



# QUEST

ISSUE 1 2017

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## Power through power tools

**A Women's Shed that teaches women trades skills is flourishing in Orange, New South Wales.**

In the large shed just out of Orange, women of all ages work away at benches in their hot pink safety vests, hammering and sawing, exchanging advice and encouragement. Whether they're making a bird feeder or a tool caddy, most of the women are learning trade skills and tool handling skills for the first time.

One of them is Carmel Hanrahan, 72. Before her husband David died four years ago, Carmel says she was the kind of person you'd find curled up in a chair with a good book while

her husband did the kind of handyman jobs that kept their old house maintained and running smoothly. These days Carmel can wield a saw and screwdriver along with the best of them. She's one of around 30 women who regularly turn up for practical hands-on sessions at one of Australia's first trade skills sheds for women.

The idea started as a project of Orange City Council 'Choices at Home' project for older residents, people with a disability and carers as a way to develop independent living skills.

Paula Beattie, support worker for 'Choices at Home' says, 'My colleague Fiona Cooper and I had the idea of a tinker shed for older women a few years ago. Most of the older ladies we worked with had traditionally been homemakers so when their husband died or went into care they were faced with how to maintain the house and they were worried about being ripped off by tradesmen. The idea was to teach women the vocabulary and the language so they can talk confidently to tradesmen, as well as how to do basic

(Story continues on p. 3)

**'It's made me much more assertive. I know if I'm dealing with a tradesman to say 'timber' instead of 'wood'. If you have the vocabulary that let's them know you know what you are talking about. It's so important for women to know how to do this,' Carmel Hanrahan.**

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# Message from the CEO



As we approach the ten-year anniversary of the signing of the Ministerial Declaration on ACE (2008) it is timely to increase the visibility of the adult and community education sector to state and federal policy makers.

Welcome to the first edition of *Quest* for 2017 and a very busy year ahead for ALA.

After consulting with our members, ALA has identified the following priorities to include in our pre-budget submission and for our future work.

Our top three priorities for 2017 are:

1. To endorse a renewed Ministerial Declaration on Adult Community Education (ACE) where ACE is recognised as an important part of providing pathways to further education and training; particularly for marginalised groups.
2. To ensure that the next Commonwealth agreement with the states and territories on skills and workforce development articulates a role for locally focussed, not for profit ACE organisations.
3. To formally recognise the role played by ACE providers in attracting disengaged learners.

ALA will continue to work for a renewed Ministerial Declaration on Adult and Community Education (ACE), to seek formal recognition for the ACE sector and the important role it plays in helping people develop the skills and knowledge for meaningful work; for participating fully as citizens, for living in harmony in a diverse, multi-cultural and rapidly changing society and for improving the health, wellbeing and social connectedness of our communities.

There is a worrying lack of any current federal policy recognising the role that ACE plays in creating and maintaining healthy, strong and connected communities.

People need to have basic foundation skills such as literacy and numeracy, particularly in disadvantaged communities. But important life skills such as emotional and cultural intelligence enable people to respond, change, adapt, be creative, apply critical thinking and analysis, problem solve, work together and connect with one other for collective solutions.

Given that the landscape of future work is largely unknown and with new media, science and technology moving rapidly, a broader more holistic approach to learning and education needs to take place. The ACE sector can provide opportunities for people to develop the abilities and skills to make them productive contributors to the future, to live meaningful and healthy lives and to actively participate in their communities.

The not for profit ACE sector provides these type of opportunities in local places, in connected situations, promoting creative and imaginative thinking and doing; enhancing people's capacity for living and learning.

This edition of *Quest* coincides with International Women's Day, the theme of which is 'Be Bold For Change'. In these pages you'll find some remarkable evidence of the courage and innovation of women in the ACE sector like Angela Van Dam whose spark of an idea was soon fanned into life with her co-workers. You will also meet Paula Beattie and Fiona Hooper whose idea for helping older women stay independent has women like 72 year old Carmel Hanrahan learning the tools of the trade and feeling 'transformed' as a result.

It is these stories and many more like them around Australia that drive ALA to champion the role that ACE plays in changing people's lives.

Jenny Macaffer

CEO





The Supporting and Linking Tradeswomen (SALT) project has been a great support and inspiration.

(story continued from p. 1)

handy work themselves.'

'We invited the Supporting and Linking Tradeswomen (SALT) project to come up and give a woodworking workshop. They've been awesome. Quite a few local women came along and everyone really enjoyed it.' The idea took off from there.

Word soon spread and the idea of a Women's Shed proved so popular that it's been opened up to all women of all ages. Today the Shed has around 50 members aged from 30 to 80. 'I'm taking more and more calls about the Shed every week,' Paula says.

Orange Mayor John Davis OAM said the initiative had made significant impacts on the lives of women across the region.

'It is aimed at women who haven't had the opportunity to learn how to do basic home improvements. But of course, it's much more than that,' Cr Davis said. 'When women get together and work on projects, they're also talking together, building relationships, being there to support each other.'

'When tough times come around, say, for women who have lost a partner, it is a great opportunity to make sure they have a social outlet and they can talk with other people in

the same boat.'

Apart from the support of Council, Bunnings offered the women DIY sessions and the local men's shed donated tools. In February 2016, the Shed achieved a milestone when Wangarag Industries, which offers jobs and training for people with disabilities, offered the women their own space. Kevin McGuire, general manager says, 'We had two sheds out the back that were underused and one of the board members mentioned a Women's Shed had started up and I said, "Wow, sensational, who do I contact?"'

Wangarag auspices the Shed, providing insurance and ensuring all the women have inductions to comply with health and safety regulations. 'It's a wonderful opportunity for our disabled ladies to participate and conversely it's a great opportunity for the other women in the Shed to be exposed to and work alongside women with disabilities, it's a great learning experience for them as well. I see it as a win-win situation.'

'So they've learned how to fix sticking doors, mend flyscreens, reset fuses in a fusebox, all these wonderful practical skills. But they've also learned a lot from each other,' Kevin says.

## CARMEL

'I'd call myself an academic rather than someone handy. But since I've been on my own I have had to step up to the mark. It's very empowering,' Carmel, 72 says.

'This is an old house and there are always things that need doing. For example, I have an electrical board that used copper wire so I learnt it's easier and safer for me to have circuit breakers so now I feel safer in my own home.'

**'I measure success in terms of the interaction between women, the friendships they take outside the workshop and into their homes and community. Having a social support network really affects people's health, welfare, mental health and wellbeing,' Paula Beattie, Orange Council**





For many women the shed has been a man's space.

'After my husband died I took my car in for a service and I was ripped off. The girls at the Shed have given me the name of a lovely man and I feel confident he will do the right thing by me. But I'd like to be able to tell the person fixing my car what's wrong with it. If you can do that you're treated differently.

'We went up to Beaurepaire to learn how to maintain the tyres on our cars. That's something your husband always did for you. All these little things make a difference.

'We all want to stay in our homes and this is a way to develop our independence so we can do that. So I feel empowered and I feel safer.

'With the Shed I found an atmosphere of caring and sharing. Having had cancer I can't use one arm so well. So if my arm gets too tired to keep sanding you've got these beautiful young ladies like Michelle to help you out. It's such an amazing thing.

'The Women's Shed is about total equality. It's open to all women, all kinds. We have women with disabilities, single mums, academics, older, younger, married and people whose husbands have died. There's so much diversity. It's wonderful.

'The ladies from SALT came up and gave us basic toolkits and told us about what they do in communities. They went out to Lightning Ridge to help farming people affected by the drought, doing maintenance jobs and teaching women how to use tools. That really inspired me. It's amazing when you see what we can achieve together. My dream is that we

hook up a trailer onto a car, and load all our tools and set up a roster where we go out and help people with maintenance jobs and their gardens.

'The shed where everyone is helping each other feels like a small community in itself. We have amazing leaders in Paula and Fiona. They have great ideas and are always so encouraging. With the recent bushfires in our area, they asked us to put our heads together to see how we could help a family with primary school aged children. And we came up with some great ideas.

'They are terrific at connecting us with the broader community. So we are not just helping each other inside the Shed. It goes both ways. We can do things for the wider community and they give back. For example, we donate the fruit and vegetables we grow in our raised garden beds to local charity Foodcare who distribute it to people who are struggling on low incomes. Bunnings really helped us along with DIY workshops and Wangarang gave us a home. It's wonderful.

### MICHELLE

As a girl Michelle Einsaar spent her school holidays working with her dad. 'It was either hang around home not doing

'With men's sheds, they already have the practical skills and are getting together for the social interaction. But we're learning new skills, learning to be independent. It's transformative,' Carmel Hanrahan.





Women gain confidence and independence and feel part of a community.

much or get out with him on the tools and help. He did all sorts of jobs like painting, installing antennas, putting up sheds.'

But it wasn't until she was in her mid 30s and at home with a new baby that Michelle took up the tools again. She saw a stand at an International Women's Day celebration and met Heather Cooper who was promoting the Orange Women's Shed. 'I thought, men have all the fun going to their shed. I'd love to do that.' She put herself on the mailing list and things snowballed from there.

With her practical skills and qualifications as a high school teacher Michelle is one of the Shed's unofficial trainers, drawing up plans for projects and teaching women the skills needed to get them done. 'The Shed isn't so much about learning skills for me so much as passing on what I know.'

'I'm working out what job I might try for when my son goes to school. Maybe something involving woodwork and teaching. I'm a single mum and I'm trying to work out my next steps.'

'I feel a real sense of accomplishment, I enjoy the socialising and the conversation which is a nice change from talking to a 3 year old. It's a great way of putting my skills into practice. And it's also a great way to make new friends. Most of the women are seniors so they have so much life experience.'

'They make choices about what speed they want to go at. There are no deadlines. Some work on a project for 2-3 weeks, others do it all in one go. It depends on their skill level. Some work on their own, others stand around a bench and go step by step.

'It's made me a better teacher. Teaching kids I often felt like I was shovelling information at them and it was hard to tell if you were getting through, I didn't get feedback. With the ladies they are always asking questions, giving you feedback, "You're doing a good job, thank you." They are always complimenting me. So it's reassuring and I really enjoy it.'

Hands on excursions are great for confidence building. 'We go up to Bunnings and walk the aisles looking at things and discussing what's on the shelves. The women might say, "Is that what that's for?"

For some women handling tools is a complete novelty. 'For a lot of these ladies of a particular generation or from particular cultural backgrounds the shed was taboo – it was the man's space. They've been told not to touch the tools, or use them or even know the names of different tools. Then their husband dies and they have a shed full of tools that they don't know what to do with and that they don't know the names of.

'Some of the women have had to learn how to hold a saw, or use a drill but now they've learned how to do things like fix a hinge or change a tap washer. They don't have to call a handyperson or a tradie, most of whom are male, to come and do things for them. They don't have to pay someone to do a job they have learned to do themselves.

'So it's very liberating for the ladies to be able to say, "I've got tools, I've got a toolbox, I can use a drill ... I can do this job myself.'

# Tips for putting adult learning principles into practice

Research tells us that adult learners have specific characteristics and learn best in particular circumstances. The best learning environments incorporate principles of adult learning and are collaborative, learner focussed and adopt a problem-solving approach.

## Tips and Trends



Here are our tips for turning adult learning principles into actions.

### 1 Review the room

Create a warm and welcoming atmosphere with clusters of tables for small group work to invite student interaction. Peer-to-peer learning is a more efficient way of teaching and learning than the didactic instruction model implied by a teacher's table up front and rows of desks.

### 2 Acknowledge what learners already know

Find out what knowledge and experiences your students bring to the class and what support particular students might need. For students with extensive knowledge look at ways of formally recognising prior learning.

### 3 Make it relevant

Adult students are often time poor and very focussed on wanting to learn what they need to know in order to do what they want to do. Find out what gaps they want to fill so the class is relevant.

### 4 Keep goals in sight

Adult learners like purposeful learning. They like to know why they are studying a particular topic and what they'll get out of it. Be clear about learning outcomes so they know exactly what to expect.

### 5 Plan for hands-on

Adult learners are practical. Look for ways to integrate classroom learning with real life and work situations so students can apply what they are learning through practical problem solving.

### 6 Encourage self-directed learning

Allow students to feel they have some control of what's going on in class and what's being studied. Even if your curriculum is tightly planned, ask students if there's anything else that they would like to see included, what activities they prefer or give them choices about assessment.

### 7 Foster respect and sharing

We all like to feel listened to, respected and understood and for adults this creates a happy and productive atmosphere.

### 8 Connect to learners' experience

Adults learn best by connecting their life experiences and interests to new learning situations. Encourage students to apply their experiences to problem-solving exercises and small group discussions.

### 9 Encourage self reflection

Not every adult is a good learner. Those who've had negative or interrupted education can come to your class with trepidation. And you can use this information to help shape the best experiences for them so they flourish.

### 10 Keep it loud

Ditch the myth that learning proceeds calmly and quietly. A noisy room with lots of laughter and interaction is a healthy sign that adult students are engaged, enjoying themselves and learning.

These tips are from a recent ALA webinar by Dr Tracey Ollis, who has a long history in the ACE classroom as well as an academic teaching teachers at Deakin University.

A recording of the webinar is available for ALA members at: <https://www.ala.asn.au/professionaldevelopment/webinars/>

Photo credit:

Small group discussion by Eugene Kim CC BY 2.0

"Adult learning is problem-based and learner-centred. As a teacher that means the focus is less on you and more on the learners. If you're doing most of the talking, you're working too hard."



Visiting remote communities gives Di a unique perspective.



## Meet Dianne Borella, the newest member of the ALA board

Di Borella is an Aboriginal (Yawuru) and Torres Strait Islander woman with links to Broome and the Torres Straits. Di lives in Darwin on Larrakia country. She has over 40 years of experience working in the Northern Territory and Thursday Island (Qld)

in Aboriginal education, youth affairs, health, employment and training, law and order in service delivery, policy, programming and managerial roles.

### What role education has played in your life?

I was the only girl in a family of seven. After my mother died, my dad and my brothers made the decision to send me away from Darwin to boarding school in Adelaide. I was 13 and I'd never been to a city before. For the first 18 months. I was very homesick and I felt very isolated. I didn't have any cultural family around me. I could only go home once a year during the big school break. I used to ring my dad and say, 'I wanna come home' but he'd say 'Girl, you have to stay and go to school and get an education and come back home and get a job.' So the importance of education was instilled in me from a very young age. Mum and Dad were part of the Stolen Generation and were taken away to Beagle Bay Mission near Broome and because of their experiences they wanted to make sure I was provided with the opportunity to get the best education out of the whole family.

There were 8 of us Indigenous girls from Darwin at my school and we all found it hard being away from home. One by one the others dropped out and I was the only one to finish year 11. I knew by then I needed to improve and gain my education. There was a bit of bullying at school and I felt discriminated against but I brushed it off. It made me stronger and more determined. I didn't accept it but I didn't take it to heart either. I was able to stand up for myself.

At the time I didn't like being away from home. But after I completed school I was able to go home and join the public service and this led me on to a career of almost 40 years in Indigenous affairs, training and health. My father was a very

good role model even though he didn't finish school himself, his attitude towards the importance of education and learning had a powerful influence on me. I feel education is so important and I've instilled that in my own four kids.

### How do you continue learning in your own life?

I've continued learning in my own life through books and reading and I've also completed a diploma and later a Masters degree. I do a lot of research. If I'm not sure I ask questions. I believe that regardless of your age you're always learning and the value of learning goes through generations. It's so important to set a good example so that the younger generation will follow in your footsteps and be good citizens.

### Why is adult and community education so important?

From a cultural perspective, acknowledging the many ways that we learn is really important. For example when I go to remote communities, whether I'm at a community centre or visiting an art group I can see the way the aunties and uncles provide guidance and leadership to younger people who learn about their own culture from elders in their own communities. Community based learning strengthens connections to culture. And part of that is keeping Indigenous languages alive because if the language dies out people lose their cultural identity. A lot of Stolen Generation people, for example, are trying to find their original families and are trying to find a connection to identity, family culture, who they are. Supporting people learning in their own language by providing information and teaching materials in Indigenous languages strengthens people's sense of who they are and where they fit in the world.

### What do you hope to bring to the Board?

We all come together with different strengths and my main aim is to bring cross-cultural awareness to the Board. I've conducted a lot of training to different sectors throughout the NT to raise awareness and education about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture and the differences between them. I've got a really strong commitment to supporting and showing respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture and heritage so I would like to bring that to the table. I would like to see the Board establish a Reconciliation Action Plan. It is quite a long process but that's my goal.

Photo credit:

[Crossing the coast of WA](#) by David McKelvey, CC BY-NC-ND 2.0

# Learning to believe at Griffith Uni

Griffith University's equity program aims to attract and re-engage adult learners. Pip Giles was a reluctant school student who left school in year 10. But as an adult she's discovered the joy of learning.



Pip Giles (R) has benefited from support of teachers, friends and staff like Di Mahoney.

Pip Giles recently got a tattoo of a pair of wings with 'Believe in yourself' written underneath. It's Pip's motto now because with newly discovered self-confidence she's found herself doing things she'd never imagined.

For Pip who left school in year 10, school was always a bit of a chore. But as an adult she's been thrilled to discover how much she loves learning.

Pip was a childcare worker who loved her job but she decided in 2012 that she needed a change. But she was tentative about returning to study at TAFE. Her friends and staff encouraged her to enrol in a Diploma rather than a Certificate in Community Services but Pip was convinced it would be beyond her.

'I cried a lot in the first three months, I was afraid I was going to fail. Once I started passing I was OK and then it became easy for me. I found my passion,' Pip says. 'I just loved it. I just wanted to put in 100 per cent.'

By 2014 with her Diploma almost complete Pip didn't want to stop. 'I enrolled in a further two diplomas in Youth Work and Child and Family Intervention and one of my teachers said "What are you doing back here and why have you taken on three diplomas?" She wanted to know why I hadn't applied to go to uni. But I said "No way".'

'Going to uni was something I never imagined in my wildest dreams. But she kept pushing me. She said, "Just apply and see how you go". My TAFE classes were starting that week. When I looked at the Griffith website, entries had already closed and I was relieved. I put in an application so I could say that I had done it but on my first morning of TAFE classes I got an email saying I'd been accepted. But I didn't want to go. It was definitely fear.'

'I always thought uni was just for the elite. There was no way someone like me could go there. No way.'

'I walked in to my first lecture and when I walked out I thought 'Oh no I didn't know what the lecturer was talking about.' I was looking around at the other students who all seemed younger than me and they all looked like they were dealing with it really well. I thought something was wrong with me and I felt so overwhelmed. It wasn't until later that I realised it was all a façade, and behind that mask of looking cool and confident a lot of them were freaking out too.'

'I worked and worked on my first assignment. I'd never written essays at high school. I was so overwhelmed I went to student services and said "I'm pulling out, I'm gonna fail". The guy who saw me there said "Send it to us" and I did and he got back to me and said, "This is great!" When I got it back I got 85% for it.'

After that Pip attended weekly appointments during her first semester with the Student Success Adviser. By the end of semester she had completed 3 courses and achieved 2 High Distinctions and 1 Distinction and a GPA of 6.7.

'No one I knew had ever been to uni. School was not a focal point in my life, I had fun there but I was never good at school. It was forced on you, you had to learn. But going to TAFE was like a spark. Once I knew I could do it, I could learn and I could do well, it just gave me this enormous drive. For me, doing well and getting good grades is a measure of me as a person. It's not just about academic results. So I started to feel really good about myself and it's given me this huge boost to my confidence. I just love researching and reading and thinking about how what I'm learning applies to the kind

'Once you find something you love and enjoy, learning is easy.' Pip Giles



of work I've done and the work I want to do.'

As a mentor, Pip talks to adult learners in a range of community settings. I say "I was sitting in your seat once and now I'm doing really well". My key message is to believe in yourself because that's half the battle. But I also tell them about the tough times I've had where I've had to ask for help. A lot of people think they have to do it on their own but they don't.'

Having people around who believe in her has made all the difference, Pip says. 'Without the support and encouragement from my friends and university staff, I would have not been able to get through it.'

**Di Mahoney** might visit a class at a neighbourhood house, a TAFE or community college and a local private training provider. Her job is to inspire adult learners to think about further study.

Di is an adult learner engagement officer at Griffith University's Logan campus and part of the university's Student Equity Services team.

Griffith has a commitment to improving the participation of adult learners and in particular those from disadvantaged groups – early school leavers, parents of young children required by Centrelink to pursue work or training, and migrants from refugee backgrounds.

'There's a lot of misunderstanding and confusion about uni study. My role is to demystify and de-bamboozle people about university and help them make good choices.'

With a population of over 300,000 with people from over 200 different cultural backgrounds Logan is a highly multicultural area. But it's also socioeconomically disadvantaged with high unemployment and high numbers of people with incomplete schooling.

'You can see how powerful education can be in a community like that. By encouraging parents to study at uni we are influencing the next generation as well as their family and friends.'

'We have an amazing bunch of people studying at Logan. The campus is full of mums in their 20s, 30s and 40s studying education, nursing, human services, social work. They juggle children and often have difficult family, health or social issues to deal with. They are going to change their own lives and their kids' lives as well as the system. I find them very inspiring. These people are sometimes former clients of the systems they are training to work in so they understand the challenges; they bring their lived experiences to their studies and they will make great human services practitioners.'

<http://www.griffith.edu.au/student-services/diversity-and-inclusion>

'Having people who positively support and encourage you to achieve your dreams helps you to keep the focus on your goal when you get overwhelmed or disheartened.' Pip Giles



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# Crunch time at Woodend

Woodend Neighbourhood House's idea for a social enterprise to tackle social isolation in the small Victorian town just got a step closer to reality.



Patrick Hocking, Nayan Puri, Terrie Hollingsworth and Angela van Dam at CRUNCH workshop in Melbourne.

Imagine a dreary mid-winter's day in the small country township of Woodend. You hurry down a deserted and cold street and open the door to an old warehouse. Inside it's warm and cosy. A busy café staffed by unemployed young people is serving delicious, cheap food and coffee. In a corner, a volunteer reads children stories while parents and carers sit around tables having a break and catching up with new friends. People who usually work from home are working at their laptops, and a sewing group sets up their machines to make free community shopping bags. After school, the place turns into a Job Ready training centre, homework club, and youth space. At night, evening commuters just off the train call in for open mic sessions, or to catch a movie or class.

This is the vision that won Woodend Neighbourhood House a coveted place in Social Trader's Crunch Accelerator program. In a well-rehearsed four-minute pitch, co-ordinator Angela Van Dam outlined Woodend Neighbourhood House's idea for a social enterprise.

'It was like "Shark Tank" except we didn't ask for money,' Angela says. 'I had to practise and practise to get it right.'

Clearly she hit the mark. Woodend Neighbourhood House was one of the 10 projects selected from 18 projects pitched.

Angela and her team have just embarked on the four-month training program in Melbourne enabling them to develop the business skills and networks to refine and validate their business model and turn their vision into reality.

Social Traders choose projects that tackle a social problem, are commercially viable and use at least half of their profits towards their social mission. Social Traders aims to break the cycle of disadvantage through social enterprise and believes in the power of social enterprises in creating employment, providing access to services and strengthening local communities.

The Crunch Accelerator program helps organisations to build their business, understand their customers and how to generate social impact.

Each project team attends workshops, is mentored by someone from the corporate or start-up world, receives individual coaching from Social Traders and business analysis from MBA students at Melbourne Business School. They also have the opportunity to meet and learn from Crunch alumni.

Other Crunch projects include an employment program for migrant and refugee women, access to nutritional food for the homeless, and assistance for people facing issues in the workforce.

'We're absolutely thrilled,' Angela says. 'It's very exciting.'

For Angela a chance invitation to see visiting American Jim Diers talk about the power of neighbourhoods gave her the spark of an idea. 'He was all about letting the community work out what they want together. It really inspired me.'

Angela took her idea back to the Neighbourhood House. 'I've got two fantastic volunteers working with me, Nayan Puri who has a background in architecture and sustainability and Patrick Hocking who is in his early 20s and has really opened our eyes to the people our Neighbourhood House doesn't connect with. He's the one that pointed out that there's a mass exodus of young people from Woodend. It's not an attractive place for people in their 20s. There's nothing to do, so even though they love growing up here they don't stay. But there's an influx of people in their mid 30s who return to the area to bring their children up here.

'We have lots of courses and classes at the Neighbourhood House but they are at set days and times. The people in a yoga class might get on very well with people in a bike-riding class but they are on different days and times so there's not

Over the past six years, Social Traders' Crunch has supported 88 enterprises with 60% currently trading. Social Traders aims to grow the number of sustainable social enterprises in Australia and by 2020, deliver Crunch to another 200 enterprises assisting them to start and grow.





Conducting research at the farmers' market.

that cross fertilisation of ideas or opportunities to meet like-minded friends.

'The goal of our social enterprise is to reduce isolation in the community. Our goal is to help people who are socially isolated to develop meaningful friendships. It's OK if you're an extrovert but if you're not it can be really hard to make new friends.

'We want to get people out of their houses. We know the cost of loneliness and the prevalence of mental health problems Australia wide. A lot of people in Woodend are people on their own at home or caring for small children.

'Research shows that 33% of people in Woodend are involved in unpaid child care, which is much higher than the state average of 24% so we're looking at what facilities or services there are for people on limited incomes and for people looking after children. What things are there to do in Woodend that are cheap, good for the adults and good for the kids? In summer it's not a problem because we have a terrific pool and park but in winter it's a different story. We also want to know if you're a carer looking after someone with a disability or an elderly relative and you want to go out, what options are available for you?

'Our initial idea was to turn a disused warehouse into a space that meets the needs of the people in our community.' Angela first heard about the Crunch program just a week before the close of applications. With not long to the deadline the three worked hard on fleshing out their proposal and turning it into a compelling pitch.

The Social Traders' Crunch Start up Accelerator program began with the first of six workshops in early February. 'To get the opportunity for training of this calibre is absolutely amazing. We have a fabulous mentor in Megan McDonald, who is a manager of Customer Experience from Australia

Post. We have a terrific relationship that I'm sure will continue long after the Crunch program is over. We call on her advice and she's opened our eyes to a whole new world, especially when it comes to research.'

First up they are refining and testing their idea through research with their community. 'We are trying to be "solution agnostic" at the moment, just focussing on understanding the problem rather than jumping to a solution. With Megan's advice we started by talking to 60 people at the Farmers Market, then we will do some in-depth interviews, followed by a survey of our members. The survey asks people how they spend their week, what interests they have, what their typical week in summer and winter looks like, how long they've lived in Woodend and what makes them happy and what makes them miserable about Woodend. We also ask them how connected they are already. One indicator we use is asking people "Is there someone in your neighbourhood who you could ring in the middle of the night and ask for help if you needed it?"

The Crunch program might have just begun but to Angela there's a curious sense of déjà vu. 'Woodend Neighbourhood House was founded 34 years ago after the Ash Wednesday bushfires by a group of women who wanted somewhere to meet and learn from each other and rebuild their community, so it's in our DNA.'

<https://www.woodendnh.org.au/>

'More and more people are wanting to do good in the community and want to support businesses and organisations that do good in the community.' Angela van Dam



Angela Van Dam with Patrick Hocking and Nayan Puri.

# ACE update

Linkwest, the peak body for Neighbourhood and Community Resource Centres in **Western Australia**, is busy encouraging member centres to be a part of a coordinated *#ItsGoodToBelong* campaign. LinkWest is offering small grants to enable Centres to hold events in celebration of Neighbourhood House Week (1–7 May) and is full swing into preparations for their 20th biennial conference (19–21 September).

In **South Australia** Community Centres SA has developed a series of free professional development webinars for ACE providers designed to assist in the design, documentation, delivery and assessment of an adult community education (ACE) learning program.



Queensland's Western Downs Library's Chinchilla Conversations in English group at Dalby's Festival.

In **Queensland**, applications for Skilling Queenslanders for Work are now open for community based not-for-profit organisations planning to run projects that help train unemployed or underemployed people in their community.

<https://training.qld.gov.au/community-orgs/funded/sqw>

Queensland Council for Adult Literacy (QCAL) reports that despite an absence of government funding or policy for community based adult literacy since 2012, a number of literacy initiatives continue to run with local government and community support. The latest initiative is from Western Downs Library in south east Queensland who have identified a growing need for adult literacy help but a lack of services in the region. The library has organised a pilot program and has trained four volunteer tutors to work one on one and in small groups. If the pilot is successful the library hopes to gain funding to extend the service.

The Adult Literacy project complements the library's free Conversations in English service, which offers people a chance to practise their English in a supportive environment.

In **New South Wales**, Community Colleges Australia (CCA) has released a report entitled *The Role of Community Education in Australian Regional and Rural Economic Development* that investigates the role of not-for-profit community-based vocational education and training (VET) providers in non-metropolitan Australia.

In the **Northern Territory**, NT Equity Training Grants aim to improve training and employment outcomes for disadvantaged people in the Northern Territory (NT) are now open.

<https://nt.gov.au/learning/adult-education-and-training>

**Nationally**, Grants for Community Inclusion. A new \$13 million grant has been launched in a bid to make the community more inclusive and support people with disability.

<https://www.communitygrants.gov.au>

**ALA's** dhumbadha munga or 'talking knowledge' forum on April 28 will explore the ways Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders learn, develop and reinforce their cultural identity and express and share their stories. The 54th Adult Learning Australia conference 'Exploring possibilities – Changing lives' will be held in partnership with LINC Tasmania on the 13 - 14 June 2017 in Hobart Tasmania.

<https://ala.asn.au/upcoming-forum-dhumbadha-munga/>

<https://ala.asn.au/ala-conference-exploring-possibilities-changing-lives/>

# QUEST

Quest is the national magazine for adult and community education. It is published four times a year by Adult Learning Australia.

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