



Lifelong and lifewide learning for all Australians

Issue 4 2013

Women trading places

Bianca Murray has discovered a passion for cabinet making. Karren Duri has realised how much she wants to be an electrician. And Maria Polodonis has a real gift when it comes to working under car bonnets.

All three are recent graduates from Thornbury Neighbourhood House's 'Women in Trades and Technologies' course. Co-ordinator Sarah Derum says she's 'really in awe' of the way the young women involved have developed confidence and focus on working in a trade.

Sarah says that for women, getting into a trade is not nearly as straightforward as it is for men. Entrenched and outdated attitudes and lack of encouragement can be real barriers.

The ten day course teaches practical skills, encourages contact with potential employers, and develops knowledge of how different workplaces operate.

Confidence can also be a problem. 'It can be intimidating working in an all male environment when you're new and especially when you are learning something new and you're not sure of yourself.'



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Message from the CEO

In this edition of Quest, the ALA Board members have each identified their Christmas wish lists for adult education and here is mine:

I wish that Australians would recognize that we can't have strong civil, social and educational institutions and also reduce taxes at the same time.

I wish that Australian politicians would think and talk about lifelong learning as an investment and not a cost. I wish that they would play the "long game" on the skills and knowledge of the population.

I wish for the next Australian election to be run on who has the best plan for those Australians with the lowest skills and least access to education.

I wish that the voice of adult learners had an equal place at the

decision making table with the voices of industry and providers.

I wish that education policy makers would begin with a focus on the needs of families, then communities, then cultures and then the country, rather than the other way around. I particularly wish that they would drop the damaging fantasy that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children can be educated independently of their families and communities.

I wish that pay increases for politicians were pegged to pay increases for coordinators of neighbourhood houses.

And finally I wish that all Quest's readers have a wonderful Christmas and a restful and restorative New Year.

Sally Thompson CEO

(continued from page 1)

In contrast, entering a trade for young men can be less complicated. 'It seems that for young men becoming a tradie is a linear and obvious path. For women it's been more a case of "I've always wanted to do this but didn't know how or where to start". So the entry point for young women is a lot less obvious.'

The Women in Trades and Technologies course aims to provide just such an entry point. The two week course, run during the school holidays, develops skills and confidence in women aged 18 to 30 who are interested in a trade.

The course is run in conjunction with Northern College of Arts and Technology (NCAT) at their trade workshops. 'It's an amazing, brand new facility where they teach automotive, electrical, building and construction and furniture making.'

The women are taught how to use power equipment and tools and make a piece of furniture during the course. Guest tradeswomen visit to share their stories and experiences and industry visits give learners practical insights into what's involved in particular trades.

NCAT has a history of running courses for women including a 'Girls Make It Go' a course

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for women working in manufacturing. For the Neighbourhood House, who have a history of working with local women and as a Learn Local provider, an anticipated skills shortage in the building and construction industry seemed an ideal opportunity to look at tailored training for women.

A visit to Brookfield multiplex highrise site

in Melbourne's CBD offers practical insights.

The course has run twice – in 2012 and 2013 – in the September school holidays, an ideal time as NCAT's facilities are idle. Applicants are interested for a range of reasons. 'They can be women who've decided they don't want to sit at a desk, they might want to try doing something hands-on, or they might have a family member in a trade and they want to try something different.'

A combination of dedicated teaching staff, enthusiastic learners, an 'amazing facility' and great food made the course a winner, Sarah says. Once they've completed the course the women have a range of career pathways to choose from.

Some take up a practical work placement to get real-life experience of a trade and its particular demands. They can enrol in a 10 week pre-

apprenticeship course where they develop skills and confidence and contacts with local employers.

Of the seven women who've completed the most recent course, four are undertaking work placements, three are enrolling in preapprenticeships and two will soon begin automotive and electrical apprenticeships.



The prospects for women in trades look rosy. 'There's a definite demand for apprentices in Melbourne's northern region.' And some people prefer female tradespeople. 'There's a perception that women can be more trustworthy. For example, some people feel safer having female tradies in their home. Employers say they appreciate that women tradies pay more attention to detail, are more likely to clean up their workspace and create a positive and productive work environment.'

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Showing and telling – the Men's Shed crawl

It was early morning and a convoy of cars drove through the streets of Ballarat. The Men's Shed crawl had started.

Around 50 people had car pooled and were beginning a day-long guided tour of five of Victoria's men's sheds. The shed crawl was a break from the two day 5th National Men's Shed Conference held from 27 to 29 October in Ballarat.

The mood was jovial. Included in the group were visitors from Ireland and the Netherlands as well as visitors from most other Australian states keen to observe first hand what it is that has made Australia's men's sheds such a success.

First stop was the Ballarat East shed, followed by sheds at Buninyong, Winchelsea, Norlane (Geelong) and Geelong East.

Paul Sladdin, President of the Victorian Men's Shed Association says the delegates were interested in doing the crawl because of the diversity of sheds in Victoria. 'No two sheds are the same. It's not like McDonalds, it's not a franchise.' Sheds can vary in the way they're managed, who they partner with as well as



Presentation at Ballarat East.



in the diversity of activities they offer. What they have in common is good relationships with local organisations and a positive impact on shedders' self-esteem. Sheds offer a place for men to talk, work together on projects, and feel less socially isolated.

'At each stop we saw how the sheds are highly regarded and welcomed in their local communities, and how that value is expressed in different ways,' Paul said. At Buninyong, it was the support of the wives encouraging the men to attend the shed; at Winchelsea it was the auspicing of the shed by the neighbourhood house; at Geelong it was the strong relationships with the local council and local community groups who shared the premises.

Each shed has its own personality. 'Ballarat's shed is an independent organisation that has a very large physical space. They're involved in community markets and in running a soup bus for the homeless. At Buninyong, the shed is on private property so it's smaller but it produces woodwork products for the local market. Winchelsea is very much a community hub and

because it attracts retired farmers and people from the land, it's very involved with a community garden. The Norlane shed does a lot of work cross culturally, offering tutoring to the local culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) community. At Geelong East, they share a common room with the local pony club and so the shedders are involved in constructing

jumps and doing leather work for the club.'

At each stop, up to 20 shedders were on hand to talk to visitors and show them around, which gave visitors invaluable first hand experience. 'Someone can get up at a conference and show a PowerPoint presentation and talk about sheds. Or you can get out on the road and visit a few. It's the difference between showing and telling. People learned things on the crawl and asked questions and had conversations with shedders that really brought the men's sheds to life. You can't beat that for learning.'

Men's sheds began in Australia in 1996 to provide social interaction and improve the wellbeing of men who are no longer in the workforce. Currently there are over 1000 sheds registered in Australia. Men's sheds have since spread to New Zealand, Ireland, Scotland, the US and are planned for the Netherlands.

The 5th National Men's Shed
Conference was hosted by the
Victorian Men's Shed Association
in conjunction with the Australian
Men's Shed Association (AMSA).

Social Inclusion in Learning conference

"Learning is not a cost, it is a social, family, community and economic benefit and investment. Learning is not a luxury, it is a necessity."



As part of Social Inclusion
Week 2013, the Centre of Adult
Education (CAE) in partnership
with Adult Learning Australia
organised a conference for over
a hundred people at the State
Library Victoria to consider
the following questions. What
does social inclusion in learning
mean? How can we respond
to the challenge of creating
new spaces of opportunity
for everyone?

In his closing remarks, ALA President Barry Golding drew together and connected a number of overarching principles that emerged from a stimulating day of discussion and ideas.

'It is important to learn from others and have conversations like this, including but beyond education, to make sense of our joint and surprisingly common endeavours. While we tend to split up what we do as either learning or education or health or welfare based on whatever our own education trained us to do: real people are best when they are whole – and not treated as having only one need, one identity, one affiliation and one outcome.

'Learning is fundamentally about and facilitated by affiliation, in a group or program where people feel at home. Good learning is premised by social inclusion, and vice versa.

'Learning is most inclusive when it involves learner agency: when people are empowered, not patronised from deficit or ageist models as students, customers, clients and patients. Learning is best, wherever possible, where it is lifelong, lifewide and bottom up. But we operate in a system that otherwise tends to be market based, top down and mechanistic and which predetermines what a successful outcome is. So inclusive learning



Sally Thompson and panelists discuss what is socially inclusive learning.

starts from what people know, can do and need to know, not premised only on what they don't know or what we think they need to know.

'A lot of what we have talked about today is first nature in many other societies, including many Indigenous communities. Maori writer Fe Day says cultural and social diversity, from a Maori perspective is like the diverse and interwoven



strands in a mat. The closer and more inclusive we are, the stronger the weave the society and the richer the learning. We need to enjoy and learn from diverse peoples and patterns rather than creating separate learning mats. Our diversity is our strength and opportunity, not a liability.

'The people most in need of learning and most likely to benefit are the least likely to sign up to formal education and are the most likely to experience systemic disadvantage. Rather than expecting people to cross the barriers, we need to ask whether what we are expecting people to cross

the barriers for is actually of value to them. If it is not, we need to redesign it.'



Bridging the digital divide

Think about all the things you do in a day – both at work and at home – that involve using digital technology. You send emails with attachments, you post photos and share news with family and friends on social media, you check the weather, look up recipes, you might do banking, book holidays or apply for jobs online. You might also participate in online learning, pay your council rates online or access health services on the internet.

But for many Australians these are not skills that they can take for granted. These are the digitally disadvantaged – people on the other side of the digital divide.

According to a 2010–2011 report by the Australian Bureau of Statistics, approximately 21 per cent of Australians do not use the internet and this figure increases to 63 per cent for people aged over 65.

Kaet Lovell, Assistant Director of the Digital Policy Section in the Federal Government's Department of Communications says that the digital divide is not just an age issue. 'Adults who left school before 2000 when computers were introduced in classrooms, people who have had no need to use computers in their jobs, and stay-at-home parents – are all people for whom computers have just not been part of their world.' The high income and highly literate can be just as vulnerable to digital disadvantage, Kaet says.

People with little or no digital literacy have unequal access to services and information.

But some groups including people with disabilities, are doubly disadvantaged.

Kaet says the cost of not participating in the digital world can be high. People with little or no digital literacy have unequal access to services and information.

'Social inclusion means having access to government services and by 2017 all major government services and interactions with individuals will be online.'

The Australian Government offers a number of free tools and resources to help Australians get online and make the most of the internet – safely and confidently.

The Internet Basics website
and the Digital Hubs program
aim to increase the number
of Australians who use the
internet and to train those
people at risk of being
left behind in using digital

Internet Basics offers online help in learning to use the internet safely and easily and to increase awareness of the benefits of being online.

technology.

Digital hubs are operated by 40 community organisations around Australia including councils, libraries, community centres and neighbourhood houses. They offer free individual and group training to local community members.

TRAINER'S STORY: Trish, Adelaide Hills Digital Hub



Trish joined the Adelaide Hills Digital Hub team in February 2013 and thoroughly enjoys her role. 'The most rewarding thing about working for the Digital Hubs program is the ability to help people resolve their frustrations with technology, and connect with others online', says Trish.

Helping people develop digital confidence and independence is one of the most satisfying parts of her job. 'I push them out of the nest and watch them fly'. She has to juggle being helpful with encouraging people

to develop digital problem solving skills. 'It's not about always knowing all the answers—it's fun to teach people how to find answers.'

With her teammates, Trish plans training that is relevant to the needs of their community. 'It can get very cold during winter in the Hills, so there are lots of people who travel to escape the cold. We have sessions that teach people how to book travel, stay in touch with their family while they are away, and then how to edit their photos when they return.'

You can watch a short video about the Adelaide Hills Digital Hub on YouTube.

TRAINER'S STORY: Jane, Brisbane Digital Hub

Jane says, 'We have a lot of different cultures and quite a large Chinese population. We are fortunate that the Sunnybank Library already offers courses in Cantonese and are lucky to have a Cantonese-speaking staff member, who will assist with the Digital Hub training.'

As the Digital Hub trainer, Jane finds showcasing technology exciting. She says, 'I love that light-bulb moment –the 'aha!' when you know people really understand something they have never understood before'.



TRAINEE'S STORY: Shirley, Scottsdale Digital Hub, Tasmania

Shirley is the owner of a local Art Gallery Café in Scottsdale, northeast of Launceston, Tasmania. She took a variety of Digital Hub training sessions, including group and one-on-one sessions on file management, Outlook, and Facebook pages for business.

She has since set up a Facebook page for the café and posts content every day. She says, 'The Facebook page is a great way to market the products available in the art gallery and café as soon as they are available.'

Shirley says she has noticed new people liking the page when she began posting content more regularly. 'It is hard to know whether people are coming in because they have seen us online, but we are now getting about 50 to 60 people come through the café daily, which is probably about a third more than last year.'

Sending out invitations to her customers was a time-consuming manual task. Learning how to set up a contact list in Outlook has saved her time and effort. 'Instead of folding letters and putting them in envelopes and posting them, I send them out over email with the click of a button.'

Fast Facts

In 2010–2011 the Australian Bureau of Statistics reported that approximately 21 per cent of Australians did not use the internet and this figure increases to 63 per cent for people aged over 65.

Since February 2012 almost 27,000 Australians had undertaken training in <u>Digital Hubs</u> around the country.

There are 40 digital hubs located across Australia. Local residents are provided with digital literacy training and the opportunity to experience broadband enabled services and technology.

The Internet Basics website offers simple information in both text and video format on the benefits and skills required to enjoy easy and safe use of the Internet.

TRAINEE'S STORY: Joan Henderson, Victoria Park, WA

One of Joan's relatives suggested the Digital Hub as a way of improving her limited computer knowledge. Joan learnt how to use Facebook, and a range of IPhone apps. She can now monitor her diabetes online, which has helped her feel more in control and less stressed about her health. She also has more regular contact with her family through email and social media.

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Tips and trends

Putting your website to work

You probably invest time and effort in making sure your building looks welcoming and inviting and your staff are friendly and professional.

But can you say the same about your website? Here's our tips for making your website pull its weight when it comes to making a positive and lasting impression.

1. Keep it up to date

A website that has outdated information and that looks neglected won't inspire confidence in your web visitors and is likely to leave them feeling frustrated rather than impressed. Aim to feature the latest information – whether it's on new classes, staff changes, special offers or useful links.

2. Don't navel gaze

People expect to find information quickly and easily on the web. Make sure the information you publish on your site is visitor-centric and save your mission statement for your annual report and board meeting.

3. Watch your Ps and Qs

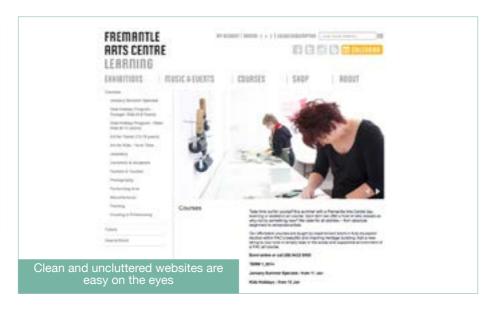
Take the same care online as you do in print. Spelling errors, grammatical mistakes, inaccurate, incomplete and outdated information can undermine your credibility. So allow time for someone to proofread before uploading.

4. Make updating your website easy

Ensure that updating the website regularly is part of someone's job description and that staff responsible are confident in using your website's content management system.

5. Make sure your website is easy to find

Don't expect people to remember your web address. Check Google to see where your organisation



shows up in search results when you type in, for example, your suburb and classes. Make sure your local council, health centre, library and other key community groups have links from their sites to yours.

6. Keep your target audiences in mind

Think about the kinds of people and different questions people visiting your site are likely to be asking. Organise information and write with their interests in mind.



Web users expect to find information quickly and easily

7. Talk to your readers simply and directly

Staff who answer phone calls or deal with people face to face are expected to be good communicators. They answer people's queries simply and directly. Apply the same standards to your website. Words and phrases like 'core values', 'stakeholders', 'delivery of quality programs' are industry-speak that can alienate your site visitors. Write the way you speak.

8. Design that's easy on the eye

Text that's too small, crowded and difficult to read is off-putting. Ensure text sizes are easy on the eyes, that there's plenty of white space and that there's enough colour contrast between text and background. Make sure your site is accessible for people with disabilities and for people who may have images and graphics disabled on their computers.

9. A picture is worth a lot

Review the photos you've used on your website. A photo of your building is fine – particularly on your 'Contact Us' page - but too many photos of empty buildings or rooms without people in them can make a place seem dejected. Nominate a staff photographer and refresh your site with new images of events, people and activities.

10. Save time and money

Reviewing and improving your website strategy takes time and effort but it pays off. If your website is attractive, enticing and offers comprehensive information that people can view 24/7, then you are saving money on photocopying, printing and staff time spent answering emails and phone calls. Better still, it's out there on the World Wide Web, projecting an impressive public image to the world.

Celebrating a century of workers' education

A one hundredth birthday is worth celebrating and the Workers' Education Association (WEA) have made a great job of it in 2013 with the centenary of the organisation's arrival in Australia.

In 1913, horses and carts were still a common sight in Sydney's streets. Adelaide was

scandalised by the arrival of a new dance called the Tango.
And Melbourne marvelled at the arrival of electric trams. It was also the year that Albert Mansbridge, founder of the adult education movement in Britain, helped establish Australian branches of an organisation committed to education for working men and women.

From its ambitious beginnings as a nationwide organisation, the WEA today is flourishing in the Hunter Valley, Illawarra and Sydney in New South Wales and in Adelaide in South Australia.

'We've been celebrating like billy-o here in Sydney,' Michael Newman Executive Director of WEA Sydney says. Centenary celebrations included guest lectures by advocates of adult education such as Hugh Mackay, a formal birthday party and civic reception all of which have celebrated the role of WEA in Sydney's intellectual and cultural life.

It's been great to reflect on and acknowledge the role of the WEA. 'The terrific contribution of adult education to people's lives is an immensely unsung story. Lifelong learning benefits everyone – individuals, communities, and society as a whole.'



Michael says there's a chemistry in the WEA classroom. 'Tutors love teaching here. They get a huge buzz out of the students' excitement and enthusiasm, at sharing ideas and seeing people develop.'

training for adults.



A 1916 WEA conference in Sydney on 'The teaching of sex hygiene' breaks new ground and shocks many.

Over in Adelaide the centenary kicked off with a series of master classes, talks, tours and exhibitions. At a recent civic reception, WEA's 450 tutors were recognised for providing 1600 different classes to the current crop of 26,000 students. Fourteen more were recognised for having taught for 30 years, and another ten for having notched up quarter of a century of teaching at the WEA.

'Our tutors are our lifeblood,' says Sue Ross, CEO of WEA South Australia. Tutors like Erika Von Elm has spent 50 years teaching at the WEA, beginning with yoga in 1964 she has diversified into teaching cooking, baking and most recently, soap making. 'Erika keeps on transforming

herself,' Sue says. 'She's had a passion for teaching and learning all her life.'

Sue says the Adelaide WEA's early classes bear little resemblance to the wealth of courses offered today. Like Sydney, Adelaide WEA was originally affiliated with a university. 'From our early beginnings offering history, economics and philosophy we really broadened our scope.'

Today's offerings includes overseas study tours, services to assist people with a disability enter mainstream courses, and a range of WEA clubs so students can continue to meet and share interests.

The centenary celebrations in both states have highlighted the impact of the WEA on the its communities. In Adelaide, the Royal South Australian Society of Arts recognised the WEA's art tutors with a recent exhibition that celebrated the WEA's centenary. 'Lasting impressions' was a retrospective of work by artists including Ruth Tuck, Marjorie and Sophie Hann, David Dridan, Thomas Gleghorn, Dora Cant, Brian Seidel and Malcolm Carbins.

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Christmas wishes for adult learners

If the government could give adult learners one thing for Christmas, what would it be?

Our new ALA board has lots of suggestions.



Barry Golding

I'd like to see a concerted all-of-government effort to support and facilitate learning across all ages and for multiple benefits and purposes. There is a need for something aside from university and VET to help prepare people for life before work, while working, and post work – given the way VET and ACE have been cut in many places, courses and sectors. A pilot of a Scandinavian folk high school model of education in Australia might be brought by reindeer from Finland for Christmas. I'd like to see a strengthening of bonds between ALA and the rest of the international adult education community all around the Pacific rim.



Donna Rooney

I want the government to give adult learners more opportunities to reap all the benefits of learning: including, but not limited to, getting paid work. Sure, a job is important, but so too are things like our health, wellbeing, family relationships, active ageing, positive lifestyles, and social capital.



Tony Dreise

This Christmas I'm wishing that the government will provide 'Place Learning Accounts' to Australia's most disadvantaged postcodes. Data show that some places in Australia have been doing it tough for a long time. Learning is the key to turning these places around.

When you take a satellite view of Australia, you can see the postcodes that are doing it tough. They're not only in the bush, but on the fringes of cities, neighbourhoods in regional cities, and along coastlines. Aboriginal communities are particularly doing it tough. Let's empower them: by giving them the power to purchase real learning. Let's make Santa Claus real!



Mark Brophy

The Australian government should recognise and develop a comprehensive adult lifelong learning culture in Australia, that embraces all forms of learning that occur in many contexts throughout life. Non-formal lifelong learning courses and programs that provide pathways to formal qualifications, help develop generic skills and literacies. promote social inclusion and impact positively on health and wellbeing should be a right of all citizens.



Allan Cormack

For Christmas I would like the government to give adult learners a voice. It won't cost anything, it's easy to implement and can reap lots of benefits for everyone.



Dorothy Lucardie

I would like every adult in Australia to have access to one government funded non-accredited learning experience of their choice, every year for life.



Trace Ollis

I would like to see greater recognition and resources for adult learning that occurs in both formal and informal communities of practice such as ACE, neighbourhood houses, men's sheds and NGOs.



Rob Townsend

I'd like a national lifelong learning policy wrapped in funding that recognises the role of ACE in community based informal and formal learning. Also a policy that recognises that the pathways between ACE, VET and higher education are multi-directional and not just a one way 'ladder'. Each Australian should have a 'learning account' with funds and loans up to a specific amount that they can spend during their lives on formal and informal learning programs that enrich their lives and provide skills for employment. Happy holidays to everyone involved in adult learning.



Catherine Dunn

What I would really like to see in our stockings are affordable, convenient classes in all kinds of things, available to anyone and everyone. It would be nice to have tax exemptions, or significant subsidies, on any kind of enrolled course ... not just those that lead directly to jobs in high profile industries. I'd like to see courses rated by how much people enjoyed going, made friends, had interesting conversations, were inspired to learn more - not just whether there was a qualification or paid employment at the end.

10

Conference round up

Kentucky conference

ALA Board member Tony Dreise and President Barry Golding both presented at the Commission for International Education (CIE) pre conference and the American Association of Adult and Continuing Education (AAACE) Conference program in Lexington, Kentucky in November.

Tony's session on 'Learning in place' was particularly well received, as was Barry's presentation on the Men's sheds movement. In the Current and Emerging Conversations session, Barry and Tony took part with Matata Johannes Mokoele (South Africa) and Bolanle Clara Simeon-Fayomi (Nigeria) about how to reach unique populations.

International conferences also provide a great opportunity to compare our own work with that of organisations around the world, as well as offering useful insights into the host country Barry said. 'There's a large commercial, corporate, university and military component in adult education research and practice in the US that's quite different from our own.'

Tony says that the conference got him thinking about the role of leadership and adapting to change in times of transition. 'A real value proposition for all of us in ACE, is seeing learning as an enabler in uncertain times. Whilst hardly a new construct, my sense is that it such a powerful narrative at this very time of great global uncertainty in Europe, Africa, US, and other places.'

Having the chance to investigate partnerships and network with others involved in adult education around the globe was invaluable. Barry is currently looking at how to develop and grow new networks and communication between ALA, CIE and AAACE members.



Adelaide forum

Literacy and learning: What do Australians need to know to get and keep a job?

This half-day forum was held at the Mawson Centre in Adelaide at the end of October.

The forum, run by ALA with support from Australian Council for Adult Literacy (ACAL) and the South Australian Council for Adult Literacy (SACAL) explored the linkages between literacy, workforce participation and employability and the broader impact of low literacy on those outside of the mainstream economy.

The 'Welcome to Country' by Uncle Frank Wanganeen was followed by speakers including The Hon. Grace Portolesi Minister for Employment, Higher Education and Skills, and keynote speakers Dr Allie Clemans (Monash University) and Dr David Curtis (Flinders University).

Michele Sutcliffe President of SACAL said the forum, presentations and discussions were inspiring. 'The Adult Learning Sector is composed of passionate, hardworking and creative educators who know the value of strong teacher–learner relationships and who work towards empowering their learners to increase self-confidence, independence and self-reliance – crucial skills – life skills. Good communication, teamwork skills and problem solving skills all equate to employability skills, needed to succeed in all areas of life.'

'At the end of this very valuable forum, we reflected on what we had learnt and what our next steps would be in order to continue the conversation about what Australians need to know to get a job and keep it.'

Details of the forum program and presenters' presentations are available on the ALA website.





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About 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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