



Indigenous ways of knowing, learning and doing

The ACAL Forum 'Indigenous ways of knowing, learning and doing' held in Alice Springs, 18 September 2003 was attended by over 120 people, and began with an official welcome to the country by one of the traditional owners, Pat Ansel Dods. The day was full of surprise learnings for literacy practitioners lucky enough to attend; this could be attributed to the excellent choice of presenters, many of whom were Indigenous.

In the first session of the day George Pascoe, Tom Ober and Ochre Doyle, from the Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Training and Education told 'stories of learning journeys'. These stories were drawn from their personal experiences and outlined the obstacles they faced as Indigenous students.

George Pascoe told about his decision to go to Batchelor College in Darwin where he studied to become an early childhood teacher. George is from Milingimbi, an island off the coast of Arnhem land with a population of 900 people and ten different language groups (ten!). In his conclusion he told a moving and revealing story



The Ntaria Ladies Choir with conductor David Roennfeldt at the ACAL Conference in Alice Springs. The sheets held by the ladies are the song lyrics of one of the vernacular languages they sang in that afternoon. (see article page 9)

about a yam given to him by an elder when he was going off to Darwin (see article page 9).

Tom Ober, from far north Queensland, told of speaking a range of languages to different family groups and members depending on cultural protocols. He spoke of the cultural shock and emotional anguish arising from the imposition of English teaching upon Cape York communities. (His own parents sent him home after he completed year 12 to re-connect with his language and to save him from losing his identity.)

Tom began learning English at school in Townsville aged 11. He spoke of the shock of going to school with no English skills, and says—

"I learnt English in the playground by watching the other kids and copying them."

Hearing that the formal instruction by teachers in the classroom was less effective than informal learning of the playground was not the only surprise learning arising from the forum.

Ochre Doyle spoke of 'wanting to learn to write *black* words on *white* paper.' She spoke of her assimilation at birth and of the monolingual

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tradition of white middle class families in Australia. Ochre had to teach herself Kriol English to build a connection with her birth family, and said how important is the need to HEAR the sounds of the language to understand Aboriginal languages. From her experience she suggested teachers need to learn to 'give their own learning and not their judgements and attitudes'.

Michael Christie and Waymamba Gaykamangu (Faculty of Indigenous Research and Education, Northern Territory University) spoke of the many different Aboriginal languages in the north eastern Arnhem land region (see article on page 11). They pointed out the complexities of the different world view of Indigenous people which involves their unique relationship to the environment via many languages and kinship systems..

Language and place are connected—rights to land entitle some individuals the right to speak a certain language. The audience was told of the protocols for speaking to people depending on their relationship to you. For example—

"You might speak to your mother and mother's family in a different language and register to that of your father and his family."

Waymamba Gaykamangu spoke of how she is working to explain her cultural understandings in European terms so white Australians can understand them. She said her explanations were very difficult.

Michael Christie spoke of bilingual education programs and the problems surrounding them. In communities where many languages are spoken one language must be chosen as the language of instruction. This served some groups well but marginalised those not of this language group. There are cases of a school with a bilingual program adopting a particular Aboriginal language to teach in, and some

parents removing their children since the chosen language of instruction may not be culturally appropriate for their children.

Relocation of communities and people has also served to disrupt the languages spoken and has a serious implication for educators who are trying to work with bilingual programs. There was a great deal of discussion about the complexities of bilingual teaching programs and how truly integrated language programs in schools may demand that the teachers (whether Indigenous or European) are fully versed not only in the local languages (there is usually more than one), but also the social and cultural contexts in which they are used and the English systems as well. This is a big ask but essential if further cultural dominance by one group over another is not perpetuated.

Neville Field (Alice Springs Correction Centre) spoke on the program offered in the prison system and offered the following statistics by way of introduction:

- 28% of the Northern Territory population is Aboriginal
- 65% NT prisoners are indigenous males
- about 20% of these are aged 20—25 years
- 90% of all prisoners access education in prison—many for the first time ever.

Some prisoners speak many Indigenous languages but no English.

Mike Fewster, an educator at the Alice Springs Correction Centre, spoke of some success with beginner learners in the prison system using a phonetics-based basic literacy program—THRASS (Teaching Handwriting, Reading and Spelling System). He spoke of his concerns about culturally inappropriate symbols in this system. (It originated in the UK—amongst other issues the range of sounds in Aboriginal languages are simply not captured in English forms.)

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

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

Editorial Committee:

Jim Thompson, Stephen Ward, Pat Hazell (editor), Jana Scomazzon, Tess Were, Robyn Jay, production by David Dickson

Correspondence for ACAL including membership should be addressed to:

ACAL, PO Box 850
Reservoir
VIC 3073
phone: 03 9469 2950
fax: 03 9442 4508
email: acal@mira.net

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Inaugural awards for outstanding contribution to improving literacy and numeracy

Dr Brendon Nelson, Minister for Education, Science and Training announced the five winners of the inaugural Awards for Outstanding Contribution to Improving Literacy and/or Numeracy on 3 September. Each of the winners has made a major contribution to the development of literacy and/or numeracy in their community and will receive \$10,000 to further enhance the work they are undertaking. Three of the five awards were made to adult programs.

The Awards were provided as part of the National Literacy and Numeracy Week (NLNW) which ran from 1–7 September 2003 with a range of activities and events taking place across the country. NLNW is supported by the Commonwealth Bank Foundation, Dymocks, Australia Post, Lovatts Crosswords and Puzzles, Franklin Electronic Publishers and AFL Auskick.

Minister's Award Winners

Narrellae Simpson

Ms Simpson has lived in Goodna, Queensland for over 20 years and is a well known and respected member of the Ipswich community. She is a community advocate in the true sense of the word and has established close relationships with community members at all levels.

Narrellae works as a volunteer with a number of agencies; she assists and supports the development of many community programs, including literacy programs. In 2002, she supported over 38 members of the Indigenous community into literacy programs.

She has worked to establish needs based literacy training programs to help the Indigenous community and has helped established classes that are open to all members of the community; this has encouraged cross-cultural awareness.

The scope of Ms Simpson's work is impressive in its range and innovation. She has established literacy training courses to help members of the Indigenous community obtain their driver's licence, learner permits, forklift ticket and computer literacy. The course Literacy for Driver Learner Permits was recently picked up and is

being run by the Department of Main Roads in Queensland for prison inmates.

Her special gift is recognising ways to help disadvantaged people with low literacy skills reach their true potential. Her achievements are demonstrated through the success of those who have attended her courses.

The Community Development Officer, West Moreton Migrant Resource Service (Goodna Neighbourhood House) with whom she has worked with for over ten years nominated her for the Minister's Award. Ms Simpson will use the award to further her work, support the cost of transport, workshop facilities, educational scholarships, research and administration costs.

Kathleen Napier

Kathleen Napier's contribution to improving adult literacy and numeracy encompasses five decades. Her achievements include the development of the first TAFE course in WA with a focus on remedial reading, the establishment of general education courses in TAFEs to address the literacy needs of both apprentices and the general community and the establishment of a volunteer tutor scheme called Read Write Now.

This scheme helps people to access face-to-face tuition in literacy and numeracy. It has been operating for 27 years, and encompasses 24 self managing schemes operating in 24 regions across WA.

It is estimated that 25,000 adults have benefited directly from the one-to-one tuition offered and that Ms Napier has personally supported approximately 1,500 tutors

during her involvement with this volunteer tutor program.

Ms Napier's current role is to recruit and interview new tutors and to match tutors and students. Her referees have stated that 'her vision and capacity to impart knowledge continues to have a marked effect on many Western Australian people'.

Ms Napier was nominated by Ms Lyn Southam, Acting Director Community and Cultural



Dr Brendon Nelson, Minister for Education, Science and Training with award winner, Narrellae Simpson

Services at the Swan Valley TAFE. Ms Napier will use the award to establish the volunteer tutor scheme in the Midvale region of the Swan Valley, WA. This will include the purchase of three computers with literacy development software to further the Swan Explorers Project.

Margaret Simonds

Ms Simonds is the Chief Executive Officer for On Track Learning, Wimmera (a community adult literacy provider in Horsham, Victoria). She has worked in a wide variety of literacy and numeracy forums with people from a range of ages and backgrounds and has demonstrated an innovative approach to facilitating programs to bring about many successful outcomes.

Ms Simonds' teaching has brought change to literacy delivery, influencing peers, colleagues and organisational management. She has been instrumental in the growth of a dedicated volunteers group who have become an example of 'best practice' in community literacy providers in Victoria.

Her philosophy of literacy shows sensitivity and breadth: 'literacy and numeracy are seen as skills enhancing living.' Ms Simonds is responsible for 'Can You Read This?' an early publication for Wimmera Adult Literacy; the Voluntary Tutor Training Package designed for local practitioners. She designed training for flexible delivery including using mail, teleconference and computer.

Ms Simonds has used technology to enhance learning in rural and remote areas, eg she set up teleconferencing by flexible delivery; arranged 'pub literacy' in Marnoo, Willaura, Birchip; facilitated training programs in public buildings such as hotels, senior citizens clubs and football clubrooms as well as schools.

Ms Simonds was nominated by Ms Dianne Richards, a teacher at the University of Ballarat - Horsham TAFE Campus and Ms Judith Krahe, Vice Chair of On Track Learning Wimmera. She will use the award to enhance the delivery of literacy provision to individuals in the more isolated rural areas of the Wimmera area who have no access to funded courses.

Beth Powell

Ms Powell is a Senior Lecturer in the School of Education at Murdoch University where she has taught teaching and undergraduate primary mathematics education units for the last 20 years.

Ms Powell is acknowledged nationally within the numeracy field as one of the leaders and innovators in numeracy education over the last decade. Recent projects are:

- Team leader for a DEST project Promotion of Awareness of the Importance of Numeracy to parents: design and develop posters and brochures which were distributed to every school in Australia.
- Academic Associate to groups of teachers in the national project: Innovative Links Between Universities and Schools for Teacher Professional Development.
- A project for the Catholic Education Office of WA entitled Nidja Noongar Boodjar Noonook Nyininy (This is Noongar Country you are Sitting In)
- Working with a school in a low socio-economic region in WA on an ANTA Innovative Project: Improving Numeracy in a Low Socio-Economic Region Community, and
- Co-directing a DEST Literacy and Numeracy Innovative Project Initiative and working with a number of local schools: Principles to Inform and Improve Students' Progress in Developing Numeracy Skills.

Ms Powell is attracted to projects which aim for numeracy learners to be self-supportive. She works to provide people with ways of moving forward independently.

Ms Powell was nominated by Dr Judith MacCallum, School of Education, Murdoch University and will use the award to build on the outcomes of two recent projects.

Karen Hendrix

Karen Hendrix is the Co-ordinator of The Meeting Place at St Mary's High School in Casino NSW, a centre for students who, for a range of reasons, are not coping successfully with the formal classroom.

The Meeting Place is both a location and a generic term for a range of Learning Assistance Programs developed by Ms Hendrix and delivered by a team of volunteers from the parent body and community. Now in its eighth year, the program has trained 20 volunteers of whom 14 are currently still actively involved. In 2002, 70 students accessed the programs which represents 14% of the student population at St Mary's.

Ms Hendrix was nominated by Ms Sue Griffiths, a teacher and colleague at St Mary's High School and will use the Award to provide school-based literacy support resources modelled on The Meeting Place but more suited for mainstream classroom use.

Further information is available at—
www.dest.gov.au/literacyandnumeracyweek

Restructuring public education in NSW

The last two issues of *Literacy Link* have included alarming news items flagging fee increases for TAFE courses in NSW with no course any longer being exempt from fees. This situation would have been calamitous for literacy and numeracy provision in that state. So the NSW Adult Literacy and Numeracy Council, supported by the NSW Teachers Federation commenced a vigorous and effective campaign to prevent the implementation of fees. As a result the Deputy NSW Premier and Minister for Education and Training, Dr Andrew Refshauge, recently confirmed that the Government would NOT proceed with fees for TAFE's introductory learning courses.

Dr Refshauge signalled his intentions to keep exemptions for 38 TAFE Access courses. Retaining the exemptions will cost \$2.75 million this year and \$5.5 million in a full year. Funding will come from internal savings within the Education Department.

Exemptions will remain for courses including: reading and writing, numeracy, volunteer training, employment skills, work readiness, community training, school mentoring, career opportunities and signed language.

Adult Literacy National Forum

On 8 September, the Adult Literacy National Forum took place at the Department of Education, Science and Training Canberra (DEST). The Forum is organised each year by DEST, and State and Territory Education and Training Departments are invited to nominate one official to attend. The forum was also attended by representatives from the Australian National Training Authority (ANTA), the National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER), and all Commonwealth adult literacy programs.

The aim of the forum is to share information on what is happening and what is planned, across Australia in adult literacy. The Commonwealth programs present included the Language Literacy and Numeracy Programme (LLNP), the Workplace English Language and Literacy (WELL) Programme, Basic IT Enabling Skills (BITES) for Older Workers Programme, and the ANTA Adult Literacy National Project.

A presentation was made by ANTA on how literacy is involved as part of Shaping the Future, the VET strategy 2004–2010.

Taking action on Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)

The Queensland Department of Employment and Training received the thumbs-up from the National Quality Training Council in September for its proposals to take action on the Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) issues raised in research by the National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER) and the Australia Qualification Framework Advisory Board (AQFAB). Serious issues around RPL practice, processes, support and compliance were identified by the national research.

Queensland is planning activities to:

- develop examples of simpler, more holistic, quality assured RPL processes
- create a shared understanding of RPL across VET stakeholders
- engage skilled individuals who have not attained AQF 3 or above in the past
- promote better delivery, recording and reporting of RPL
- develop enabling RPL guidance for all stakeholders, and
- engage industry and the community in RPL for continual learning.

The development and trial of new RPL processes for selected qualifications in community services, horticulture and maritime services are planned from October 2003 onwards.

*For more information contact Helen Foley,
Qld Dept of Employment and Training.
Telephone: 07 3237 0361
Email: helen.foley@det.qld.gov.au*



Attendees at the 2003 Adult Literacy National Forum in Canberra

Ethnographic perspective allows application of cultural theory to literacy

by Inge Kral

This article is a short version of a paper delivered by Inge Kral at the ACAL Forum 'Indigenous ways of knowing, learning and doing' in Alice Springs. Inge started a PhD in the Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research at ANU this year. Her research will be an 'ethnography of literacy' and will explore the socio-cultural context for language and literacy use in a group of linguistically related remote Indigenous communities in Central Australia. What follows is a brief description of the professional journey that brought Inge to this area of literacy research.



Ethnographic studies of literacy look at the social practices, social meanings and cultural conceptions of reading and writing, and how they are embedded in the broad range of ideas that the term anthropology encompasses. They stand at the interface between sociolinguistics and anthropology. Bringing an anthropological perspective to literacy allows the application of cultural theory to literacy; it is the lens which opens the way to seeing how people actually use literacy in a broad spectrum of contexts outside assumed Western cultural parameters. As Brian Street¹ states, *An ethnographic perspective enables us to see how literacy is incorporated into the receiving culture's already existing conventions and concepts regarding communication...It also reveals how literacy processes cannot be understood simply in terms of schooling and pedagogy: they are part of more embracing social institutions and conceptions.*

Educational anthropology is an area little explored in the Australian Indigenous education literature. Yet comparable cross-cultural contexts, in newly literate societies, have been well-researched in the international literature and encompass the fields of social anthropology, sociolinguistics, and discourse analysis.

My early teaching experiences in Aboriginal schools allowed me to see that gaining alphabetic literacy skills is a mighty achievement when your own language has only just been written down and there is no vast repertoire of literature or an historical legacy of literate practices.

This field has come to be known as 'New Literacy Studies' and much of this work draws on ideas investigated and developed by researchers such as Brian Street, Shirley Brice Heath, David Barton and James Gee and includes studies such as Kulick and Stroud's work on the conceptions and uses of literacy in a small village in Papua New Guinea, Reder and Wiklund's study of literacy development

and ethnicity in an Alutiq village in Alaska and Besnier's investigation of the social, ideological and textual characteristics of literacy on a Polynesian atoll.

I came to Indigenous education nearly twenty years ago via linguistics and anthropology and this sensitised me to the language reality in remote Australia. My early teaching experiences in Aboriginal schools allowed me to see that gaining alphabetic literacy skills is a mighty achievement when your own language has only just been written down and there is no vast repertoire of literature or an historical legacy of literate practices. Especially when it is most likely that literacy will be learnt, not in the vernacular, the first language, the mother tongue—the language that is imbued with the concepts that form the psychic home where the core values of culture reside—but in a second language that is not spoken well and that the learner remains culturally distanced from.

Subsequent English and vernacular adult literacy teaching and curriculum writing experience in Indigenous education in Central Australia gave me further insights into the complexity of adult literacy in that context.

As a result I began to investigate the literacy context from a sociohistorical perspective through a Masters in Applied Linguistics. I explored the introduction and development of vernacular literacy, and the implications for current vernacular literacy practices, in the Arrernte language spoken in and around Alice Springs. Literacy in the vernacular was introduced to Arrernte speakers over two periods. Firstly, Lutheran missionary linguists at Hermannsburg mission introduced reading and writing in Western 'Aranda' from the 1880s onwards, primarily for the purpose of Christian conversion. Secondly, in the late 1970s and early 1980s (and curiously after it was decided not to include Hermannsburg as one of the bilingual schools in the new NT bilingual education program) literacy teaching in Central,

1. Street, B. V. (Ed.) *Cross-cultural approaches to literacy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Eastern and Western Arrernte was introduced in adult education in conjunction with the new enthusiasm for self-determination and the requirements of emerging bilingual programs at Santa Teresa School and Yipirinya School.

I found that at the Lutheran mission at Hermannsburg 'Aranda' literacy was interconnected with Christian cultural practices and was acquired, and to a limited extent retained and transmitted, in this context (see letters below—It should also be noted that Indigenous Lutheran Pastors are still trained by the Finke River Mission and high levels of vernacular reading competence have been observed.) Translated Christian texts are available in a number of Arandic dialects.

I also found that young adults who had been to a bilingual primary school and who came from families where previous generations had participated in Christian literacy practices had 'forgotten their reading and writing'. Primarily because for these young adults reading and writing had no purpose in everyday life, as the only regular literacy event was signing a dole form.

So although Arrernte has a relatively long history as a literate language, compared with most Aboriginal languages. It is in fact a very short history for the development of literacy and has resulted in the minimal saturation of vernacular literacy practices across the Arrernte speaking community.

Recently I have worked on a number of adult English literacy projects, particularly in relation to Indigenous health. These projects have

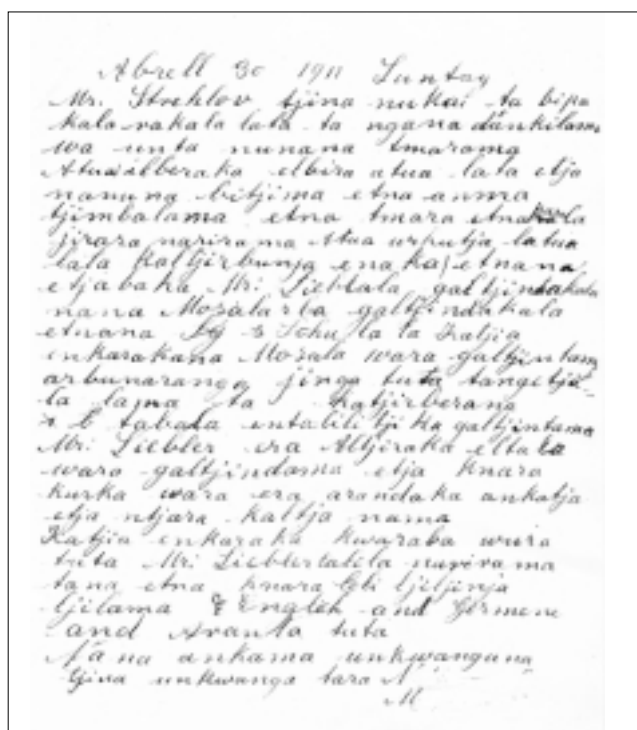
repeatedly brought to the fore the mismatch that exists in remote Australia between the expectations of Aboriginal adult literacy by the mainstream, and often Aboriginal language speakers themselves, and the reality of actual literacy competence.

Throughout this time I have been realising how much the adult literacy domain is immersed in culturally bound assumptions about literacy and how it is acquired and maintained. Firstly, let's remember that although English literacy has been evolving for more than a thousand years we still have not achieved universal literacy, despite having a standardised alphabet and a long history of formal schooling interconnected with intergenerational family and community lit-

eracy practices developed over many centuries. And secondly, despite the comparatively short history of literacy learning in remote Indigenous communities we often assume a high level of adult literacy competence from this newly literate group. (Or conversely we have imbibed the sense that Aboriginal schooling is failing and expect very low levels of competence)

So a quick sketch of the language and literacy landscape in Central Australia:

- Aboriginal people began to make the transition from an 'oral culture' to a 'literate culture' relatively recently in comparison to most Western or other major literate cultures.
- Most Aboriginal adults who live in remote communities or town camps still speak English (or Aboriginal English) as a second (third or fourth) language.



April 30 1911 Sunday

Mr Strehlow my friend. I have already seen your letter today. I thank you. Yes you are asking us about Warlpiri men. There are no Warlpiri men coming here at the moment. They are waiting for later on. They're staying in their own country up north. A few men received baptism recently. It wasn't Mr Liebler who taught them. Moses is the only one who taught them. At school Moses is the only one who teaches the children. sometimes I [N.....] go to school to help. I teach the children to write on slates. Mr Liebler only teaches/preaches in God's house. Not much, just a little bit. He doesn't know many Aranta words. All of the children, both girls and boys are with Mr Liebler. There they sing a lot of hymns—English and German and Aranta.

Your two friends are saying this to you.

N [name deleted—approx. 38 yrs at the time]

M [name deleted—approx. 33 yrs at the time]

- The quality of teaching in some Aboriginal community schools may not have been equivalent to the mainstream.
- In most communities Aboriginal children start school not speaking English and have to learn oral English first. Literacy learning has mostly taken place in English only, not bilingual, schools. Thus childhood literacy has predominantly been learnt in English (a language children often don't speak or hear particularly well), without the conceptual pathway towards literacy in an understood language.
- Therefore often only the 'rote learning' aspects of literacy acquisition may have been picked up—ie learners are good at memorising and playing the game in primary school but fall behind in upper primary and high school because they don't have the conceptual underpinnings for independent, individual literacy competence.
- In many families this generation may be the first to have literacy skills. In remote communities most families have few literacy practices (eg, few books at home, little or no 'bedtime reading', and minimal discussion around 'literacy events') so literacy tends not to be retained and transmitted in the home or community environment.
- There is minimal social context for adult literacy use—few reasons to use literacy in everyday life, and literacy learning at school is often not meaningful and not embedded in community social/cultural practices.
- There have been limited opportunities for ongoing adult literacy learning—little easily accessible community education, and few adult literacy classes/tutoring.

The more I became interested in exploring the sociohistorical perspective on literacy acquisition and use in Central Australia, the more I realised how little we know about the short history of formal education in this region and the implications of this for literacy learning.

I'll briefly summarise this history. Prior to the introduction of government schooling Aboriginal children either received no Western schooling or were educated in mission schools. The first literacy learning began late in the 19th century at Hermannsburg Mission, schooling for children of mixed descent began in Alice Springs after 1915 and a school was started by the Catholic Church in 1935 and later moved to Arltunga then Santa Teresa Mission.

The government did not start taking responsibility for Aboriginal education in Central Australia until the 1950s; however, many mission schools continued functioning until the mid to late 1960s. In 1951 there was, for example, only one government primary school for Aborigines

in the Territory and by 1965 'Native Welfare Branch' included 12 settlement schools and 11 schools on pastoral properties. It is understood that in some communities children were not able to access schooling until the 1980s or 90s and that there is still a percentage of Aboriginal children who are not enrolled in any school. In most communities there is still no facility for ongoing secondary education.

As for the language question, initially the government directive was that the medium of instruction in government schools was to be English. However, following the 1964 Watts and Gallacher Report the mood shifted towards an openness to the idea of vernacular or first language instruction. This was formalised with the introduction of bilingual education in 1973 following the election of a federal Labor government. But fewer than a quarter of NT schools were accredited to deliver a bilingual program. Some schools within the Catholic and independent system have also delivered bilingual programs. The bilingual program is no longer resourced by NT DEET, although there is some flexibility for the inclusion of language and culture maintenance programs in Aboriginal schools within the NT Curriculum Framework.

As for adult education, vocational training was a key aspect of the assimilation period in the 1960s when adult training took place in some communities as well as in regional centres like Alice Springs; then in the 1970s, adult community education became more available. In recent years however, adult education providers have been compelled to deliver nationally accredited competency-based training, much of which does not take into consideration the reality of adult English language and literacy competence in remote Aboriginal Australia.

In conclusion, an ethnographic approach allows us to see that literacy learning must have a purpose and a meaning in the adult community world, otherwise, as is so often the case with the literacy learnt in primary or post-primary school, the skill will recede. Becoming more cognisant of these sociocultural/sociohistorical factors allows us to perceive the context more sympathetically and to question the assumptions about literacy that we carry to the situation.

Inge Kral
inge.kral@anu.edu.au



Indigenous voices—Ntaria Ladies Choir

by David Roennfeldt

One of the highlights of the ACAL Conference in Alice Springs was the singing by the Ntaria Ladies Choir (see photograph page 1). They sang mainly in their mother tongue, Western Arrernte. And they sang in Pitjantjatjara and English as well. Most Aboriginal people in Central Australia are multi-lingual.

The Ntaria Ladies Choir started practising in the latter part of 1969. The ladies learn their parts by listening to them played or sung; they do not read music but have excellent memories for tunes and harmonies. They went on a trip to South Australia in 1970, and they have kept going as a choir since then. Their ages range from mid 30s to about 80 years of age.

The first missionaries started a settlement at Ntaria (Aboriginal name) or Hermannsburg (European name) in 1877. Within a few years, a school was set up. Singing was the children's favourite lesson. In the mid 1920s, a teacher and his wife taught a few local Ntaria people to sing in parts. A choir tradition started building over the years. In the 1950s the men formed a choir, and they toured down south.

In the mid 1960s, a mixed choir rehearsed with Pastor and Mrs Radke, and performed in Adelaide. The Town Hall pipe organ accompanied the large Arrernte choir of male and female voices.

Through the years, various European staff have come to the community and encouraged the choirs to keep going, providing musical accompaniment and conducting. The membership of

the choirs has changed over the years, but the tradition has been kept strong.

The Ntaria choirs sing most of all in local language, the language of the Hermannsburg or Ntaria area: Western Arrernte. They also include English, Pitjantjatjara and Luritja songs in their repertoires.

The choir practises regularly, and sings locally, in other communities. They most frequently go to South Australia., but have also toured Victoria, NSW, and the Brisbane (Qld) area. Some compilations of the ladies choir's best songs have been put out in cassette and CD formats.

Gospel music is immensely popular in communities in Central Australia. There are three choirs in Central Australia that are noted for their harmonies, and the Ntaria Ladies Choir is one of those three. They keep the choral tradition strong.

The Ntaria Ladies Choir is the first Aboriginal choir to sing in the Sydney Opera House—which took place when they sang as part of a performance with the Sydney Symphony Orchestra in May 2003.

Every few years they go on an interstate trip, which they save up for out of their own pockets. Recently these trips have taken place every second year.

*Ntaria Ladies Choir,
c/o David Roennfeldt
P M B 4,
Hermannsburg NT 0872*

Yam story

by George Pascoe

In the story below, George Pascoe from Milingimbi, an island off the coast of Arnhem Land, tells about his decision to go to Batchelor College in Darwin where he studied to become an early childhood teacher. George was given a yam by an elder before he left his homeland.

A very wonderful person once said: 'George I will give this finest yam. Keep it and grow it to its height.' I grew the yam in residential block 19b. Each night I could just step outside and watch in case someone might steal my yam or even dig the yam. Each night even at the middle of the night I sometimes would not remember from my hard study. For almost a year I would water the plant until the plant would almost grow to its height till the end of November 2000 and approaching to December. I had sigh of

relief because the plant I grew was so big, I dug it out and got the biggest yam. I called my friend to come eat with me and share the yam around. My friend said to me 'Hey George the best yam I have ever had. What's the flavour?'

I turn around to my new and my old friends. You need to study the way of power so hard, and even understand the educational changes and understand the suffered people, who are out in the community and need the knowledge of education. It is very vital that the community needs to change their current situation to suit community's responsibilities so they can maintain their lives in their own community and run their own community.

The following report written by the ACAL President, Jim Thompson, was presented at the ACAL Annual General Meeting at Alice Springs, NT Friday 19th September 2003. Jim was not able to be present so Jan Hagston, ACAL Vice President, presented the report. Jan began by acknowledging the traditional owners of the land.



Jim Thompson,
ACAL President

Each year brings new challenges to the adult literacy and numeracy field. 2003 has been no exception. The impact of the Australian Quality Training Framework (AQTF) on practitioners has been immense. ACAL acknowledges and supports the drive for continuous improvements across the Vocational Education and Training (VET) sector. At the same time, differing interpretations of compliance have seen practitioners and managers literally groaning under the weight of paperwork. Precious time and resources have been disproportionately allocated to bureaucratic tasks and structures. We all need to work towards relevant and streamlined systems for meeting AQTF standards.

Responding to initiatives such as the AQTF, comprises a significant component of ACAL's leadership in the field. In 2003, ACAL has also contributed to the following:

- The Training and Assessment Training Package with particular emphasis on the proposed specialist qualifications for Language Literacy and Numeracy (LL&N) professionals. Our response to the last draft is in the August issue of *Literacy Link*
- The draft Australian National Training Authority (ANTA) national strategy for 2004–2010, 'Shaping Our Future'
- The Adult Literacy Research Program managed by the National Council for Vocational Education and Research
- The VET Student Outcomes Survey documentation, managed by the National Council for Vocational Education and Research
- The Commonwealth Ministerial Awards for literacy and numeracy
- The Reading Writing Hotline
- The Great Literacy Debates in collaboration with Adult Learning Australia
- The ANTA National Adult Literacy Innovative Project Reference Committee and
- The National Equity Toolboxes.

Contributions to the preceding projects are a significant part of ACAL's strategic direction in working collaboratively with key stakeholders in the LL&N field. Significant opportunities are provided for advocating the interests of adult LL&N educators.

I would like to acknowledge the significant support that the Department of Education, Science and Training (DEST) has provided in this and previous years. Two DEST-funded

national forums have been conducted by ACAL:

- *Beyond Training: Locating Literacy in Social Policy*—Launceston, Tasmania
- *Indigenous Ways of Knowing, Doing and Learning*—Alice Springs, Northern Territory

ACAL made the decision to take this year's national forums to regional Australia in recognition of the additional barriers facing isolated and remote practitioners. National ACAL professional development events have now been held in all Australian States and Territories.

DEST also provided funding for *Literacy Link*, the only national adult literacy and numeracy newsletter in 2002/3. ACAL's submission for funding in 2003/4 was also successful.

Finally, I would like to acknowledge the work of my colleagues. The ACAL Executive Committee is a voluntary group whose members make significant contributions in addition to their full time jobs and family responsibilities. State and Territory representatives are nominated by their respective associations. Office bearers are elected at the AGM and co-opted members are appointed as needed. Some members are retiring at this AGM or have retired through the year. Geraldine Castleton, our immediate past president has worked tirelessly on ACAL's behalf and will be sorely missed. Helen Foley, organiser of the Alice Springs forum and member of *Literacy Link* committee, is another who has made valuable contributions to ACAL.

The professional development group led by Pat Hazell and Helen Foley has worked constantly all year, communicating across the country to organise two highly successful national forums. The *Literacy Link* Editorial Committee has met regularly to support the production of the newsletter. However, the issues would not come together without the outstanding work of David Dickson, who continues to produce a high quality newsletter. The ACAL Executive and Projects would not operate effectively without the excellent support provided by Alex Tsakmakis. Alex is the link person inside and outside the Executive, for all of our activities.

The Australian community, workforce and education sectors are facing big challenges and constant changes. ACAL's key direction will be to forge partnerships to support LL&N educators meet the challenges and influence the changes.

Kinship, moiety, land & language in Arnhem Land

by Michael Christie & Waymamba Gaykamangu

The complexity of the relationships between land, language and culture in Indigenous communities is revealed in this piece by Waymamba Gaykamangu and Michael Christie (Faculty of Indigenous Research and Education, Northern Territory University). It comes from their excellent web site—<http://www.ntu.edu.au/yolngustudies>

Q.How many Yolngu are there?

A.About 5000, mostly in the old mission centres of Milingimbi, Ramangining, Galiwin'ku, Gapuwiyak and Yirrkala, but many also in homeland centres on traditional land in north-east Arnhem Land.



Q.How many Yolngu languages are there?

A.More than 40. Some languages are very similar to each other, but they are different languages because they belong to different people, land, totems, histories and ancestral songs. Yolngu divide languages into general categories according to their structure, and these categories are named according to the word which in English would be translated 'this' or 'here'.

Q.What are Yolngu moieties?

A.In the Yolngu world, there are two moieties, Dhuwa and Yirritja. Everyone and every useful thing—lands, songs, animals, plants, totems, waters, ceremonies—is either dhuwa or yirritja. Dhuwa must marry yirritja, and yirritja must marry dhuwa. Everyone is the same moiety and the same group as their father and as their land, language and totems. So everyone has a mother who is from another group, and another moiety. This relation between the mother and child is called yothu-yindi, and can be found everywhere in the world, not only between people, but between groups of people, and pieces of land, totems and so forth.

Q.How does Yolngu kinship map on to Yolngu land?

A.Yolngu must always marry into a clan group of the opposite moiety (dhuwa if you are yirritja, yirritja if you are dhuwa). Yolngu clan groups have long standing marriage relations, so that, for example, the men of one group will often marry the women of another. If for example, the Djambarrpuy\u children marry Gupapuy\u wives, there will be successive generations of

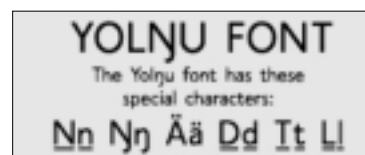
Djambarrpuy\u children who call everything Gupapuy\u 'mother'. For them, Gupapuy\u land, language, songs, totems, etc will all be called mother. The group into which the Gupapuy\u men marry (eg Garrawurra) will be the mother of the Gupapuy\u, and the m^ri (mother's mother) of the Djambarrpuy\u.

In this sense, Yolngu kinship links people across moieties, and across the land, by mapping out links (called yothu-yindi) between mother-child pairs, in long chains: mother, mother's mother, mother's mother's mother, mother's mother's mother's mother etc. These links work in a circular fashion: a woman's mother's mother's mother is her waku—the same as her own son or daughter. Her mother's mother's mother's mother is her yapa—her 'sister'.

As these relations form a network drawing in all Yolngu clan groups, this is mapped on to the land holdings of these peoples so that any piece of land—if it is not your own received through your father's line—will generally be expected to be your mother, or your m^ri, or your waku, or gutharra (waku's waku) or yapa.

Q.What are the key Yolngu kinship terms?

- b^pa—father
- \^][i—mother, (& waku's waku's daughter)
- \apipi—mother's brother
- m^ri—mother's mother and her brother
- waku—woman's son or daughter, man's sister's son or daughter, (& mother's mother's mother and her brother)
- gutharra—waku's waku
- w^wa—older brother (& father's father's father's father)
- yapa—older sister (& father's father's father's father's sister)
- yukuyuku—younger sibilin



Yolngu languages are written using special characters which are downloadable from the internet at—
<http://www.ntu.edu.au/yolngustudies/resources>



Michael Christie



Waymamba Gaykamangu

2002 Adult Literacy Research Program (ALRP) projects near completion

by Jennifer Gibb

The National Centre for Vocational Education and Research (NCVER) on behalf of the Department of Education, Science and Training (DEST) is managing a group of research projects which are investigating literacy from a number of different angles. The six projects are funded as part of the Australian National Training Authority (ANTA) Adult Literacy National Project. They will have been completed by the end of this year and fall into two categories:

- projects which look at what literacy means and policy implications
- projects which look at the literacy needs of different communities

Literacy—what exactly is covered by this term? In terms of dimensions of literacy, Michele Lonsdale and Doug McCurry have undertaken a project to probe what the nature of literacy is and all the external factors that shape our current thinking about literacy. Factors such as developments in technology, the proliferation of information, the fact that education is no longer confined to the period of formal schooling and the fact that education is more student-centred all have an impact on literacy and what it means to be literate today. The ongoing debate about what is literacy recognises that literacy has many dimensions; it is not something that relates solely to the individual but has to take account of the context in which the individual lives and works. Furthermore, there are new literacies emerging such as media, financial and science literacies and these also need to be considered when we think about literacy and how to teach it.

A second project undertaken by Rosa McKenna is under way which will investigate and evaluate international literacy policies and initiatives and explore the implications for Australia.

The other four projects investigate literacy and the needs of specific communities.

Inge Kral and Ian Falk are investigating the role that literacy plays in an Aboriginal community in the Northern Territory. In particular, they take a close look at Aboriginal health workers and their need to have a certain level of English language and literacy if they are to gain a health worker qualification. This case study discusses broader issues as well, such as the role of the church and family in encouraging literacy learning.

Christine Hayes, Barry Golding and Jack Harvey are investigating the literacy skills required by people who work as volunteers in public safety organisations. The study explores the new styles and expectations of training, accreditation and assessment for volunteers and reveals a great deal about the role public

safety organisations play in providing learning opportunities for men who may not otherwise access training to improve their literacy and communication skills.

Crina Virgona and Peter Waterhouse are investigating workplace literacies within aged care facilities and call centres within the context of the changing nature of work and employment. In the aged care industry regulation, documentation and procedures drive much of the work and thus there are implications for the report writing skills of personal care attendants. In call centres the technology and the regulations that cover this industry influence the work that call centre workers do. Both these case studies give insights into the social practice of literacy and the new literacies that are emerging due to changes in technology and how work is organised

Judith Miralles is focusing on people from diverse language and cultural backgrounds and seeks to find out what influences their participation in Vocational Education and Training (VET) and what influences whether or not they complete their studies—in particular what roles do English language proficiency and English language programs play in this? The findings indicate that generally there is low understanding and undervaluing of VET among these communities and dissatisfaction with English as a second language programs. Most respondents in the research felt vocational programs which could hone their skills would increase their chances of getting a job.

NCVER plans to publish this group of research reports by early 2004 and produce a succinct overview summary of all findings.

The full reports have these working titles:

- *Analysis of adult literacy policy and programs*—Rosa McKenna
- *A fair go—an analysis of factors that impact on the VET participation and completion of six ethnic communities*—Judith Miralles
- *Two dimensional work—contingent employment and workplace literacies*—Crina

Indigenous ways of knowing, learning and doing

continued from page 2

The point made earlier by Michael Christie about 'protocols for speaking to people depending on their relationship to you' was picked up later in the morning by two Indigenous teachers, Jodie Kopp and Grant Butler (Institute for Aboriginal Development NT) in terms of how it affects the Indigenous classroom. For example, we were told how in one class a student simply left the room when another student (actually his mother-in-law) arrived. They made a kinship grouping that simply was not permitted to be present together.

'With Aboriginal people family is always the first priority—this is also one of the biggest challenges Aboriginal people face'.

The forum was told how some Aborigines, particularly those from remote communities in the Northern Territory, have spoken of the lack of necessity to speak English unless they are going to town or moving. While there is great understanding of the need to learn English, and a strong desire to learn it, there is in many places in remote Australia practically no requirement for it on a daily basis.

Jodie Kopp and Grant Butler concluded by stating adamantly that it is crucially important to increase the quality of Indigenous teachers.

Inge Kral spoke of her research on the ethnography of literacy (see article page 6) '...an ethnographic approach allows us to see that literacy learning must have a purpose and a meaning in the adult community world, otherwise, as is so often the case with the literacy learnt in primary or post-primary school, the skill will recede. Becoming more cognisant of these sociocultural and sociohistorical factors allows us to perceive the context more sympathetically and to question the assumptions about literacy that we carry to the situation.'

Inge's view that 'literacy learning must have a purpose and a meaning' was evidenced wonderfully in the afternoon when the Ntaria Ladies Choir performed. This choir (which has actually

performed at the Sydney Opera House) certainly forced those at the forum to 'question the assumptions about literacy that we carry to the situation'. The ladies sang from text on handout sheets written in their first language, Arrernte.

Professor Donald Leu, University of Connecticut, was the final speaker at the forum. His task was to draw together many of the themes arising from the day's speakers and activities. He began his summing up with the word '*Multiliteracies*—an Aussie idea which is exciting the world!' He continued that in a shrinking world, diversity is on the increase, and,

'The important thing to understand is that diversity is NOT a disadvantage. Or at least it shouldn't be.'

Professor Leu encapsulated the challenges facing educators thus: 'How will we resolve the tension between singular English text and multi-literacies? How can we capture the learning that takes place outside the classroom and use it within the classroom? How can we develop strategies that make diversity a positive in the classroom? And how do we best support the work of adult literacy practitioners? The point was made that there seemed to be a history of English teaching which does not value first languages and this is vital with all languages.

The forum managed to live up to its title 'Indigenous ways of knowing, learning and doing' for most of the participants. It pointed out the immense subtlety of Indigenous culture in ways that were very humbling for those of us who have had little contact with it. It was clear, too, that the challenges facing our profession in Indigenous literacy are breathtaking. Even so, many of those attending the forum, spoke of the positives, not the least of which is their professional satisfaction and also the attraction of working with such alluring people in such a dramatic place.

Special thanks must go to Helen Foley for organising such an interesting forum.

David Dickson & Tess Were

(continued from previous page)

- Virgona and Peter Waterhouse
- *Adult Learning though public safety organisations*—Christine Hayes, Barry Golding and Jack Harvey
 - *Literacy in the new millennium*—Michele Lonsdale and Doug McCurry

- *What is all that learning for? Indigenous adult English literacy practices, training, community capacity and health*—Inge Kral and Ian Falk
- For further information contact
Jennifer Gibb, Manager, National VET Research and Evaluation, NCVER
email— jennifer.gibb@ncver.edu.au

The Reading Writing Hotline celebrates 10 years

The Reading Writing Hotline celebrated its tenth anniversary on 3 September 2003 with a morning tea at the William Wilkins Gallery in the NSW Dept of Education and Training building in Sydney. As readers may already know, the Hotline is a national telephone adult literacy referral and information service funded by the Commonwealth Department of Education Science and Training (DEST) and managed by TAFE NSW—Access Division.

The gathering was addressed by the Hon Peter Slipper MHR, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Finance and Administration, and Mr Kimble Fillingham, Assistant Director General TAFE Educational Services, representing the NSW Government. Both speakers paid tribute to the fruitful partnership between the Commonwealth and State Governments, as is evidenced by the Reading Writing Hotline. They acknowledged the excellent work that the Hotline had done to improve adult literacy in Australia by linking adults to the literacy provision they needed, and in linking other relevant support agencies with one another. Both speakers also confirmed their governments' continued commitment to initiatives, such as the Reading Writing Hotline, which address adult literacy.

Guests at the celebration included Commonwealth and State representatives of DEST and TAFE NSW, and representatives of the media, key adult literacy providers, other organisations with an interest in adult literacy, and Hotline staff.

A highlight of the morning was an address by two literacy students who were clients of the Hotline. One was a young single mother who, as one of a family of eleven children, said she 'hardly went to school at all. I helped my mother with the kids.' After two years of a Basic Education course, she is now enrolled in a Welfare course.

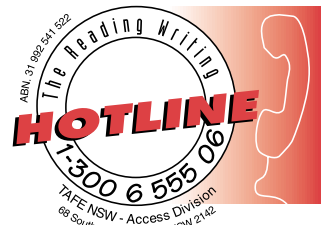
The other student was an older, retired woman who needed numeracy help in relation to her volunteer work in a charity shop. She said that she knew there were literacy and numeracy classes around but just didn't know how to find them. The Hotline solved this problem for her, and she now finds numeracy tasks much easier.

Both said that two years ago, before that call to the Hotline, they would never have dreamed of standing up before an audience and talking about their lives. Both acknowledged that the call to the Hotline had made a dramatic change to their lives. Happy tenth anniversary Hotline.

Since its inception, the Hotline has had in excess of 90,000 callers. The tenth anniversary was an opportunity to look at the emerging patterns of caller characteristics.

- 54% of these students were already employed, although most cited employment related reasons for making the call.
- 78% of the callers were from an English speaking background.
- 61% were male.
- 10% had only primary schooling.
- 40% had left school between years 7 and 9.

Call volume has now settled at an average of approximately 8,000 calls per year.



NEW online banking resource for adult literacy learners

The Online Banking Resource for adult literacy learners is now available. This resource has been produced by Olympic Adult Education with ANTA Innovative Project funding.

The resource aims to empower learners to make informed decisions about online banking by developing their knowledge and skills in this area. It also offers an effective and authentic context for literacy and numeracy development.

The resource consists of 6 booklets around the topic of online banking and a complementary web site. The booklets are suitable for learners who are NRS 3 and the web site for NRS 3/4.

The web site address is—
www.onlinebanking.org.au
It provides a link to the booklet order form on the Home Page.

*Rachel Wilson
Olympic Adult Education
21 Alamein Rd, West Heidelberg 3081
ph: 03 9458 2711
rwilson@vicnet.net.au*

Literacy: bridging past, present and future

LitCon 2003—Penang, Malaysia

by Lorraine Sushames

The third LitCon—International Literacy Conference—was held from 15 to 17 August 2003 at the Park Royal Hotel on the Island of Penang, Malaysia. The event was organised by the International Literacy Research Unit (ILRU) Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM) and co-hosted by RMIT University, the International Development of Asia Committee, the International Reading Association, the National Higher Education Research Institute and the Education Ministry.

In his opening address, conference chairman Dr Ambigapathy Pandian (USM) challenged delegates to consider a framework 'that equips people not simply with technical skills but also with broad perspectives on the world of information, its origins and development trends, its definitions of experience and social life, its potential for human emancipation and domination, growth and destruction, so that people can be the intelligent shapers of the information society and humanistic culture'.

The conference attracted over 400 delegates from over 20 nations, including Australia, NZ, the USA, UK, Fiji as well as countries in the Asian region, with 120 papers presented by local and international speakers. Over three days presenters elaborated on themes such as:

- the new literacies of the knowledge society, including the literacies of technology in everyday use such as SMS messaging
- visual and virtual messaging generated through computer graphics
- literacies operating in specific domains (family, workplace, community and nations)
- the continuing expansion of literacy requirements due to technological developments
- literacy for designing social futures
- a need for multi-lingual literacy with a focus on English to enhance opportunities in a borderless world
- enhanced learning opportunities that may be offered by teachers/lecturers who maintain currency of knowledge and skills in using

advanced technologies.

Australia was represented by Mary Kalantzis, Bill Cope, Peter Kell and Sue McGinty, as well as two NTCAL members, Kate Boyd (presentation—'Cross cultural perceptions of literacy in Kakadu National Park') and myself (presentation—'Where policy and people intersect: literacy for changing work paradigms').

The conference venue, the Park Royal Hotel on Batu Ferringhi is located on the northern beach area of the island

and is situated within extensive tropical gardens.

During meal breaks delegates could linger over a meal in the cool and breezy outdoor eating pavilion overlooking the Malacca Strait while engaging in lively conversation, or enjoy a leisurely stroll through the palm gardens to the white sandy beach.

In the evenings a bustling night market provided an added diversion to complement the array of dining experiences offered by the Malay, Indian and Chinese restaurants in the area.

Penang's history as the first British trading post in the far east for spices, tea, china and cloth is still in evidence in the colonial architecture to be seen throughout the island; however, its capital, Georgetown is a bustling metropolitan city in which eastern and western influences converge to form a unique culture.

The next LitCon will be held in Penang in August 2005. Further information about LitCon conferences may be obtained from Dr Ambigapathy Pandian, ILRU, mobile: +016-4516456 Ph: +04-6534181 (office) or email ambiga@usm.my



LitCon 2003 delegates came from over 20 nations

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ACAL contact details



AUSTRALIAN COUNCIL FOR ADULT LITERACY

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

Vice President: Jan Hagston
Language Australia Ltd
GPO Box 372F
Melbourne VIC 3001
Ph: 09 9612 2600
Jan@languageaustralia.com.au

Immediate Past President: Geraldine Castleton
Institute for Learning Communities
Bond University QLD 4229
Ph: 07 5595 1151
Plantagenet@petri.hotkey.net.au

Secretary: Pauline O'Maley
Crosslink
548 Mt Alexander Road
Ascot Vale VIC 3032
Ph: 03 9372 0675
omaley@mira.net

Treasurer: Suzanne Bozorth-Baines
PO Box 137
Belmont VIC 3216
Ph: 03 5244 2097
kesnsuz@pipeline.com.au

ACT Rep: Christine O'Callaghan
Canberra Institute of Technology
PO Box 826 Canberra ACT 2601
Ph: 02 6207 4054
christine.o'callaghan@cit.act.edu.au

NSW Rep: Pat Hazell
Petersham College of TAFE
Petersham 2049
Ph: 02 9335 2345
hazefive@bigpond.net.au

QLD Rep: Stephen Ward
Ph: 07 3335 3645
stephen.ward@optusnet.com.au

NT Rep: Lorraine Sushames
Faculty of Indigenous Research and Education
Northern Territory University 0909
Ph: 08 8946 7219
lorraine.sushames@ntu.edu.au

SA Rep: Ann Brown
Ph: 08 8252 2474
Amp@nacys.asn.au

TAS Rep: Sheila O'Leary-Woodhouse
20 Valley Road

Devonport TAS 7310
Ph: 03 6421 7610
Soleary@tassie.net.au

VIC Rep: Sheryl Sinclair
Ph: 08 5760 4517
ssinclair@gotafe.vic.edu.au

WA Rep: Lois McManus
Ph: 08 9378 1885
robmac@onaustralia.com

Co-opted: Jana Scmazzon
Language and Training Group
PO Box 59
Elsternwick VIC 3185
Ph: 03 9532 8809
jana@ltg.net.au

Co-opted: Robyn Jay
NSW Adult and Community Education
Ph: 02 6628 7499
Email: robyn@gecko-ed.com

Co-opted: Rosie Wickert
University of Technology Sydney
PO Box 123
Broadway NSW 2007
Ph: 02 9514 3818
Rosie.wickert@uts.edu.au

Co-opted: Karen Dymke
karen@qps.net.au

Exec Support: Alex Tsakmakis
ACAL, PO Box 850
Reservoir VIC 3073
Ph: 03 9469 2950

fax: 03 9442 4508
email: acal@mira.net

State affiliated councils

ACTCAL
PO Box 778 Jamison ACT 2614
helen.cotter@cit.act.edu.au

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

NTCAL
PO Box 31U
Charles Darwin University
Darwin NT 0815

QCAL
PO Box 301 Red Hill Qld 4059
Ph/Fax: 07 3878 9944
Email: qcalau@yahoo.com.au

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

TCAL
PO Box 633, Moonah TAS 7009

VALBEC
PO Box 861, Springvale Sth VIC 3172
info@valbec.org.au

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



Members of the 2003-2004 ACAL Executive met recently in Alice Springs.

absent: Jim Thompson (ACAL President—see page 10) and Jana Scmazzon (Industry Rep)
back row (l to r)—

Karen Dymke (Co-opted Member), Robyn Jay (Co-opted Member), Rosie Wickert (Co-opted Member), Geraldine Castleton (Immediate Past President)

middle row—

Lois McManus (WA rep), Pat Hazell (NSW Rep), Pauline O'Maley (Secretary), Ann Brown (SA Rep), Sheila O'Leary-Woodhouse (TAS rep), Stephen Ward (QLD Rep)

front row—

Sheryl Sinclair (VIC rep), Christine O'Callaghan (ACT Rep), Lorraine Sushames (NT Rep), Suzanne Bozorth-Baines (Treasurer), Jan Hagston (Vice President), Alex Tsakmakis (Executive Support)