

Champion community advocate wins national award

Say Htoo Eh Moero from Wyndham Community and Education Centre (WCEC) has been named Case Worker of the Year at the inaugural Migration and Settlement Awards in Canberra on March 18.

The award, presented by Prime Minister Julia Gillard, recognises Say Htoo's outstanding commitment to the settlement of newly arrived refugees and migrants.

Say Htoo's dedication as a settlement case worker stems from her own experience as a Karen refugee. She was 16 when she arrived in Australia from Burma in 1994, and, she says, services were limited and finding help was hard. Although Say Htoo had a sister already here, it was still a 'struggle'.

She understands and empathises with people who have recently arrived — whether they are from camps on the Thai-Burma border or in Sudan — and she is committed to



Prime Minister Julia Gillard and Say Htoo Eh Moero

helping them settle and live independently in Australia.

Say Htoo's job ranges from providing practical assistance to emotional support. In an average day she could be helping people pay bills, find housing or deal with the loneliness of life in a new country, often far from family members and friends.

It's challenging work. By the time they arrive in Wyndham

many refugees and humanitarian entrants are suffering from physical and mental health problems that are a result of life in the camps. They also suffer from the stress of the language barrier and the difficulty of adjusting to a new life.

As a settlement case worker, Say Htoo's role is to assist people in this transition. She admits that her job is 24/7.

In this issue

Champion community educator wins national award

Message from the CEO

Upcoming webinars

Shelving retirement plans can be good for your health

Getting the hang of Google+ Hangouts

Household money management pays off

Personal stories of lifelong learning

Meet our Ambassador: Rosemary Stanton



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Message from the CEO

As we move into an election year, most sectors are looking at ways to enhance their credibility with the major political parties and to make a case for continued financial support. This is a significant part of our work at ALA on behalf of our members; on behalf of the Adult and Community Education fields and on behalf of adult learners, particularly those learners who might not have other means of making their experiences and opinions known.

Good advocacy has been described to me before as 'stats and stories'. We look for good research and statistics about the relationship between adult education and work, income, health, wellbeing, family, citizenship and social cohesion. Because this tells policy makers why adult education is a more efficient source of investment



than the many other activities out there that governments can invest in to achieve similar outcomes. We also look for stories to tell because efficiency is only one value and our stories speak to the rest of our Australian values like connectedness, aspiration and egalitarianism.

Maybe it's because I come from

an Irish background, but I believe that it's through the telling of stories that communities, societies and nations create themselves. My childhood was spent with my grandparents telling the same stories again and again to make a point, to entertain, but most of all to instill values. When I left home I found it strange that other people's families didn't do the same.

To this end I am very pleased to welcome our new *Quest* Editor, Gina Perry, whose job is officially Communications Officer but perhaps should be called Chief Adult Education Storyteller. I hope you enjoy the stories in her first edition of *Quest*. And I hope that they speak to your experiences of the transformational nature of adult education and provide ideas for your own work.



Australasian Adult and Community Education Conference

Theme: Adult Learning Opportunities and Active Citizenship

Adult Learning Australia is proud to be a part of the first ever Australasian conference on Adult and Community Education. This conference is a joint event between ourselves and ACE Aotearoa in New Zealand and will bring in speakers from across the region and internationally.

Full program is available at:
www.aceaotearoa.org.nz/ace-conference-programme-2013

To register online go to:
<https://ace-conference-2013.lilregie.com/step1>



Our annual conference is another opportunity to share our stories. If you haven't already registered for the joint ALA and ACE Aotearoa Australasian conference to be held in Wellington, NZ June 18–20, I encourage you to do so. As my grandparents taught me, one of the main reasons to tell and hear stories is to inspire and invigorate yourself for the journey ahead. So I hope you will join us.

This last month saw the launch in Sydney of ALA's new publication *Lifelong and Lifewide: Stories of Adults Learning*, written by Ilka Tampke. The book tells the story of 10 learners from around Australia who embarked on a new learning journey through a range of different adult education environments including a neighbourhood house, a men's shed, a book club, a microbusiness course, a gardening program and, in the case of MP Dick Adams, at the kitchen table of a volunteer tutor.

We're very proud of it and I encourage you to buy a copy if you haven't already.

You'll see more details of the conference as well as how to order your copies in this issue of *Quest* as well as on our website.

Sally Thompson, CEO

'I'm happiest when I get problems solved.'



Say Htoo Eh Moero and her manager Kathy Brunton in WCEC's vegetable garden.

(continued from page 1)

It's the challenge of overcoming obstacles that Say Htoo enjoys. 'I'm happiest when I get problems solved.'

But Say Htoo is well-known for her modesty so it's her manager Kathy Brunton who explains why she nominated Say Htoo for the award. Say Htoo is in high demand both inside and outside of WCEC's office hours, Kathy says. She and her family have an 'open door' policy at home. 3ZZZ radio station work out of the family's garage, people are encouraged to drop by to help themselves to the vegie garden and it's not uncommon for her to be approached for help when she's at church or out and about

in the community.

Settlement assistance is just one of a range of services offered at WCEC, a vibrant and busy centre in Melbourne's western suburbs that was also nominated as a finalist in the Settlement Innovation category of the awards. WCEC has been creative in developing support for new refugees and migrants and it auspices and leads the Wyndham Humanitarian Network. The centre offers community classes such as sewing and weaving, Broadband for Seniors, VET, VCAL and language and literacy training courses. The centre's services and programs aim to encourage and support people to become active participants and contributors in their local community.

WCEC staff were 'thrilled' with news of Say Htoo's award. WCEC Chief Executive Officer Jennie Barrera says: 'We are all very proud of Say Htoo and consider the award wonderful recognition of the outstanding work that she does. We don't know what we'd do without her.'



Upcoming Webinars

Adult Learning Australia runs regular professional development webinars for people who work in adult and community education.

For information on how to participate, go to www.ala.asn.org.au/professional-development/webinars.

Convivial Backyard Civilisation Project

Presenter: Dr Peter Willis

31 May 2013, 1.00 pm AEST

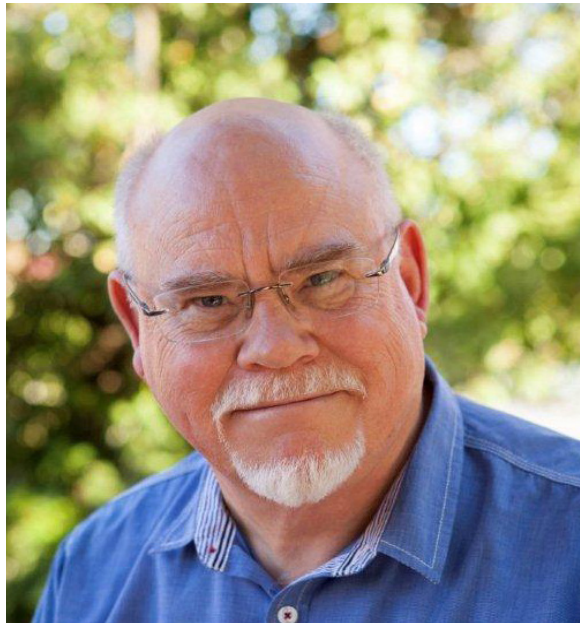
Dr Peter Willis has a long history of research and exploration of innovative forms of informal learning. The Centre for Convivial Backyard Civilisation has emerged from this.

This Adelaide-based group has been meeting for more than a year to discuss applied practice and informal 'action learning' projects that promote convivial backyard civilisation in small scale groups and institutions.

In our next webinar, Dr Willis will map some of the informal existential and functional learning activities that the group has been pursuing, and will explore ways to foster creative learning responses.

Dr Peter Willis is a long-time ALA member. He has had experience in community development and adult learning with city youth groups, Aboriginal groups in outback and central Australia and University Groups at the University of South Australia.

Shelving retirement plans can be good for your health



Dr Darryl Dymock

What do Jack Thompson, Quentin Bryce, Malcolm Fraser, Bob Hawke, Maggie Tabberer, and Lindsay Fox have in common? They're among a growing number of Australians who are working well beyond the traditional retirement age. But it's not just the rich and famous who are part of this growing trend.

Author and ALA member Darryl Dymock has just published a new book, *Extending your use-by date* in which he argues that working longer and retiring later is good for our physical and mental health.

The idea for the book began in 2009 when, in the course of his work as a researcher at Griffith University, Darryl came across a statistic that startled him. An ABS survey found that 650,000 Australian workers aged 45 plus said they would never retire.

It shouldn't have surprised him. After all, Darryl could count himself as one of the growing number of Australians who had

shelved any plans for retirement.

Once he started looking around and talking to people – from taxi drivers to farmers, from computer technicians to teachers – he found evidence of the ABS statistic all around him. More and more Australians are continuing to work beyond what we think of as the traditional retirement age.

For some continuing to work is straightforward. But for people who have been retired involuntarily getting back to work can be more difficult. A 2006 ABS Adult Literacy and Life Skills Survey found older Australians have lower levels of literacy and numeracy. This can make it difficult for older people to re-enter the workforce.

So what advice was there for people who wanted to keep working? When he went looking for books on the topic, Darryl found there was little written about delaying or permanently postponing retirement.

Retirement-related books were out of step, assuming that people would be eager to knock off work permanently once they hit their official retirement age. 'They were all about planning to retire, and hardly any of them had anything to say about planning NOT to retire', Darryl says.

So Darryl decided to write his own book. *Extending your use-by date: Why retirement age is only a number* is a handbook for people who are considering their options as they approach retirement age.

Darryl points out that he is not advocating that people don't retire.

Many are ready for it, he says, especially people who've worked in hard or physically demanding jobs. But what's important is that 'we don't head unthinkingly into retirement'.

While some people put a hold on retirement plans for financial reasons, Darryl says for many more work provides a sense of self-esteem and connectedness that makes people reluctant to give it up. And given that Australians are living longer than ever, and that people in their later

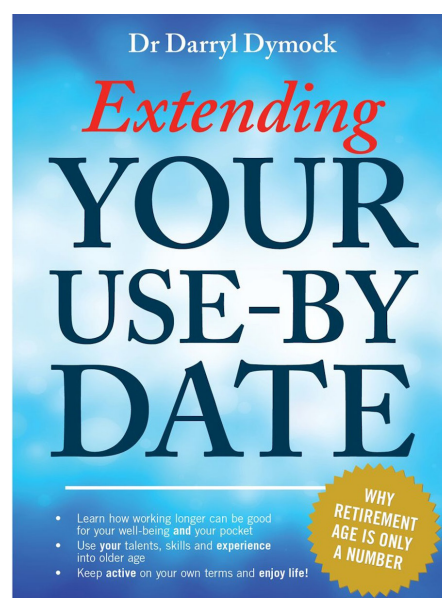
years have accrued a rich bank of knowledge and skills, it makes sense to think twice before giving up work completely.

The problem is that if you do retire, and then change your mind, getting back into the workforce is likely to be much harder, so 'think about it in advance', Darryl says.

Rather than giving up work altogether, people should consider the other options available, Darryl advises. 'You could consider reducing your hours from full-time to part-time, or combine paid with volunteer work or change jobs altogether.'

Whatever choice people make, Darryl says, there's an important role for adult learning and community education providers at this stage in people's lives.

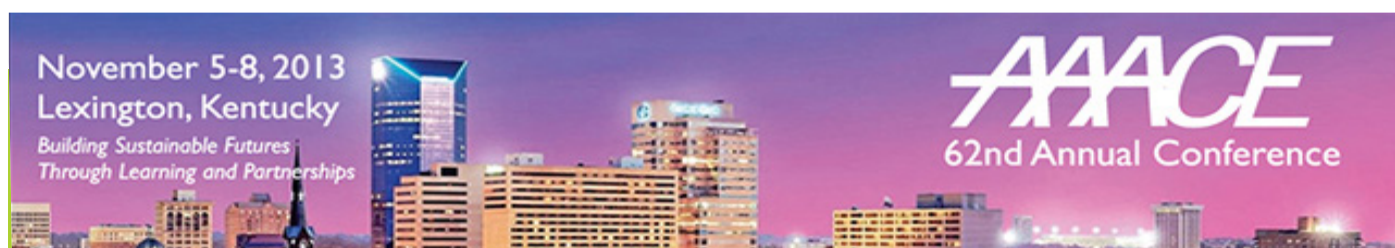
'Creating courses for older people so that they can keep their skills up to date and make sure they're up to the mark is critical if people want to remain part of the modern workforce. If people want to do something different, perhaps go into what has been termed an "encore career", they may also be looking for training that will help them



prepare for their new occupation. In the US, some educational providers are experiencing a surge of mature-age workers seeking to re-train'.

Mature workers also have much to offer local adult learning and community education providers. 'As the population ages local communities have the opportunity to benefit from a growing pool of wisdom that could be put to great use in education and training', Darryl says.

Extending your use-by date is published by Xoum Publishing, www.xoum.com.au.



The American Association of Adult and Continuing Education (AAACE) Call for Proposals is open now through April 22. Find out more about the conference and submit your proposal at <http://www.aaace.org/2013-conference>.

The Call for the Commission for International Adult Education Pre-Conference is open now through May 13. Visit <http://www.aaace.org/ciae> to make a proposal for the November 3-5, International Pre-Conference. Find additional conference details in AAACE-related publications and on our website.



Getting the hang of Google+ Hangouts

Google+ Hangouts is video chat for groups. Hangouts can accommodate up to 10 people at once, with room for others to watch. But you can also use it to chat one on one. Best of all it's free and easy to use

You can use Hangouts on a desktop computer, laptop, mobile phone or tablet.

When it comes to sharing information with clients and colleagues, teaching and learning, Hangouts can be used in a range of different ways to improve communication and connectedness.

Catch up with colleagues

You no longer have to wait for that annual conference to catch up with colleagues you haven't seen all year. Use Hangouts to connect with people who do work like yours in different parts of Australia or around the world.

Professional development

Watch someone else in action. Perhaps you're teaching a new group and want some advice from someone who's more experienced, or you'd like to see how they work with a similar group or topic.

Teach and learn a skill

Use Hangouts to demonstrate how to do something or pass on information in an engaging way. You can use Slideshare to support a public talk or to give practical examples of your topic.

Hold a meeting

Hangouts can be particularly useful if finding a convenient meeting time is difficult or when you want to include people who might not be able to attend. Scheduling a Hangout can be a useful way to overcome problems of distance or mobility

and to include all community members in discussions.

Invite guest speakers

You can invite anyone from around the world to talk to your group. Whether it's a poet in Paris or a birdwatcher in Berlin, you can use the technology to bring them into your group.

Create video interviews

You might want to capture the experiences of your learners or gather testimonials about your service. By recording video interviews you can upload these to your website or share them with members of your organisation.

Work on group projects

You can collaborate on documents during your meeting. Google Drive allows you to work on documents while you're meeting so that you can draft

and then discuss them face to face.

Schedule 'drop in' time

Talk with prospective users of your service or keep in touch with former participants by scheduling time where they talk with you or other staff at a specified Hangout time.

Getting started

Encourage people you want to connect with to set themselves up with what they need:

- an internet connected desktop or laptop computer, smart-phone or tablet
- a Google+ account
- an introduction to using Hangouts

We'd love to hear how you use Google+ Hangouts. Visit our Facebook page and tell us how you are using it in your organisation.

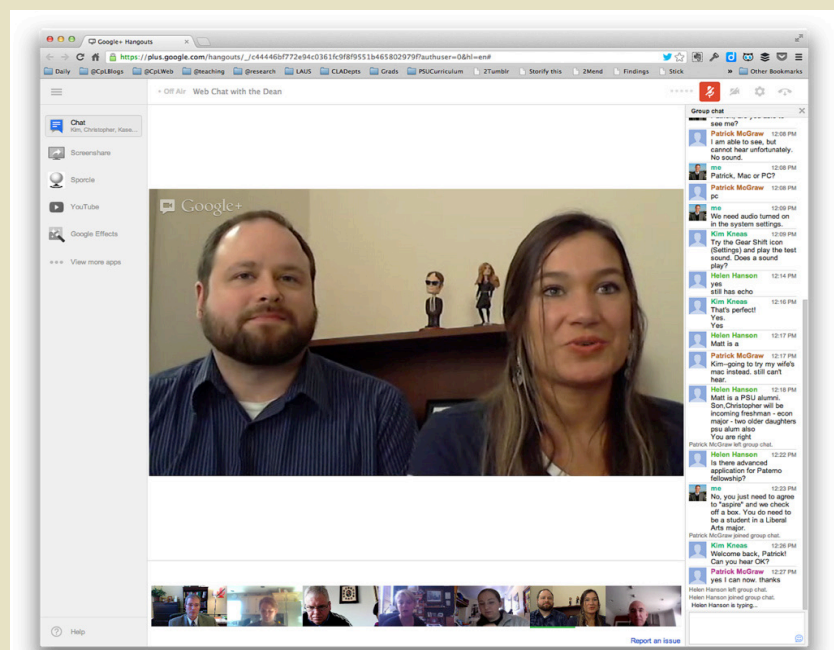


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Household money management pays off

A financial literacy program Budget Blitz! is about to kick off at Geeveston Community Centre (GECO) in Tasmania's Huon region, 62 km south-west of Hobart.

The Centre was announced in March as one of 10 successful recipients of the state government's Financial Literacy Exchange (FLEX) grants. The FLEX program aims to equip disadvantaged and low-income Tasmanians with the skills to better manage their household budgets.

Geeveston Centre volunteers will undertake intensive training in helping people who might be struggling financially to manage better on a tight budget.

Lucy Whitehead, the Centre's Literacy Co-ordinator, says that centre staff and volunteers noticed a need for financial literacy training through their work in the Centre's Food Pantry program.

'We noticed that some people were coming back repeatedly for emergency food. And that's not an easy thing for most people to do. There's a lot of pride involved.'

Food Pantry staff approached people they thought were really struggling and offered them a chance to talk about their finances. 'Having established a trusting relationship with people made it easier for them and us to have a discussion about how they were managing their money.'

Financial literacy is something a lot of us take for granted. Lucy says it involves being aware of



GeCo Literacy Co-ordinator Lucy Whitehead.

income and expenses; being able to read and understand bills and being able to plan ahead and spend carefully.

Financial literacy programs like Budget Blitz! aim to help people to learn the skills and develop the confidence to make more informed decisions when it comes to managing money.

Lucy says Geeveston Centre has helped people with their budgeting in the past.

The Centre is a NILS (No Interest Loan Scheme) agent, and with FLEX funding, the Centre will be producing more 'Cash Up' guides, a practical guide that offers recipes, planners, advice and resources for living on a tight budget.

The 'Cash Up' guide and its money-saving tips is popular and not just with people on low incomes. 'One woman told me that she'd never thought that putting less water in the kettle would save on electricity.'

Three volunteers and one staff member will undergo intensive training in offering financial assistance as well as in how to train others.

Lucy says the aim is to have around seven of their 20 volunteers trained to offer help both at the centre and through a mobile outreach service where they will take Budget Blitz! information and advice out to the community.

<http://www.gecocentre.com.au/>

Personal stories of lifelong learning

A new book celebrating the stories of a diverse range of adult learners from around Australia was launched in Sydney in April.

Lifelong & Lifewide: Stories of Adults Learning was launched by the Hon. Sharon Bird, MP and Minister for Higher Education and Skills at Sydney Community College on April 17.

As part of the event, a panel including two of the learners featured in the book, Sahar Elsemary and Mick Goss, Professor Barry Golding (President Adult Learning Australia) and Garry Trainor (Sydney Community College) and the Hon Sharon Bird, MP, shared their views and experiences of adult learning.

The book's author, Ilka Tampke, was commissioned to write the book by ALA CEO Sally Thompson. 'Her vision was to create a book that could bring a



Sally Thompson, Sahar Elsemary, the Hon. Sharon Bird MP, Mick Goss, Ilka Tampke

stories' of people's experiences of adult education.

The result is a series of 10 intimate portraits of a diverse range of people whose lives have been enriched and transformed by finding the right place to learn.

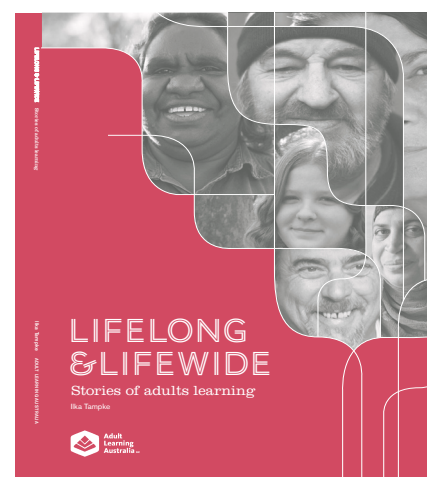
Lifelong & Lifewide: Stories of Adults Learning is

available for \$15.95 plus \$4.95 postage at <https://ala.asn.au/publications/>

human face and personal stories to the diverse policy areas of ALA', Ilka says.

Ilka had been writing about adult learning for *Quest* magazine for over a year and saw the book idea as an exciting prospect. 'It was a fantastic opportunity. I knew that there would be some amazing and uplifting stories out there.'

And that meant hitting the road. Ilka travelled to most states in Australia, conducting both face-to-face and phone interviews in her quest to 'unearth the rich



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Meet our Ambassador Rosemary Stanton

We are delighted that Rosemary Stanton, one of Australia's best-known and respected nutritionists, has agreed to be an Ambassador for Adult Learning Australia.

Why did you decide to take on the role of Ambassador for Adult Learning Australia? What do you hope to be able to contribute?

I am passionate about learning. Basically I think the day you don't learn something is a sad day indeed. I do realise that learning takes a bit of an effort, but, just drifting through a day with no effort doesn't appeal to me. My own learning involves my topic of nutrition and health, but I'm also keen on cryptic crosswords and scrabble. The dictionary is rarely out of reach. I'm also keen on learning about birds, plants and gardening as well as the daily learning that comes from observing grandchildren.

You really had to stand up for yourself when it came to going to university. Where did this enthusiasm for learning come from?

I was brought up in a religious sect that forbade girls going to University. Their rationale was that too much education might put a woman in a position of authority over a man. That didn't fit with their ideas of 'headship'. Such a restriction was a powerful stimulus to me not to accept such archaic ideas and I vowed to continue my education.



Nutrition was certainly not my first choice (medicine was) but the enlightened man in charge of Health Education in the Department of Health created a special cadetship for me to go to university and receive a living allowance while I was there. He needed nutritionists and so that was what was on offer. I took it and decided to throw myself into it.

You're passionate about changing Australia's poor eating habits through education. In your view what role can adult learning play in changing Australia's eating habits and creating healthier communities?

There are three aspects to my passion for food: food choices that promote health; teaching people about the food (what I call 'food literacy'), which includes how it grows; what happens to it; how it tastes and exploring foods that are new to us and help bring people from different cultures together and the problems of maintaining a sustainable food system.

Every one of these aspects of food and nutrition requires lots of learning. The health aspects are important to keep us going; the 'food literacy' aspects bring great pleasure for food and respect for those from whom we can learn; and there is a steep learning curve associated with a sustainable food supply. Older people may have a lot to offer the debate on sustainability because they lived through a time when food was valued and not wasted.

In your experience what are the most effective and engaging ways to teach adults about good nutrition and healthy eating? How can we model better eating practices for children?

I am a firm believer that gardening is an excellent



teacher about many aspects of life. It teaches us planning and patience (no instant gratification from planting a seed, but great expectation as the plant grows and becomes productive). Children who attend schools with a kitchen garden program have better eating habits; more skills in the kitchen (which assists when both parents work outside the home) and the garden is often a refuge from bullying and other life stresses. Once we grow fruit and vegetables (either in a home or community garden), we also get back in touch with food, seasonality and the wonderful flavours of freshly harvested products.

How do you continue to learn in your own life?

Although I do little paid work, I rarely have a day without an interview with a journalist. They seem to value my attention to keeping up with the latest information and with my freedom from conflict of interest. With no employer to keep happy, I am free to give my opinion. As I want that opinion to be valued, I continue to read widely and am involved in a consulting role (unpaid, but interesting) with several universities and government bodies.

I can't imagine a day when I won't want to learn more and there will always be so much more to learn than I can ever conquer. It means life will never be dull!

About Rosemary

Rosemary Stanton has been awarded an Order of Australia for her services to community health through education in nutrition and dietetics.

She has a Biochemistry and Pharmaceutical Chemistry degree, post-graduate qualifications in Nutrition and Dietetics, a Graduate Diploma in Administration and a PhD for her work in public health.

Rosemary is a prolific author. She has written over 30 books covering nutrition for adults and children, obesity, and women's health issues.



Adult Learning Australia INC

Lifelong and Lifewide Learning
for All Australians

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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