The 200-odd literacy practitioners who had listened applauded enthusiastically at the conclusion of Bob's high altitude view of the big picture.

ACAL would like to thank Ann Kelly in particular for her splendid efforts as the conference convenor, and Jean Searle, Jenny Farmer, Robyn Bellen and Robyn Nutt for the support they provided as well as the practical work that they contributed to the organisation of the conference. Thank you, too, to the supporters of this event: the Enterprise and Career Education Foundation, the Australian National Training Authority and the Reading Writing Hotline, and also the ParkRoyal Hotel for assisting in ensuring the success of the conference. Finally, ACAL would like to thank the presenters and the participants at the conference.



literacy contact lists



AUSTRALIAN COUNCIL FOR ADULT LITERACY

President: Geraldine Castleton
Griffith University Centre of
Literacy and Language Education
Research Nathan QLD 4111
Ph: 07 3875 5925
g.castleton@mailbox.gu.edu.au

Vice Pres: Judy Harwood
Enterprise and Career Education
Foundation
level 9, 76-80 Clarence St
Sydney NSW 2000
Ph: 02 9299 5899
jharwood@ecf.com.au

Immediate Past Pres: Rosa McKenna
65 James St, Northcote VIC 3070
Ph: 03 9326 8369
Ph: (a.h) 03 9481 5319
mckoz@bigpond.com

Secretary: Erica Daymond
Canning College Macquarie St,
Bentley WA 6102
Ph: 08 9458 9644
edaymond@canningcollege.wa.edu.au

Treas: Suzanne Bozorth Baines
PO Box 137, Belmont VIC 3216
Ph: 03 5229 0663
kesnsuz@pipeline.com.au

VIC Rep: Philippa McLean
CAE, 256 Flinders Street
Melbourne VIC 3000
Ph: 03 9652 0719 Fx: 03 9650 3741
philippa@cae.edu.au

NSW Rep: Pat Hazell
Petersham TAFE
27 Crystal St, Petersham 2049
Ph: (02) 9335 2345
Pat.Hazell@det.nsw.edu.au

ACT Rep: Christine O'Callaghan
16 Brunswick St, Kaleen ACT 2617
Ph: 02 6207 4054
christine.o'callaghan@cit.act.edu.au

TAS Rep: Liz Cooper
Adult Literacy TAFE
GPO Box 1477 Hobart TAS 7001
Ph: 03 6233 6676
Elizabeth.Cooper@tafe.tas.edu.au

NT Rep: Rae Flanagan
NTU, Casuarina NT 0810
Ph: 08 8946 6571
rae.flanagan@ntu.edu.au

QLD Rep: Helen Foley
Ph: 07 3390 4941
Helen.Foley@detir.qld.gov.au

WA Rep: Jim Thompson
Challenger TAFE
15 Grosvenor Street
Beaconsfield WA 6160
Ph: 08 9239 8271
thompj@fremantle.training.wa.gov.au

SA Rep: Tess Were
Literacy and Numeracy Professional
Development
120 Currie St. Adelaide SA 5001
Ph: 08 8207 8266
tesswere@tafe.sa.edu.au

ACAL Executive Support:
Alex Tsakmakis
PO Box 2283, Canberra ACT 2601
Ph: 03 9326 8369 Fx: 03 9326 8670
Mob: 0411 283 163
acal@mira.net

ACAL Co-opted Member:
Cynthia del Grosso
Level 1, 351 William Street
West Melbourne VIC 3003
Ph: 03 9320 4242
cynthia@tdtaust.com.au

ACAL Co-opted Member:
Robyn Jay
NSW Adult and Community
Education
Ph: 02 6628 7499

robynjay@iprimus.com.au

State affiliated councils
ACTCAL PO Box 778 Jamison
ACT 2614
Pam.bossard@cit.act.edu.au

NSWALNC
c/o Leslie Stein
leslie.stein@uts.edu.au

NTCAL
Ph 08 89 4666
rflanagan@ntu.edu.au

QCAL
PO Box 301 Red Hill Qld 4059
Ph: 07 3369 8422
www.slq.qld.gov.au/cwpp/qcal/

SACAL
PO Box 610, Magill SA 5072
Chrisl@status.net.au
ph: 0417 890 774

TCAL
GPO Box 1477 Hobart Tas. 7001

VALBEC
PO Box 861, Springvale Sth VIC 3172
Ph: 03 9546 6892
Valbec@vicnet.net.au

WAALC
19 Brittain St Como WA 6152
grimsh@midland.training.wa.gov.au

Meet the 2002 ACAL Executive



Back row left to right—Tess Were, Pat Hazell, Christine O'Callaghan, Jean Searle, Liz Cooper, Jim Thompson, Rae Flanagan, Philippa McLean, Alex Tsakmakis (Exec. Support) Front row left to right—Cynthia del Grosso, Erica Daymond, Suzanne Bozorth Baines, Geraldine Castleton, Rosa McKenna, Judy Harwood, Robyn Jaye