

A false dichotomy: human and social capital outcomes from adult LLN courses

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Introduction

The Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ACCI) recently published its *Skills for a nation: A blueprint for improving education and training 2007-2117* (ACCI 2007), a wide ranging report outlining the Australian business perspective on education and training. This report is significant in so far as the business perspective appears to hold considerable sway in the current educational climate in Australia as recent *Literacy Link* articles have indicated. With specific reference to adult literacy and numeracy courses the report states:

While the human capital agenda in adult literacy is worthwhile and necessary, it could go further. Through Workplace English Language and Literacy (WELL) and the Language, Literacy and Numeracy Programme (LLNP) the federal government has had some influence on LLN development, but at the ground level, implementation is still strongly focused towards achieving "social capital" outcomes. (ACCI 2007: 183)

As the authors of a recent National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER) study on the social capital outcomes of adult LLN courses (Balatti, Black & Falk 2006), we find the above ACCI statement and its implications both confusing and inaccurate. First of all, we do not accept the dichotomy it establishes between a worthwhile and necessary "human capital" approach to adult LLN, and by implication, less worthy and less necessary "social capital" outcomes. Further, on the basis of our research, we found little evidence that LLN development at the ground level "is still strongly focused towards achieving 'social capital' outcomes". On the contrary, we found quite the reverse, that since the early 1990s the human capital agenda has predominated and that an interest in social capital outcomes is new in the adult LLN field (Black, Balatti & Falk 2006).

The case we have made in our research is that while adult LLN courses do result in social capital outcomes, until

now they have been largely unrecognized and their value unknown. Our research demonstrated the value of social capital outcomes and leads us to claim that both forms of capital should be valued highly as outcomes.

Misunderstanding social capital

It is impossible to know what the ACCI means by social capital and this is a weakness in their report. It is likely their meaning does not accord with recent literature on the subject. Our understanding is informed by the social capital framework developed by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (2004:14). It is based primarily on how and the extent to which people relate with each other in social networks. Thus, when we refer to social capital outcomes from adult LLN courses, we refer to the way

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people *change* in terms of social networks. For example, these changes may be changes in levels of trust between people, changes in the number and nature of the different groups to which people belong, changes in the support people receive or give in groups, and changes in activities undertaken within one's regular groups (bonding), different groups (bridging) and links to institutions (linking).

Prior to our NCVER research it was uncertain from the literature that there were in fact social capital outcomes from adult LLN courses because so few studies had addressed the issue. This was the reason the NCVER commissioned our research, to identify if there were such outcomes. There was little evidence also in our research that teachers of adult LLN courses focused on social capital outcomes; moreover, social capital appeared not to be a concept they consciously identified with. Thus we find the ACCI's claim that adult LLN provision "is still strongly focused towards achieving 'social capital' outcomes" to be completely unsubstantiated through research.

Valuing human and social capital outcomes

Clearly, most students improve their technical skills in reading, writing and numeracy through attending adult LLN courses. But these improved human capital skills of themselves are no guarantee that people will get jobs or improve their socio-economic well being. Very often getting a job can be as dependent on who people know and their ability to mix with others as it does on the technical skills they may have. For example, in our research we interviewed one young student in an adult basic education course who appeared to make little progress in improving his LLN skills. But this student made gains in other areas. He entered the basic education course as a school drop-out, as one who hated teachers, the police and authority figures generally. As he stated in an interview, the most important outcome of the course for him was his new found respect for authority figures which resulted from the way he was taught in the basic education course: "I seen that they ... treat me the way they should... so I treat them with a lot more respect". Following the course he had sufficient confidence to go out and get part time work because he could now deal with "authority figures". This was a case of social capital outcomes being produced in the immediate context of the course, which led to social capital outcomes outside the course (see Balatti, Black & Falk 2006: 28). Successful job outcomes in this case had little to do with improved skills in literacy or numeracy.

Another adult basic education student, a non-English speaking background mother of a teenager, explained that she improved her language and literacy skills to the extent that she was now able to communicate effectively with her son's school by writing letters to teachers, attending parent-teacher nights and negotiating with teachers for her son to receive ESL assistance. In this case, it was the improvement in her technical LLN skills (human capital) that in turn led to her interacting with her son's teachers (i.e. social capital outcomes) outside the course.

These are just two examples which serve to highlight social capital outcomes which hitherto had not been recognized or at least not reported from adult LLN courses. The first example demonstrates the value of social capital outcomes alone, and the second example shows how human and social capital outcomes together can contribute to improved well-being.

The main point to be made in this brief response to one statement in the ACCI report is that human and social capital outcomes in this adult LLN context should not be seen as competing, but rather as complementary to each other. One form of capital is not superior to the other, and in many cases they require each other to achieve socio-economic well-being. Sometimes the interrelationships between human and social capital outcomes can be quite complex. Recently major international organizations such as the OECD (2001) have examined the role of social capital and how it inter-relates with human capital. Similarly, the Productivity Commission (2003) in Australia is showing considerable interest in the concept. The ACCI, if it examines the literature, may find that social capital outcomes from adult LLN courses have the potential to be recognized as significant contributors to socio-economic development.

If we can draw any comfort from the ACCI statement, it is that the concept of social capital has found its way into mainstream discussions involving adult literacy and numeracy. It's just a shame that the concept appears to have been misrepresented in this case. ■

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ACAL eNews ACAL's electronic newsletter

ACAL eNews is ACAL's electronic newsletter with links and short, sharp national and state news. It's available to anyone interested in adult literacy and numeracy.

To receive a copy just email acal@pacific.net.au with your name and 'ACAL eNews Subscribe' in the subject line.

It's completely different material to *Literacy Link*, the print newsletter you're reading now.

Interactive Ochre – a new web-based resource

Haley Beck

Feature

When European people first came to Australia there were at least some 250 Aboriginal languages and more than 600 dialects. But after European contact, many languages were lost forever when Aboriginal people were moved from their traditional lands and, in some instances, forbidden to speak their native tongue. Well over 150 of Australia's Aboriginal languages have disappeared and only a few are expected to survive this century.

Many Aboriginal people speak more than one language – each of their parents may have differing original Aboriginal language backgrounds and they may also know the languages of others they relate to. In fact, standard Australian English may be their second, third or even fourth language and often their second English dialect.

Today, the most commonly used dialect is Aboriginal English, which is a different dialect to standard Australian English. It uses English vocabulary but often the meanings of the words are different, such as an 'Aunty' in Aboriginal English is a courtesy title given out of respect to an Elder or community leader, not only a blood relative. This 'language barrier' can lead to misunderstandings, such as non-Indigenous work colleagues thinking nepotism may be occurring in the workplace when in fact the person maybe highly regarded within the community.

Also, the sounds, the grammar, the text form, the rules of language use and the way knowledge and experience are conceptualised in thought, are also heavily influenced by the diverse Aboriginal languages. These differences can easily lead to 'language barrier' and misunderstandings.

It's not just the spoken word that Aboriginal people use to communicate. Body language, hand signals and gestures all play their part. Again, this can lead to misunderstanding. Did you know, for example, that many Aboriginal people find it rude to make eye contact when speaking?

Language is an extremely important element of Indigenous culture as *Interactive Ochre* a new cultural awareness interactive CD-ROM resource, reveals.

Using the tradition of storytelling, it looks at the impact of European settlement, Indigenous traditions (language, lore and the Dreaming), racism and working with Aboriginal people through animation, video clips, song, graphics and pictures.

The pioneering piece of work was produced by the national training system's e-learning strategy, the Australian Flexible Learning Framework, in partnership with the Aboriginal Education Program of TAFESA.

More than 100 Indigenous people from all over Australia were involved in the production of the e-learning resource, which can be dipped into for a few minutes or provide up to five days of in-depth training.

Among them was Patricia Konigsberg, a teacher, a linguist and the manager of the Aboriginal Literacy Strategy in Western Australia. Patricia grew up as a dialect speaker herself and is fluent in four additional languages.

"*Interactive Ochre* provides a really good introduction to people working with Aboriginal people to help them understand that Aboriginal English is a language in its own right, with its own structure, rules and complexity.

"But Aboriginal English is not a widely valued language and this can lead to disengagement. It needs to be more widely accepted.

"When a student starts to read and write they might make 'mistakes' if you are looking at it from a standard Australian English point of view. But they could be writing down something that is perfectly accurate while using the features of their own dialect – their mother-tongue.

"If the student keeps getting their work marked 'incorrect' then it has real repercussions. They won't feel valued, they won't want to contribute to class and they will feel school has nothing to offer them. They won't want to go to school. The teacher sees the student as deficient but what is really happening is the teacher doesn't recognise the language and knowledge that they do possess.

"*Interactive Ochre* really impressed me in the way it introduces perspectives of Aboriginal culture. It's perfect for people working with Aboriginal students or employees to understand where, from a language and cultural point of view, they are coming from."

The multimedia resource was designed to train public service employees who work with Indigenous people in areas such as health, policing, courts, housing, education and transport. However, its versatility means it is just as valuable a resource to schools, colleges and universities.

A vodcast from New South Wales Labor MP Linda Burney features in the language section. She states: "I'm a member of the Wiradjuri nation and we have a huge land area, the Wiradjuri. Of course we know in our culture that land and country and language are so fundamental to who we are and how we see ourselves. And I think that one of the unwritten tragedies...is the destruction or the neglect of protecting Aboriginal languages. There are only something like 50 or 60 viable languages left out of 600 or 700 languages and it is something that I cannot understand, how linguists and universities and governments and education systems and the Australian population are allowing the original languages of Australia to die, and die surely."

It has taken four years to produce *Interactive Ochre* due to the heavy consultation with a number of Aboriginal communities and permissions to use the photos and other materials.

There are six entry points:

History: An interactive timeline - with pictures, narration and video clips – representing the impact of European settlement and government policies.

Traditional perspectives: Avatar representations of Indigenous people explain the importance of traditions such as land and sea, language, dreaming, and lore.

Racism: Definitions of covert, overt, systemic racism and discrimination are backed up by video clips and 3D animated stories of Indigenous people who have experienced racism first-hand.

Moving on: The song animation *Serious Minds* looks at human rights and improving lifestyles for Indigenous people without racism or discrimination. This section explains the way forward from Indigenous perspectives

Working with Aboriginal people: Two songs (*Newsflash* and *If But Maybe*) written and produced by Aboriginal artists introduce a workplace guide and many of the issues facing Aboriginal people today.

Laurel Williams is from Biripi country in New South Wales. Her vodcast revealed: "...a lot of people have come to believe that there are no languages maintained in New South Wales – and we know that's incorrect. I'm happy to say that there's a group in the Hunter region in New South Wales where I'm currently living that is recording the Awabakal language and that will be excellent if that can be maintained and taught in schools - like the New Zealand mob, you know, people speak Maori over there, black, white or stripey. Wouldn't it be lovely to be able to talk to your own countrymen in your own language? And the same thing is happening with the Biripi language. So that's exciting, and I think that's where we're going now, into the future is that we're recognising how important some of those traditional practices are, but putting them into a practical contemporary usage and for the languages that's teaching it in communities and in schools."

Interactive Ochre has been created using infotainment to engage the learner. It means teachers and trainers can select the media they feel most appropriate, and learners can follow their own learning path.

Aboriginal activist Professor Lowitja O'Donoghue AC, CBE, said it was one of the most powerful training tools she had ever seen to "bridge the gap between Indigenous and white Australians".

"This is a no-holds barred look at Indigenous culture," said Prof O'Donoghue. "There are graphical stories of racism but not from a 'poor bugger me' point of view. For Aboriginal people racism is par for the course. When an audience sees and hears these stories they are genuinely shocked. *Interactive Ochre* may just make some people take a step back and think about their actions."

The title *Interactive Ochre* came from combining a traditional resource of Aboriginal people – ochre – with the word 'interactive' to reflect the use of new technologies.

Priced at \$400, once purchased an organisation can download the CD-ROM onto their server or make additional copies providing the resource is not 'on-sold' or lent to another organisation. ■

To preview *Interactive Ochre* visit:
<http://toolboxes.flexiblelearning.net.au/series9/907.htm>

The New Zealand government is putting strong emphasis on the quality and relevance of tertiary education provision and this is reflected in the approach being adopted to raise adults' literacy, numeracy and language (foundation) learning.

The Learning for Living project was launched in 2004 as a cross-government initiative to promote effective adult foundation learning. To ensure the best outcomes for learners from the project, Learning for Living comprises six government agencies working on different initiatives from educational, labour productivity and social welfare perspectives towards the same objective – raising adult literacy, numeracy and language skills nationally.¹

Achieving this objective will require a number of changes and shifts in behaviour at governmental and organisational level towards foundation learning before more learners can be brought into the system. A staged approach to change is being implemented:

- improving teaching capability
- ensuring that the tertiary infrastructure supports the delivery of high quality programmes
- improving access for learners.

New Zealand policy makers were keen to base all decisions on sound research evidence when planning how to lift quality and capability of provision. A strong feature of the project therefore has been its emphasis on research evidence to find out what works well when teaching adults.

A literature review of effective aspects of literacy, numeracy and language teaching and programmes proved influential and formed the basis of ongoing work and shaped policy decisions. It highlighted the importance of:

- appropriately trained teachers
- deliberate acts of literacy and numeracy teaching
- learning placed in context of learner's authentic everyday requirements
- accurate assessment of a learner's literacy needs.

The research evidence has underpinned the project's emphasis on professional development. The project continues to commission research to gain better understanding of particular issues. A current research focus is on improving outcomes for Maori learners.

One of the most important findings from the research was that literacy, numeracy and language skills are learned most efficiently through deliberate acts of teaching. Providers and tutors need to be able to identify the skill levels of individual learners and develop focused teaching to address the gaps. Teaching must be delivered by tutors with the appropriate skills. Professional development for tutors therefore became a focus for the project. This was implemented by the establishment of the clusters mentioned in the July issue of *Literacy Link* and also through professional development workshops.

A central principle for all professional development initiatives has been that both tutors and education managers

The Learning for Living approach

The July issue of Literacy Link introduced New Zealand's Learning for Living project which aims to raise adults' literacy, numeracy and language skills. That article focused on one aspect of the project – a sustained professional development initiative provided for tutors and education managers.

Andrew Pillay now looks at some of the strands of work encompassed by Learning for Living.

should participate in the workshops. The inclusion of the managers is seen as crucial for obtaining support for changes at an organisational level and to help spread the learning throughout the organisation.

The workshops have been well received by tutors and education managers, many describing earlier difficulty in finding suitable professional development courses, particularly in numeracy. Workshops are held over 4 to 5 days with a space of around one month between sessions in order for tutors and managers to try out and reflect on new teaching strategies. The content and format of the workshops are continually being adjusted based on feedback collected from participants and the recommendations of researchers evaluating the workshops. Workshops are typically over-subscribed weeks in advance.

Another aspect of the professional development of tutors is the establishment of a professional teaching workforce.

Previously, adult literacy courses were largely the domain of volunteer tutors. Volunteer tutors continue to be important, but requirements of society and industry have changed. Today adults need greater skills to participate in a knowledge-based, globalised society. The research tells us that to achieve that objective, we need trained tutors.

The New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA) is one of the partner government agencies in the Learning for Living project. Its primary function is to coordinate the administration and quality assurance of national qualifications in New Zealand.

This year NZQA has introduced new qualifications for adult literacy educators. Adult literacy and numeracy tutors can now enrol in national certificate courses, including one for vocational tutors and on-the-job trainers and one for specialist literacy or numeracy tutors.

NZQA has also established national Foundation Learning Quality Assurance requirements and education provider self-review guide. From 1 January 2009, the regular quality audits that NZQA conducts on providers will also include a foundation learning quality assurance component. These steps are integral to lifting quality of provision. The audit will help highlight evidence of good teaching and organisational practice and improve the overall quality of adult literacy, numeracy and language learning.

The importance of authenticity of context was highlighted by the research. For many adults seeking help with their reading or numeracy, this means placing the learning within the context of a work setting. Embedding literacy, numeracy and language in industry training is one way

to target people with low skills in the workplace. The government has funded a pilot to develop approaches to embedding literacy, numeracy and language in existing qualifications and programmes of study through the industry training sector.

At the same time as improving the quality and supply of provision, the government is seeking to raise demand amongst employers for literacy, numeracy and language training in the workplace. In 2006 government funded a three year pilot programme to set up partnerships between employers, providers, and other partners with an interest in raising workforce skills to deliver literacy training in the workplace and discover what kinds of delivery work best for employers and employees.

Research also stressed the importance of sound assessment practices. New Zealand education providers are well aware of the need for assessment and many use their own assessment tools, but a national assessment tool, providing consistent information of learners' current skill levels, has not been available. Government is therefore funding the development of an online national assessment tool for adults with foundation learning needs.

The assessment tool will be built upon the draft Foundation Learning Progressions.

The progressions describe the key learning steps taken by adult learners as they strengthen their expertise. They will help tutors and learners identify current skill levels, specify goals, measure progress and plan effective programmes.

The crucial component in the Learning for Living initiative is funding. Tutors have been consistently found to be highly committed and enthusiastic, but need assistance to attain government's objective for the teaching workforce. To help encourage tutors to take up the new qualifications, study grants are available, provided by the Tertiary Education Commission, New Zealand's tertiary funding agency.

Government has provided additional funding to expand provision of current programmes, particularly to those in low-skilled occupations. Industry training organisations, which coordinate workplace training and qualifications, receive extra funding in recognition of the increased cost of purchasing literacy, numeracy and language training. Approximately 3,500 industry trainees will receive extra training to increase their literacy, numeracy and language skills.

New Zealand has a significant challenge ahead, but a co-ordinated government approach backed by solid research evidence will help our committed teaching workforce ensure improvements for our adult learners. ■

Note

1 Unlike Australia, New Zealand does not have individual state governments.

Technology in the workplace

Steve Goldberg has been the Coordinator of the Reading Writing Hotline, a national adult literacy referral service funded by DEST and managed by TAFE NSW Access and General Education Curriculum Centre since 2000.

Few of us nowadays can avoid using technology and as teachers, we recognize that literacy and technology often go hand in hand. But many callers who ring the Reading Writing Hotline seeking to become literacy volunteers express surprise that literacy is much more than books, newspapers and filling out forms.

Last week, I took a call from a supervisor at an automotive parts dealership who was seeking specific help for a young female employee who had recently begun working behind the counter in customer service.

Unbeknownst to the caller, I was last year, one of that company's customers and from my own experience am versed in exactly the kinds of workplace literacy using technology tasks this new employee had to master.

A plastic "widget" which connects lengths of rubber tubing from my ten-year-old car's windscreen wipers to the water tank under the bonnet had, due to age and heat, crumbled and needed replacing. I couldn't even think of the best word to describe the piece I needed, so I drove the car to the parts dealer. Once there, I managed to get the guy (who normally was not meant to leave the front counter) to come and have a look under the bonnet and see for himself the piece which needed replacing.

Back behind the counter, he brought up on the computer screen an avatar of the make and model of my car. Then, by dragging the mouse and enlarging the images, he honed in on the engine and moving from screen to screen, ultimately located the graphic image which included the part I was seeking. Another click of the mouse gave him the name of the part. A further click enabled him to locate which warehouse in Sydney had the part in stock as well as its price. Then, using an electronic form on another screen, while I dictated, he typed in my name, address and a contact phone number. He took my payment and electronically sent my order to the relevant warehouse where in turn, the order was processed and then delivered to my letterbox by courier later that day.

I found the whole process fascinating because it embodied exactly the kind of workplace 'literacy' challenge faced by many people working in service industries today.

The young woman who had now taken over the job clearly needed a range of skills in literacy and technology as well as having what we call generic employability skills. In her case, she needed underpinning knowledge about cars and parts, the ability to serve customers, skill in using technology using an industry-specific software program,

data entry skills, the ability to spell people's names, street addresses and suburbs and to accurately take dictation when such names are spelt out by the customer. She had to be able to perform these tasks accurately when under pressure – when I purchased the car part on that weekday morning there was a queue of customers, most of whom judging by their body language, seemed to be in a hurry.

Hopefully, this supervisor was able to negotiate an in-house commercial training arrangement with one of the RTOs on the Hotline database to whom he was referred. It is hard to

see how the immediate and most pressing goal of this employee, namely to keep her job, could be easily met within the walls of an educational institution. The software program is unlikely to be easily transferable to a computer within an education setting given all the licensing rules and costs, not to mention organizational restrictions and the business's own reservations about letting anyone but themselves have

access to it. Teaching this young woman is certainly a job for an adult literacy teacher and it is difficult to imagine how delivery away from the worksite in a classroom or learning centre could be effectively achieved.

Many employed callers telephone the Hotline because they have a precarious hold on their job. The percentage of employers ringing the Hotline has nearly doubled in the past two years. More often than not, they are seeking tailor-made provision for just one employee. Requests for workplace literacy provision are usually conveyed to us with a level of urgency and there is almost always a very specific technological component involved.

Although calls such as the one from the automotive parts dealer are becoming increasingly common, from where we sit, there is also a section of the wider community which still has a narrow outlook on what constitutes 'literacy.'

Prospective literacy volunteers who ring the Hotline often say how much they love reading books and express sorrow at the thought that there are people who cannot enjoy reading for pleasure. As a keen reader, I have to agree with them but most Hotline callers are seeking to improve their literacy and numeracy skills to hold onto the job they are doing, get a promotion or to retrain in order to embark on a new employment pathway. Reading novels is one thing, but judging from what most of our callers say, the novels can come later.

For more information on the Hotline visit www.literacyline.edu.au or telephone 1300 655 506. ■

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Adult Education as a Human Right

*At the recent WA Adult Literacy State Conference in Perth, **Melissa Jones** gave a talk aimed at persuading her WA audience to lobby for the inclusion of a Right to Education for adults in the new WA Human Rights Act. This is an edited version of her talk.*

Most of us here today have a sound understanding of why people come to Adult Literacy classes. You will be aware that participants attribute a huge variety of personal, academic and professional gains to their completion of such courses. I would like to tell you why I am hoping that we, as supporters of Adult Literacy, should lobby for the inclusion of a Right to a Basic Education for all in the WA Human Rights Act.

I am employed to assess people's literacy and make recommendations about courses of study or vocational training that may help them secure employment, enhance their capacity to cope or improve their level of education. On the whole this task is a positive experience, for me and for the people I assess. I credit that, at least in part, to the existence of Adult Literacy provision. Because of Adult Literacy, I feel hope for every person that walks through my door.

I think of one young woman I interviewed recently who whispered to me, "I only went to school a few times. I couldn't go because mum was on the run from dad and we had to keep moving house." She then began to cry and said she always wished she could go to school. "I want to know how to read," she said. What would my reply have been if we were not a country that provided a second chance for adults to gain the skills we associate with a basic level of education?

Adult Literacy courses provide a starting point. People are able to begin where they are, no pre-requisite. Let me ask you this question, "How much do you value the level of education you have achieved?" Think about it and then magnify those feelings. It is my experience that the great majority of people who have low levels of education place an even greater value on it. This is perhaps the single most surprising thing I have learnt as an Adult Literacy teacher. Upon reflection I decided it makes sense, as the saying goes, "You always want what you don't have." Those who have it have rarely experienced the difficulties of not having an education.

Thanks to Adult Literacy provision, people have choices. Its existence means that I do not have to say sorry, we can't help you, to anyone. I do not have to pass judgement on a person's goals or aspirations, I simply have to identify their needs and put them in touch with the assistance they require. The choice to return to these courses is being made by a growing number of Australians.

Providers are noticing that those attending Adult Literacy courses are also from an expanding demographic. Teachers and tutors have been accommodating these changes and it has resulted in great changes to the content and learning that takes place. It is wonderful to see teenagers

showing their significantly older peers (I won't specify an age!) how to send text and surf the net. It is also a thrill to see Australian born students helping those new to our country to understand slang and feel more comfortable in their community. You cannot deny that Adult Literacy courses are of great value, both to participants and the population as a whole.

Today I ask you not to accept the loss of adequately funded and resourced Adult Literacy provision and I propose that we aim to make the "Right to a Basic Education" part of a WA Human Rights Act. Let's make it a right for all, young or old because just as every child should be able to access quality education, so to should every adult. We would not accept our primary schools being closed and relocated to cheaper providers every few years, and we should not accept it for Adult Literacy provision. I have been a teacher in the LLNP (Language Literacy Numeracy Program) at times when contracts are up in the air due to lack of funds or end of a contract period. Although the contract was never lost in this instance, the students suffer as the environment becomes uncertain and unstable. We should remember that those attending may have relocated to be nearer provision, arranged childcare or just made difficult personal adjustments in order to attend. Many have issues that make it difficult to cope with change. We need a commitment from Government that Adult Literacy provision will be well funded, high quality and stable.



It is hoped that the introduction of a WA Human Rights Act will help develop a culture of human rights and promote greater awareness of and respect for Human Rights at all levels of government and throughout the community. If we are able to make the "Right to a Basic Education for All" part of the WA Human Rights Act the government would have to be conscious of this right and avoid infringing on the rights of those affected by any decision that is made. It would be a step forward at a time when we seem to be being asked to accept steps backward. ■

Understanding Money Pays Off

Robyn Quarmby joined the Financial Literacy Foundation (FLF) after a long career in education, both in the government and private sectors. In her role at FLF Robyn is working to develop links with the higher education and adult education sectors in order to promote financial literacy through these areas.

Looking for ideas to help your adult learners develop their financial literacy skills?

Why not explore the Financial Literacy Foundation's website www.understandingmoney.gov.au ?

This website has excellent ideas, resources and links that can support you in planning a series of engaging and practical sessions to develop the financial literacy skills of anyone from primary school through to retirement.

Some features of the website that may assist you in planning sessions include:

- a homepage with links to resources and tools to give hands on activities to complete online,
- a link to the educators and trainers page which explores, in more depth, resources and guidance for educators and trainers of all levels, and
- links to notes, tools and calculators to assist with developing budgets and setting financial goals.

The homepage is very "user friendly" allowing people to access information that is relevant to them at whatever stage of life they are at. Some of the headings include:

- **Getting started** provides the user with basic information about what financial literacy is about and how it can help us;

- **Put yourself in charge.** This section allows the user to access information relating to saving, budgeting, setting goals, investing and superannuation; and

- **Life happens!** This link provides material to assist students with financial literacy no matter what stage of life they are at or what financial decisions they may be facing.

The homepage also has two very useful financial tools to assist students evaluate where they are at in relation to their own "Financial Health."

- **Financial Health Check** – this quick questionnaire has been designed to assist people to better understand their spending and saving habits. It asks a series of questions related to everyday money situations ranging from credit card debt, unexpected bills and car loans. Responses are scored out of 100. At the end of the survey, a link is provided to advice that may help people improve their financial situation.
- **Budget Planner** – by recording their income and expenses, people can see exactly where their money goes and what changes they can make.

From a teacher's perspective the education pages on the website are also helpful in:

- providing a list of useful teaching resources which are classified according to education level;
- providing information regarding professional development support;
- providing links to the education frameworks and guides for preparing course and programs;
- providing information on planning programs for the workplace;
- showcasing case studies of programs that other people have run;
- providing links to programs for Indigenous Australians; and
- offering the opportunity to join the Educators and Trainers Network.

Understanding how money works is a lifelong skill. Whether people are starting work, purchasing a new home, having kids, receiving a windfall or retiring everyone needs to make decisions about money. The Understanding Money website contains a wealth of information to help people make better financial decisions at all stages of life. As teachers, you are in a great position to help them make these decisions more effectively.

The Financial Literacy Foundation's contact for the Adult and Community Education sector is:

Robyn Quarmby
Financial Literacy Foundation
Phone: 02 6263 3621
Facsimile: 02 6273 5465
Email: robyn.quarmby@treasury.gov.au

Should you require any information, don't hesitate to make contact.



Why you should read *Little Children are Sacred*

Cheryl Wiltshire – Vice-Chairperson WAALC

A personal view

Ampe Akelyernemane Meke Mekarle “*Little Children are Sacred*” is the report from the Northern Territory Board of Inquiry into the Protection of Aboriginal Children from Sexual Abuse. Since it was released in April this year, it has become one of the most widely known of a long series of reports into how Australian Indigenous people are faring. Have you read it?

I believe that all Australian educators need to read the report for themselves for three reasons:

- 1 Both Western and indigenous ways of knowing are represented. The report provides an interesting model of a two-way process of collecting and presenting complex and contentious information. Pat Anderson and Rex Wild co-chaired the inquiry. Pat Anderson is an Alyawarr woman from central Australia whose work in Indigenous health and community development is known internationally. Rex Wild brings the best Western legal tradition to the Inquiry, as a Queen's Counsel with 15 years of work in the Northern Territory justice system. Both voices are active throughout the report.
- 2 The extensive quotes offer us the chance to hear from Aboriginal people directly about the issues. Unless you are a member of an Aboriginal family yourself, you will be hard pressed to access this in any other way. To illustrate, I offer two quotes particularly pertinent to the role of language and literacy in the overall picture.

by discussing child sexual abuse in English you take it out of the hands of the people and into the white forum. By doing this the people will respond to what the white person wants rather than speaking truthfully. These types of issues need to be dealt with a bit more innovatively and intelligently utilising language. People need to feel like they own the story and then they will speak truthfully about it.
Alyawerre Elder (page 51)

We don't retain information – we hear teaching, especially in English and feel that we don't grasp what is being taught, and so it disappears. We go to school, hear something, go home, and the teaching is gone. We feel hopeless. Is there something wrong with our

heads because this English just does not work for us? In the end, we smoke marijuana to make us feel better about ourselves. But that then has a bad effect on us. We want to learn English words but the teachers cannot communicate with us to teach us. It is like we are aliens to each other. We need radio programs in language that can also teach us English. That way we will understand what we learn.

Two students aged 12 and 13 years who were asked by Yolngu Radio what they wanted to hear on the radio service (page 147)

- 3 Last, but not least, this report represents a part of current affairs and Australian history that many of us know far too little about. While it contains specific recommendations about education for Aboriginal people of all ages, I believe we educators need to read more than just this chapter. We need to know the truth of what is happening in our country right now, in all its complexity, and the *Little Children are Sacred* report may show everyone how each of us are contributing to the wrongs right now by accepting a mono-lingual, mono-cultural education system as the norm. Reading this report can also show non-Aboriginal readers which of the accepted services that most Australians take for granted are not available equally to Aboriginal people.

I plead with you not to write this off as only about a few people who live in remote communities in the centre of Australia. The central message of the report is that the sexual abuse of children is just part of wider problems that require far wider solutions than simply health and criminal justice responses. The Australian Government needs to lead these responses but what every single one of us knows and believes is also part of the solution. Ignorance is no excuse. ■

Literacy Link (ISSN 0158-3026) is the newsletter of the Australian Council for Adult Literacy (ACAL), 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—for your copy contact ACAL acal@pacific.net.au. Back issues are available from the ACAL website: www.acal.edu.au

Contributions to **Literacy Link** should be sent by email to acal@pacific.net.au

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DISCLAIMER

Material published in **Literacy Link** should not be viewed as endorsed by the Australian Council for Adult Literacy.

Focus on Literacy find out what the states are doing

Adult Learners' Week in NSW

NSW is hosting a variety of activities for Adult Learners' Week (ALW) in a variety of locations – both rural and metropolitan. While the focus may not be primarily on literacy, a number of the activities require literacy, or have literacy, as an enabling skill. The activities and locations also reflect the history of adult education in NSW – in libraries, community colleges and Schools of the Arts. Generally, the main adult literacy provider (TAFE) has not played a particularly visible role in Adult Learners' Week.

This year however, 'financial literacy' takes centre stage during ALW. There will be major workshops and meetings held in Sydney between economic leaders from a range of Asia-Pacific countries. Yes, APEC could be thought of as the main event during ALW. Leaders will get together in an 'informal, relaxed' retreat and hopefully learn from each other about how best to manage their economies (similar no doubt to programs being run in libraries across the state on 'Managing Your Budget'.) Most Sydneysiders may learn during this week what it's like to live in a military state. But, we are compensated by a public holiday on the 7th September – the day before International Literacy Day (ILD).

Libraries will be very active running activities and workshops – from finding out what your library can offer at Cabramatta, to launching a 6 week conversational English project for people from CALD communities at Bankstown.

The Adult Basic Education section at Randwick TAFE has been involved in a knitting project for 'Wrap with Love' and will celebrate ILD with a hand-over of their work to a representative from the organisation. This project has involved the literacy of instructions and the numeracy of patterns and measurement. Participants also investigated the countries where their wraps will be sent.

Creative writing is the topic of Anna Maria Dell'oso's workshop at Kogarah library, focusing on dramatic style and developing story telling skills. Also on the writing theme, is NSW AMES's migrant story competition in central Sydney with presentations on countries of origin and information stalls outlining further learning opportunities.

There are a number of computing sessions being run by local libraries across the state – on basic word processing, email, internet searching and digital photography.

Volunteering is also a theme of ALW. Oberon Library is running a workshop for volunteers to develop their leadership, communication and organisational skills. Macleay Valley Community College is also offering training (15 hours) on how to be an effective volunteer.

A free workshop will be held on financial literacy – or more accurately, 'home budgeting', at Tuggerah Lakes Community College. As well as a workshop on media

literacy to promote critical thinking and applying this to current news affairs (we could all do with that!). Marrickville Council is also running a session on managing your budget and finance, whereas Mosman Council is focusing on the importance of manners (for those non-NSW readers, Marrickville has a high ethnic, low socio-economic demographic, whereas Mosman is at the opposite end of the scale – mainly Anglo-Saxon with high incomes.)

Obviously, it would be no real celebration without a speech from a politician and the Hon. Verity Firth obliges by delivering the annual Dr Bob Frew Memorial Oration titled: 'The future of adult education in NSW' at the Sydney Mechanics School of Arts.

ABC radio will broadcast live from Robinson Community College (Broken Hill), talking to learners and tutors about their experiences.

And, and, and the list goes on. I've only mentioned a few of the activities listed on the ALW website (61 at the time of writing). Check it out for yourself and celebrate the richness of what's on offer: www.adultlearnersweek.org/calendar.html.

Jenny McGuirk

NSW Adult Literacy & Numeracy Council

VALBEC Twilight Forum For Adult Learners' Week

On Tuesday Sept 4th at the delightful North Fitzroy Star Hotel, VALBEC will host *A community of practice – reflections on two years together*.

It is a tradition that VALBEC holds a Twilight Forum in Adult Learners' Week and people will be invited to join a group of Melbourne writers and practitioners to consider what makes a community of practice. Discussion will centre around the elements that contribute towards sustaining and expanding a group that can lead to an outcome such as the book, *Fancy Footwork* adult educators thinking on their feet. Part of the attraction of this group was that it functioned independently of any institutions or organizations, although membership of VALBEC was a key thread.

Delia Bradshaw came up with the idea of starting a group of reflective women adult educators in April 2005. The book *Fancy Footwork* was launched by Helen Macrae at the VALBEC Annual Conference in May 2007. What took place between was a series of unique and magical encounters in either Bev's or Delia's homes with much laughter and sharing of stories, observations, reflections, tea and biscuits. The book, *Fancy Footwork*, and the writers' insights will be used as a focus to invite participants to share their own ideas and experiences of communities of practice.

The Twilight Forum provides a venue for meeting with colleagues and engaging in dialogues around current issues and practice.

Drinks and light refreshments of platters of dips and breads will be available from 6.30 for a 7.00pm start.

RSVP info@valbec.org.au

World To Be Queensland's Oyster with Learning Activities

If Queenslanders thought learning was just about talks and textbooks, they're about to get some exciting lessons with a host of exciting and innovative activities planned for the state's celebrations of Adult Learners' Week (1 - 8 September 2007).

With a focus on literacy, the week will feature learning opportunities as diverse as belly-dancing workshops, tips on writing resumes, boosting internet skills and lessons on researching family histories.

State coordinator Jana Muzik said Queenslanders would embrace the chance to boost their knowledge.

"We are known as the Smart State, and the Queensland Government is always looking for ways to deliver and support programs that encourage learning," Ms Muzik said.

"The foundations start in early childhood and school, carrying on to vocational education and training, tertiary opportunities and beyond.

"We know that learning is a lifelong journey and this week is one of the best ways to promote that."

Ms Muzik said 51 organisations across Queensland would share in more than \$46,000 funding to host learning events, with a strong focus on literacy and technology.

"As Queensland is Australia's most decentralised state, we have to ensure that people in regional, rural and remote areas know how to keep up with our ever-changing technology, so there will be workshops in regional areas including teach computer and internet skills," she said.

"With technology as a focus for older people, another workshop will give high school students the chance to teach others how to use mobile phones with lessons in texting and taking photos.

"Some of the other workshops will focus on different writing styles, financial literacy and even craft activities — all of which will help people learn different skills and boost their confidence in the community."

A host of free adult workshops called *Learning Tasters* will also be offered at the State Library of Queensland in Brisbane to showcase courses and activities that encourage adults back into the workforce, and to keep active in their community.

The 2007 Adult Learners' Week Awards will also be presented to those who have shown great achievements in adult learning.

As part of national activities and an international festival of adult learning, Adult Learners' Week is coordinated in Queensland by the Department of Education, Training and the Arts.

For more information on activities in Queensland, visit www.education.qld.gov.au/community/events/alw ■

Adult Learners' Week in South Australia

Adult Learners' Week represents an opportunity to encourage participation in learning, celebrate the success of learners, and promote those places where learning takes place. Peak agencies such as SACAL, learning providers and government agencies in South Australia all contribute something to ensuring the success of Adult Learners' Week.

SACAL is one of those organisations taking an active role during Adult Learners' Week in 2007, sponsoring one of the eight South Australian Adult Learners' Week Awards that will be presented at an Awards Dinner to be held on Thursday August 30. The SACAL award for 'Volunteer Literacy and Numeracy Tutor of the Year' will recognise an individual for outstanding service and contribution as an adult learning volunteer in the area of literacy and numeracy.

SACAL will also take part in a 'Streets of Learning' project to highlight and promote the learning in which people can become involved in their local communities.

We all look forward to another successful and fun week. ■

Jan Peterson
SACAL

Three projects planned for regional centres in Western Australia

Maths 4 Mums

Dardanup mothers of primary school aged children can participate in this series of six workshops over five days and learn to use the tactile education equipment of the Montessori method to increase their skills and confidence in supporting their children's maths learning at school. The activities will include demonstrations of maths equipment and time for participants to work with the equipment themselves. A detailed manual for participants will be provided. The aim is to supplement basic maths knowledge and help mothers to become conscious of how they learn maths, so that they can provide useful help to their children. Hopefully the mums will overcome mental barriers to maths and mathematical thinking; get familiar with the primary school mathematics curriculum; increase their own maths confidence; and learn how to support the their children's learning.

Broadcasting for Beginners

This event will be held over two Saturdays during Adult Learners' Week and will be open to all adult members of the Collie community. An experienced community broadcasting trainer associated with Murdoch University will provide informal sessions of hands-on training including the use of studio desktop equipment to record, edit and broadcast material. The training will also cover topics such as understanding the "radio voice", tone, pronunciation and style leading to an appreciation of the importance of ▶

Adult Learners' Week

the proper use of "on-air" language. Broadcasting ethics and defamation issues will also be covered. Participants will all have the experience of planning and putting together a radio program, getting to use the studio equipment to create and record their own material. They will all learn about being an effective presenter and receive a package of instructional and reference material.

Lost in Cyber Space?

Those members of the Esperance community struggling to get the better of new technolog(y)ies will be able to attend a series of two-hour sessions scheduled at different times over the course of a week. Presentations under the headings of "What is it?" and "How do I use it?" will demystify the workings of IPODs/MP3 players; set top boxes; mobile phones; digital cameras, camcorders and video cameras; DVD writers; DVD recorders; and play stations. There will also be information about buying and selling on the internet including free offers, booking holidays, flights, accommodation, Ebay, banking, research, investing and stocks and shares. The sessions will give demonstrations, provide basic advice and encourage participants to "have a go". Follow up opportunities will also be made available. ■

Each man supplied us with a recipe that they can cook, which is included in dot-point form. All the recipes work.

What's For Dinner

What's For Dinner? Is a one-act play with four scenes for four or five actors. It should take less than ten minutes. It is about Jeffrey, a students, who moves out of home and into a share-house.

The action takes place in the living room of the family home in Carlton, and a scruffy bedroom in a share-house in Fitzroy. The two rooms can appear on the stage at the same time.

Driving

Driving comprise a collection of photographs around toe topic of driving, as well as a first-person narrative by a young man whose car broke down.

The Little Book Of Poems

The Little Book of Poems comprises thirteen poems of various forms and styles, some illustrated with photographs. Each poem is followed by comments by the poet about how or why they wrote it.

Some of the poems follow traditional forms: cinquain, limerick, haiku, sonnet and prose poem, while others are free form or an invented form to express the poet's meaning.

Aspects of poetry that are demonstrated include: meaning, images, rhythm, rhyme and storytelling.

Target Readership and Market

Series Two is suitable for adult literacy students who have reached a higher level of proficiency as well as secondary students who literacy level may be at the lower level than that of their peer group. Teachers in this field often resort to primary school material, which doesn't have appropriate content for secondary school students.

ESL classes from secondary school through to adults provide a third audience for this material.

Previous Publications – Read Series One (2004)

Series One comprises seven titles and a resource book. The titles deal with familiar situations and topics. They range from simple collections of photographs and captions, to more complex stories with a variety of text styles. Each title provides topics for discussion.

The resource book comprises work list and activities relation to all the titles in Series One. They involve reading and writing, speaking and listening, comprehension and interpretation.

This series may also be useful for adult ESL students, and secondary school students whose literacy level may be below that of their peers.

Both sets of resources are distributed through NCELTR. www.nceltr.mq.edu.au/publications or 02 9850 7966. ■

Read Series Two

reviewed by Debbie Soccio

The *Read Series Two* is a set of five A5 books that have recently been published by NCELTR, and has been developed to provide literacy teachers with interesting and engaging reading material for adult learners. Each book is beautifully photographed in black and white and designed to appeal to both teachers and learners.

Read Series Two (2007) comprises five titles and a resource book. Each book is made up of black and white photographs and text, and continues to deal with familiarity situations and topics. They are more complex than the *Read Series One* books, with more words in each title, but still use simple, plain English and a mixture of text styles. They contain thematic collections of photographs and captions, interviews, recipes, a story, poetry and a play. Each title provides topics for discussions.

Titles in Read Series Two

Things People Do

Things People Do contains diverse images of people doing different leisure activities, from sports to crafts and music. The text is a series of first person accounts by individuals explaining what they like to do, and why.

Blokes Can Cook

Blokes Can Cook contains images of men and their cars (or bike and lawnmower) with comments about their cars.

Stories that bear witness: the VALBEC History Project

Beverley Campbell

The quality of this publication (Fine Print) will bear witness to our professional approach to solving some of the literacy problems of the adult requiring literacy tutoring.

These words written by Trish Pearson, Convenor of the Public Relations Committee of the Victorian Adult Literacy Council (VALC) appeared in *Fine Print*, Vol. 6, in 1979. VALC's newsletter was not yet a year old and this statement expresses some of the hopes of what *Fine Print* as a publication, and VALC as an organisation, might become for the adult literacy profession. Now nearly thirty years later the VALBEC History Project is documenting how, even though adult literacy pedagogies, policies and provision have changed, and even though *Fine Print* has changed in format and content, as an organisation and as a journal they continue to bear witness to the professionalism of the adult literacy field. To commemorate how *Fine Print* has 'borne witness', and to celebrate thirty years of VALBEC's professional life, the current VALBEC committee has commissioned the VALBEC History Project.

At this stage the VALBEC History Project is still a work in progress but a close reading of back copies of *Fine Print* has given me a working structure. The articles in *Fine Print* have stories to tell about the adult literacy field in Victoria in the last thirty years - about the struggles of the field, about the commitment of the professionals in the field, about the changes professionals have had to negotiate in that time. And *Fine Print* articles will be used to tell the story of VALBEC's episodic journey through the last thirty years. This story unfolds as a *Bildungsroman* of sorts, as it tracks how VALBEC as a professional body has developed a professional identity, through periods of relative stability and through periods of major change and irruption. The contents of thirty years of *Fine Print* tell a compelling story of a field becoming professionalised as it grapples with the complexity of changing professional practices.

The life of *Fine Print* falls roughly into two fifteen year eras. In the first era (1979-1993), VALBEC's influence as a professional organisation in the formation of adult literacy professional identity was almost entirely uncontested. *Fine Print*, which then appeared six times a year, played an integral role in that process of professional formation. After a quote from Heather Houghton, Executive Officer of VALBEC (1983-1997), I have called this first era the bootstraps era. This was a time of enormous commitment and energy, as the organisation moved from grass roots movement to professional association, and as it established its identity as a professional body supporting a burgeoning adult literacy field. And this first era might be seen as a period of relative stability, a time of limited resources and creative solutions, when language experience and personal writing was the accepted pedagogy, when

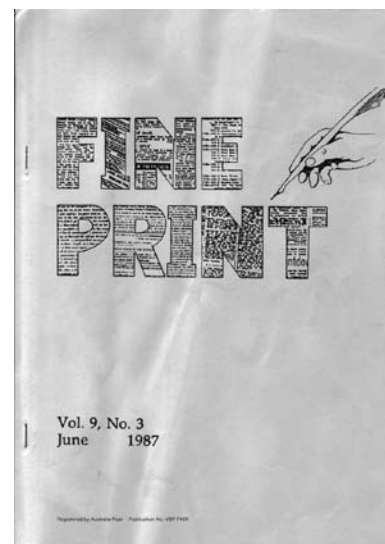
volunteers and one-one tuition was the order of the day, and people remember working together in an atmosphere of cooperation and mutual concern. Voices countering these accepted practices were heard, but only in a limited way against the weight of *Fine Print* articles promoting accepted educational philosophies.

In 1993 radical changes in the format of *Fine Print* signal changes in content which reflect the increasing multidiscursivity of the field. So after a quote from Dale Pobega's first editorial in *Fine Print* 1993, I have called the second era of the VALBEC History, 'Voices and versions of the literacy story'. This era tells a different and more complex story, when articles in *Fine Print* echo the multiple voices in the field offering competing pedagogical and policy positions, and when VALBEC became just one voice among many shaping the professional life of the field.

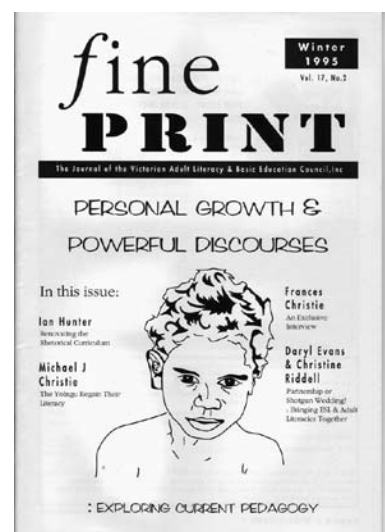
In addition to selected *Fine Print* articles illustrating some of the major debates and pedagogical trends of the last thirty years, extracts from interviews with some of the key people who have played a part in VALBEC's organisational life will help to flesh out the adult literacy story. These extracts and other material will give different perspectives on the way events of the adult literacy story have unfolded in Victoria.

In another thirty years the VALBEC story will tell of different people and the changed professional practices of those working to 'solve some of the literacy problems of the adult requiring literacy tutoring'. But for now it seems fitting that the publication arising out of the current VALBEC History Project bears witness to the many people who have kept the organisation alive and the diverse debates which have given the organisation its life-blood.

Beverley Campbell has been involved in adult literacy education since 1983, working in community education, professional development, higher education and research. The debates and struggles of the adult literacy field recounted in the VALBEC History Project are part of her own professional journey. VALBEC has played an important role in Beverley's professional life, including the years she served as VALBEC president, 1989-91.



June 1987 (above) Winter 1995 (below)



QCAL 2007 State Conference

16 – 17 November

Kite Flying: Running with ideas – Accepting challenges, extending practice, engaging learners

Visit www.qcal.org.au for further details

VALBEC conference report – Living Literacies

Friday May 4th
William Angliss Conference centre

Living Literacies were colourfully illustrated in song at the beginning and end of the conference. At 9.00am the capacity audience of 170 were soon singing along with Chris Falk about '*rhythm and syncopation*' which reminded everyone of the simple foundations of literacy and numeracy that are taken for granted in our everyday lives. The mood was set for a day of engagement and stimulation.

The delightful Uncle Herb called in to play a gumleaf welcome that segued perfectly into the keynote address. Margaret Somerville explored new literacies and the place of stories in our students' lives with her moving and thought provoking keynote address combining images, words and song. We all responded to Archie Roach's haunting voice that blended with her presentation with powerful impact. Her journey and work with indigenous Australians was conveyed warmly and honestly and struck chords with the audience on many levels.

Throughout the program of eighteen workshops there were many opportunities to consider innovative teaching strategies and approaches to a range of adult learners. Each session was presented professionally by practitioners using a range of stimulus such as film, science, computer technology, everyday numeracy, theatre and even mobile phones. Observing each room during these sessions there was a real buzz of enthusiasm, commitment and energy emanating mixed with much talk and laughter. The high standard and range of presentations was much commented on in the evaluations and amongst the crowd at morning tea and lunch.

The much anticipated two hour session conducted by

Dave Tout and Philippa McLean from the CAE focused on the new CGEA. It was hugely popular and fully subscribed with 50 participants. It complemented the pre-conference 'communities of practice' sessions held at VU and attended by 47 people on Thursday night followed by a dinner. The 'hands on' approach adopted in these sessions gave participants opportunities to share knowledge and develop clearer understandings of the work ahead implementing the new CGEA to take back to their workplaces. Engaging with the documents and having questions answered in an open forum were effective strategies.

The renowned writer and story teller, Arnold Zable brought everyone together for a final keynote at the end of the day that was in equal measures emotional and humorous. He reminded us of the importance of stories in our lives and the privilege of being a listener in our role as teacher. The points he made about the transformative power of story echoed Margaret's words from the start of the day.

The performance that emerged from the Songs and Meaning workshop was a perfect coda to the day and so beautifully completed the program.

The conference review and close had a nice feel of collegiality as some of our colleagues from past times arrived. The refreshments in the foyer that followed gave time for continued conversations and this year provided a platform for the book launch of Fancy Footwork adult educators thinking on their feet, a collection of writing by women adult educators. The conference was a success and as always thanks to the generosity and commitment of so many wonderful people. It really is a highpoint of the year and achieved VALBEC's goal of providing high quality professional development to its members and the ALBE field.

Thank you to ACFE for funding support and to all the presenters and members who support the conference each year. We trust that you will all come back next year for the 30 year celebrations. ■

Lynne Matheson

◀ Continued from page 16

If you weren't able to join the *Literacy Live* session live, or would like to listen to any of the previous *Literacy Live* sessions, the podcasts are available on the ACAL website at www.acal.edu.au. Follow the link to the *Literacy Live* room and then to the archived session of your choice.

Thanks again to Michael Coghlan for leading us in this *Literacy Live* session.

What's happening in September?

Next month, we are pleased to announce two exciting *Literacy Live* sessions.

The first will be a link to the ACAL AGM to be held in Auckland, New Zealand at the ACAL Conference. We encourage you to be part of ACAL history and join the first ACAL virtual AGM at 6:00pm (AEST) for a 6:15pm start, on Thursday 27th September in the *Literacy Live* room. If

you are joining us for this event, please register at acal@pacific.net.au

The second event in the *Literacy Live* room in September will be held during the ACAL Conference and will provide a link to the keynote presentation made by Dr Heide Spruck-Wrigley on Friday 28th September at 12:30pm (AEST). This keynote is scheduled for 30 minutes, so why not organise a lunchtime gathering at work for your colleagues? Again, if you are interested in hearing Helen speak please register at acal@pacific.net.au to ensure a seat is reserved in the *Literacy Live* room. Heide is a highly respected literacy practitioner and researcher from the US, well known for her work on English language as well as literacy.

For more information about any of the *Literacy Live* sessions, or if you have any ideas for a future session, please contact Debbie at Debbie.Soccio@vu.edu.au. ■

At least 10 Tips
for Effectively
Facilitating a
Literacy Live
Session

Date for your Diary

27 September - ACAL AGM

This year, ACAL is experimenting with holding the AGM as a virtual event. We hope that this means more ACAL members will participate.

How can you join in? Log into **Literacy Live** on the evening of **27 September** and join the meeting. This is the address <http://literacylive.ivocalize.net/> See below for the times and the details about how to book yourself a place at the meeting.

If you have not visited the *Literacy Live* Conference Room before make sure you have a practice run before the meeting. You can email someone on the ACAL Executive Committee and set up a date to meet in the room and check your settings. The email addresses of committee members can be found on the back page of *Literacy Link*. You will need a password to use *Literacy Live*.

Group events face-to-face There will be a room full of ACAL members in Auckland, New Zealand, hooked into *Literacy Live*. All ACAL members attending the Conference are invited to attend face-to-face. We will have speakers and a big screen for the data projector. The meeting will be chaired from this site.

Other face-to-face meetings may also be hosted by some of the State Councils. The participants will be able to attend the ACAL AGM through a hook-up similar to the one in NZ. Please contact your State Council to see if a similar event is planned in a location near you.

ACAL Membership and Nominations. We have written to all financial ACAL members seeking nominations for Office Bearer positions on the Executive Committee (President, Vice- President, Secretary and Treasurer). If you are not an ACAL member, but would like to become one, please visit the ACAL website www.acal.edu.au where you can join on-line. To nominate or vote you need to be a financial member by **Friday 21 September**.

Deadline for Nominations. This year we will need to have all nominations for Office Bearers **in writing** registered with the Returning Officer in advance of the meeting. The last day to get your nomination in is **Friday 21 September**. You can download a Nomination Form from www.acal.edu.au and you will need to have your form countersigned by two Proposers who are Financial ACAL members. If you are interested in nominating for a position, please call one of the ACAL Executive to get more information and advice. The Returning Officer is Don MacDowall. Email: acal@pacific.net.au Fax: 03 9546 0421. Mail (only for the purposes of the nominations and voting): Box 938, Springvale South VIC 3172

A copy of the constitution is available online at the ACAL web site.

Joining the ACAL AGM in *Literacy Live*

6.00pm	Victoria, New South Wales, Queensland, Tasmania
5.30pm	South Australia, Northern Territory
4.00pm	Western Australia
8.00pm	New Zealand

You will need to book a place in the *Literacy Live* meeting room by emailing acal@pacific.net.au by **Thursday 20 September**. ■

The “Take Away Menu by GaD!” Workshop

Gail Pratley (Swinburne TAFE) & Dawn Doherty (Chisholm & Swinburne TAFEs.)

The “Take Away Menu by GaD!” (Gail & Dawn) Workshop was a culmination of some ideas to address the Learning Outcomes of CGEA and to motivate youth (especially low-level learners) into achieving improved literacy skills.

Both research conducted in the field and a vast amount of experience teaching youth, has shown that many young people respond better to visual, rather than printed, tasks. We set out to design a series of literacy based computer worksheets geared towards Certificates I and II spread across all four Literacy outcomes. Boredom is a hurdle that needs to be addressed when trying to motivate youth so we tried to create tasks that had general appeal and were able to be completed in Word, Publisher or PowerPoint. Topics included Road Safety, Travel, Movies, Job Seeking

and Anzac Day. The tasks we chose for the workshop are short and, while they can be used as part of an overall theme, are also self contained.

In the Road Safety ones, for example, you will find an ‘Accident Report’ where images can be downloaded from www.WreckedExotics.com, and some ideas for designing Road Safety pamphlets. In Job Seeking the two that we found most successful with our students were the presentations “What do you Want?” and “The Amazing Wonderful You!” – a CV by PowerPoint.

We generally start our first two-hour session with an icebreaker such as a Word Scramble (http://teachers.teach-nology.com/web_tools/scramble/), crossword, logic puzzle – anything with a literacy base that gets the brain working - not an easy feat at 8.30 a.m! We plan for everyone to complete two short tasks in a single session, making sure that everyone is active and engaged.

The follow-up session in the computer room follows the same pattern.

To find out more contact us by email: Dawn at ddoherty@groupwise.swin.edu.au or Gail at gpratley@swin.edu.au ■

At least 10 Tips for Effectively Facilitating a Literacy Live Session

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You may be thinking about how you might run your own *Literacy Live* session; be it for teaching, a meeting or for delivering professional development. So, where do you start? How do you plan a virtual session? How do you actively engage your participants during the session? What types of activities work best in this virtual environment?

The focus of the August ACAL *Literacy Live* session was back on helping you with some of those handy hints, giving you direct insight into the special tips and techniques you might find useful when facilitating your own *Literacy Live* group.

Although the session was titled, “At least 10 Tips for Effectively Facilitating a *Literacy Live* Session,” in the planning for this session, Michael Coghlan, an experienced facilitator, had no problem in identifying more than ten tips which would assist those not so experienced in this form of facilitation. Here are some of these handy hints:

- As facilitator, arrive early in the room, making sure your training notes and activities are ready and working.
- Encourage participants to also enter the room early to check their volume and microphone settings.

- Before beginning the formal learning time or presentation, allow time for social interaction between participants and with you, the facilitator. This helps to build a community, establish trust and respect for each other.
- Set up the modus operandi about questions “from the floor.” Do you want questions during, or after the formal presentation? In text or voice? Or both?
- Vary the type of interaction you use/encourage from your participants; the white board, the text chat, the voice chat?
- Keep an eye out for lurkers. These are those people who are present in the room, but are sitting in the back row not saying anything. Think of strategies to engage these people in the text chat or to make comment on the content being covered in the session. Develop a set of general questions that you can use to trigger response: What do you think about this? How do you feel? Do you have anything you want to add to what’s been said so far? How does this relate to your situation?

So, there’s a couple of handy hints for you.

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