

## Unlikely partnership builds bridges



An intergenerational mentoring project is turning lives around.

On a shaded park bench in Toowoomba, a young woman talks animatedly to an older man who nods his head and listens. At first glance you might not think they have much in common. But they are part of an award winning mentoring program that's gaining a lot of attention.

The project pairs two groups of people in Toowoomba who often feel marginalised – young people at risk of leaving secondary school and older people who after a lifetime in the workforce can feel socially isolated and undervalued. The result is an intergenerational mentoring project that is turning people's lives around.

The program is a partnership between Toowoomba

Older Mens Network (TOMNET) and Toowoomba Flexi school – an annexe of Centenary Heights State High School. Flexi School is an alternative education site catering for 70 senior secondary school students who for one reason or another have become disengaged from mainstream schooling.

TOMNET is a not-for-profit community organisation established in Toowoomba in 2001 to support older men in regional, rural and remote locations in southern and south-west Queensland.

In 2006, an informal 'drop in' mentoring program began with older mentors offering advice and practical skills to assist young people to complete their ►

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## Message from the CEO

### Budget 2014 What Does it Mean for Adult and Community Education

This issue of *Quest* features a terrific story about 'Spinning Yarns', a 20 week project which brought together Aboriginal Elders from across the Bundjalung Nation on the northern coast of New South Wales to share a story of their life, culture, history or family. This program was funded under the Productive Ageing Through Community Education program (PaTCE) from the Commonwealth government. By the time this issue of goes to print, PaTCE will be no more, one of many casualties in the Commonwealth budget.

The Productive Ageing Through Community Education was developed as a result of a recommendation of the *Turning grey into gold report* from the Department of Treasury Inquiry into the Economic Potential of Senior Australians. As the title suggests, the *Turning grey into gold report* acknowledged that educational interventions could recognise our ageing population as a valuable source of skills, knowledge and wisdom instead of the 'ticking time bomb' of social problems view so regularly portrayed in the media.

We know from the Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC) survey that adults over fifty have much

lower literacy and numeracy than their younger counterparts. The percentage of the population at level three and above for literacy and numeracy declines rapidly for people in their late 40s onwards. It reaches its lowest point in the 64–75 age group where only a quarter have level three and above skills.

Although PaTCE was in its infancy, and the financial commitment was relatively humble, it was an important first step in the Commonwealth recognising that traditional approaches to education and training simply don't address the needs of the ageing population. Further, it was a recognition that the binary between 'learning for work' and 'learning for life' becomes meaningless in the senior years when there is a more holistic need for health, wellbeing, digital and information literacy for both work and life.

The theme of this year's federal budget has been self-reliance or, to quote our new Treasurer, Joe Hockey, of 'lifting and not leaning'. It's a philosophy that would be easier to accept if the budget didn't chip away at those things that make people self-reliant: management of your own physical and mental health, positive ageing and a capacity to cope with change. Lifelong Learning is essential in order for people to be 'self reliant'. Lifelong Learning is also essential to ensure that people are socially connected, so that they can weather the inevitable periods of dependency that characterise all of our lives; even Joe Hockey's.

If there is a glimmer of good news from an otherwise challenging

budget, it is that Commonwealth Language, Literacy and Numeracy programs including AMEP and SEE appear to have survived unscathed. The Workplace English Language and Literacy program has been discontinued, but there is some evidence that elements of this program will continue in the newly formed Industry Skills Fund. The Broadband for Seniors' initiative is also accounted for in the budget papers. This is all very good news.

The Abbott Government has so far shown a very strong desire for post compulsory education and training to be more responsive to the needs of industry and it makes intuitive sense that you would want people equipped with the skills, knowledge and expertise that industry needs. Yet we know from the 2013 ABS Work-related Training and Adult Learning Survey that workplace-based training and VET are skewed towards particular types of workers: full time over part time, under 55s over workers older than 55, and to workers who already have qualifications over those who have none. As VET and Foundation Skills policies are being rolled out, our concern will be to make sure that there are policy interventions to ensure that people who have a tangential relationship with our economy and society (the people who our Treasurer wants to be more self-reliant) are included.

This edition of *Quest* also includes a number of stories about a diverse range of lifelong learning programs funded at the state and local government levels. These governments are to be commended for their innovation and inclusiveness. And, as National Volunteer Week has just finished, it is timely to acknowledge the enormous amount of adult learning that is driven and directed by so many volunteers across the country, who understand the transformational power of learning.

**Sally Thompson  
CEO**

## Would you like to advertise in Quest?

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schooling. In 2008, with funds from The Rotary Club of Toowoomba East, the program was developed so pairs of mentors and students worked together on literacy and oracy skills. This year 15 pairs of year 10 students and their TOMNET partners will take part.

Alan Yorkston, TOMNET member and retired magistrate, works as a mentor. 'When I first went to Flexi School I saw the kids and I thought "What on earth am I doing here?" I also thought "It wasn't that long ago that I was sentencing kids that looked just like the students here" so I guess I also was guilty of pre-judging them. I now realise just how wrong I was. Now wild horses couldn't keep me away from the place ... Once I started to converse with the kids I realised they were simply normal kids, but with diverse opinions who may be marginalised, disengaged or who had perhaps dabbled in crime, have a few disadvantages or problems or simply just can't fit into society's preconceived mould of how teenagers should look and behave.'

'Initially I had the attitude that life has been good for me and that I may be able to give something back, but it didn't take long to lose this somewhat arrogant attitude



Students and mentors feel valued.

and realise I've learned so much from talking to the kids ... The other thing I've noticed is that some of the mentors really take to the mentoring. They become much more positive in their outlook. It also benefits the mentors in coming to understand the situations the students find themselves in.' Flexi Outreach Officer Melinda



Mentoring counteracts negative feelings about ageing.

Priddin says the one-on-one tutoring of young people helps young people improve their communication skills. 'They are better at formulating and expressing opinions, discussing ideas and thinking more deeply. Because they are better at expressing themselves this allows them to think more imaginatively and confidently.'

That doesn't mean it's not challenging. Mentors do most of the listening and encouraging students to talk. But active listening is a real skill, Melinda says, so training helps mentors develop this. Topics for discussion between mentors and students draw on topical issues such as local drink drivers and the causes and consequences of such behaviour. Mentors might share what things were like when they were the same age or share information from their own experiences.

'Our young people feel comfortable and confident talking with a mentor and they can apply this to other situations and develop more meaningful interactions with other people they come across.'

That's not to say that the work is all smooth sailing for the mentors. 'Working with young people can be very challenging if you've had

a conservative middle class happy existence. A lot of young people have had some fairly significant trauma and abuse and come from fairly dysfunctional families. We need to find a way of supporting mentors through that. The challenge is to know the difference between being sympathetic and empathetic. Young people don't want you to feel sorry for them, it's enough to acknowledge that things are tough for them.'

Melinda says feedback from former students is very positive. 'One person wrote on her evaluation sheet "It made such a difference to me to think that there is someone who can't wait to see me each week and who takes the time to listen and hear what I have to say." Those kinds of comments are typical, Melinda says, and show the kind of impact the one-on-one program has on participants.

For mentors it's counteracting negative feelings about ageing. 'As people get older they can start to feel they don't mean anything to society. The mentoring gives the mentors a sense that their life experiences are meaningful to someone and that they still able to make a difference. It gives people a real sense of purpose and meaning that they might have lost.'



# The power of spinning yarns

Sharon Taylor knows the power of documenting family history. She used to teach local Aboriginal Elders in and around Casino New South Wales about how to research and put together family stories. 'The feedback was amazing. Some community members hadn't realised they were related to others in the same community. Through the sharing of family histories, people made connections and developed relationships with others they wouldn't have otherwise.'

When Sharon and her colleagues at Aboriginal Learning Circle – North Coast Institute saw the advertisement for Productive Ageing through Community Education (PATCE) funding for senior Australians, they jumped at the chance to apply.

The result is 'Spinning Yarns',

a 20-week project that brought together Aboriginal Elders from across the Bundjalung Nation on the northern coast of New South Wales – including Tweed, Lismore, Casino and Coraki – to share a story of their life, culture, history or family.

The final product is a collection of stories and accompanying photographs that have been published as a book.

The whole community benefits from documenting Elders' stories, Sharon says. 'The book is something to be passed on through the generations. We have all these beautiful stories that we don't want to lose. The Elders know that their history is not going to be lost once they have gone. They have shared stories of the river in North Lismore and what they did as children and how it has changed now. They have shared

stories about their ancestors. For example, one Elder's grandmother was the first Aboriginal bush nurse and the Elder went on to be a bush nurse too.'

Spinning Yarns strengthens the bonds between the generations and passes down local cultural history to younger people, Sharon says. 'We've got some amazing and beautiful stories here.'

Sharon and other members of the Aboriginal Learning Circle team used their contacts to promote the project and convince Bundjalung Elders to take part.

Many Elders needed encouragement. 'Some of the Elders' first reactions were "I've got nothing to tell". But once you sit down and have coffee and cake and start yarnning all these stories start to flow.'



Dorrie with our Grafton Elders, left to right, Caroline Daly, Dorrie, Marrie Morgan, Lexie Donovan.

## Dorrie

*'When I was ordained the Elders in Grafton painted my face with ochre for me to remember my culture and not forget it because I was going onto a bigger, higher thing in my life' (being ordained into the church). They said 'be strong, don't get a big head and do it your way'.*

## Gwen Williams

*'In 1969, I started working at the Foundation for Aboriginal Affairs. It was the first registered Aboriginal organisation. This was in George Street, Sydney. I was a receptionist. This organisation was founded by the Sydney University and with the help and guidance of Charley Perkins. In 1970 was when Prince Charles come and we was able to represent our People, all nationalities was invited. Alana and I, who came from Townsville represented our Aboriginal People. We hit the papers and everything! That was an experience!'*



Gwen Williams, pictured next to Prince Charles at the bi-centenary 1970, Sydney.



Surfing trip to Byron Bay in 1969. Left to right: Gerald Chadburn, Graeme Togo, Dennis Watt, Kerry Watt and John Formosa.

## John Fomosa

*'The Fingal Gooris were the first surfers to surf the Tweed Bar. No matter what wind, if the swell was up, there was always clean barrels in the bar, especially on low tide. The main bank was right where the sand pumping pipe goes under the river today. Other days there was a bank right out near the mouth, inside the southern rock wall.'*

## Auntie Daph

*'Before I go any further into this story, I have to tell you I was a loner, I had no real friends I could go out with and have a good time, I was very shy and could not talk with people without stuttering or rolling my words together. I think that was due to my childhood but that is another story to tell.'*

*2006 I started to attend Lismore TAFE as a 71 year old student, I stumbled and fumbled my way through the first year, adjusting to life with a lot of strangers and making new friends and learning to communicate with people of different cultures.'*



Auntie Daph.

Elders involved attended TAFE in Lismore and Canowindra Aged Care Facility at Tweed Heads. Others were visited at home.

'It was very important to have Aboriginal staff involved who encouraged them to share their stories. Some Elders sat with a group and there was a lot of interaction in the group meetings. Once one person started telling a story the others would remember things too and add their own stories so it really took off. Some of the Elders are

very very shy and preferred to have individual meetings.'

Elders' stories were recorded and transcribed then returned to them for approval and any editing. The book is divided into stories from the Tweed and Northern Rivers areas, and each Elder's story contains their photo and some contain photos of the area or of relatives and people on communities.

Everyone involved in the project is 'really excited' about the book,

Sharon says.

The plan is for the book to go to local school libraries, TAFE and historical societies. Sharon says the book will trigger other stories. 'A lot of photos in the book will bring people closer together as they talk about the past. They'll talk about their memories of times and places and people. But most importantly it will open up avenues with kids and grandkids who will see the books at school, ask questions and learn more about their culture and history.'



### **23rd National Vocational Education and Training Research Conference**

*National VET Research 'No Frills' Conference July 9–11 July in Melbourne.  
Co-hosted by the National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER) and Holmesglen.  
For full conference details and registration go to **NCVER's Portal**.*



# Dorothy Lucardie inducted into Hall of Fame

ALA Board member and well known adult education practitioner Dorothy Lucardie was recently inducted into the International Adult and Continuing Education Hall of Fame.

In a ceremony at Iasi's Town Hall in Romania on April 29, Dorothy was one of ten people from seven countries to take part in the ceremony that recognises leaders in the field of adult education.

The 2014 Hall of Fame induction was held in conjunction with The Fourth International Conference on Adult Education – Adult Education in Universities. Local and Regional Perspectives.

Dorothy is one of six Australians to be inducted and joins the ranks of over 280 adult educators from around the world who have been honoured as leaders in the field since 1996.

'I was both surprised and thrilled to be nominated,' Dorothy says. 'I was also very humbled to be joining such a distinguished group of people.'

Hall of Fame inductees, members and family members attended the induction at Iasi's Town Hall and a reception hosted by the mayor.

People who make it to the Hall of Fame are nominated by their peers as innovative leaders who believe passionately in the transformative power of education. Dorothy was nominated because of her commitment to leadership in adult education. Among her achievements has been her work as former president of the ALA. Internationally, she forged stronger relationships with ALA and its international supporters such South Pacific Association for Basic and Adult Education (ASPBAE) and the International Council for Adult Education (ICAE). She's presented internationally on adult education and is an active member of the Australian Coalition for Education and Development, a partnership between a range of aid and education bodies working to improve Australian adult education aid to other countries. Dorothy has been a mentor and inspiration to new entrants to the field. Her passion for adult education is reflected in her infectious enthusiasm for lifelong learning.

'All are outstanding lifelong learners and have left lasting impressions on the students, institutions, and organisations they have served,' Dr James Pappas, Executive



Director of the International Adult and Continuing Hall of Fame at the University of Oklahoma says. Apart from the honour of the induction, Dorothy says the conference was a great opportunity to network and share experiences and research on adult learning.

'Meeting delegates at the conference and hearing a range of very diverse presentations on teaching and learning strategies in adult education from an international perspective was really stimulating,' Dorothy says.

For Dorothy, the acknowledgement of her work has been inspiring. She's now thinking about who she will nominate.

'There's so much value in recognising and acknowledging people's contribution like this. I know a lot of people who work in adult education who deserve to be in the Hall of Fame.'

The International and Continuing Education Hall of Fame is based at the University of Oklahoma.

Photo credit

Iasi City Hall by [Wikimedia Commons CC-BY 3.0](#)



Iasi City Hall.

# Putting down roots in Alice Springs

While the traditional owners of Alice Springs, the Central Arrernte people, have lived on the land for thousands of years, the town's population is fluid. Population churn, the turnover of people moving in and moving out, is high in Alice Springs, as it is throughout the Northern Territory.

Murray 82, retired at 78 after a career as a pilot with the Flying Doctor Service. Murray's lived and worked in London, Auckland and Sydney but he chose to settle in Alice Springs.

His job gave him a technical edge that he found he could share with others. 'We had computers fitted

Association, National Seniors Central Australia and the University of the Third Age (U3A) and is used by a range of community groups, who offer a jam packed weekly program of activities and classes from woodwork and tai-chi to bridge and computer classes. Around 150 people come through the doors of the centre each week.



Murray Cosson and Jean Carpenter in computer class.

As well as being a volunteer tutor, Murray takes part in other activities at the Centre and is part of Wednesday's snooker group. Murray says that older people can become isolated, especially if their friends move away. Then there's those older people who have moved back to Alice Springs from more remote areas who can also feel isolated in their new home.

'Part of what we do is help people stay connected and do something useful with their

In an average year more people move out of Alice Springs than move in. And in the retirement age bracket the numbers of people leaving are even higher.

But Alice Springs is making an effort to hold on to its older population. The local council and NT government are encouraging people to stay on past retirement and put down roots in the town.

Murray Cosson, Broadband for Seniors (BFS) volunteer at the Alice Springs 50 plus Community Centre has noticed things more older people are choosing to stay.

in planes and we had to figure out how to use them. We had GPS more than 20 years before everyone else.'

Murray gets a dozen or so a week to his computer classes. Some bring their own computers, others use the new NEC computers supplied by BFS. Broadband for Seniors is one of a number of programs that are run out of the centre, which is a hub for activities offered to people of retirement age and beyond in Alice Springs.

The Centre is managed by the Alice Springs Senior Citizens

time. People, particularly those who've lived in remote areas before moving to Alice, have been highly independent. By moving in to Alice Springs they are swapping an isolated life for a life in town because towns offers the kind of services that they rely on more as they get older.'

'Some people here travel 1500 kilometres to the coast to go fishing. One member of the Centre is about to visit his kids in WA. He'll be driving thousands of kilometres on largely dirt roads. He's been doing things like that all his life. So losing your





Alice Springs 50plus community centre.

younger people. 'Some of the women in the exercise class are in their 30s and 40s.'

The fact that the Centre is used by such a diverse range of community groups of different ages and with different interests is a great use of a council building, Gavin says. 'It's as it should be. We're making the most of it. As a result, it's a great way to meet

independence can hit people very hard. We are helping people to stay independent as long as possible.' It's this wandering spirit that sees the Centre offer bush-based activities including gliding, clay shooting and archery as well as more traditional town-based classes.

Gavin Carpenter is one of a number of community members who approached the council four years ago about using the Senior Citizens building as a community centre.

they get their retirement cheque, they're out of here.' The loss of older people from Alice Springs is sad, Gavin says. 'You lose that continuity, that expertise, that history and that experience.'

The Alice Springs 50 Plus Community Centre helps older people who stay to connect with others. 'When you look at the Centre's diary and the range of activities that are on you realise what an asset this centre is to the town.' Gavin's pleased too, to see that the Centre is attracting

new friends.'

The Centre offers a great place for people to get together. 'Older people have got to have somewhere that isn't a pub or a club – a place where they can feel safe and welcome. Every town should have something like this.'

Photo credit  
Yunta by [GothPhil CC-BY 2.0](#)

After 33 years running the newsagency and general store in Tennant Creek and seven years running Timber Creek and Dunmarra roadhouses, Gavin and his wife Joan moved back to Alice Springs in 2005 to settle.

They considered Queensland and South Australia as places to retire to but once they'd 'travelled and had a look around' Alice Springs was their choice. They're unusual, Gavin says. 'Most people who retire here have their car keys in one hand and the car running on the street and as soon as



Moving to town after years in remote areas can be a challenge.



ALA has a long history of offering free staff development webinars for its members. We've noticed that some members seem a bit unsure about what's involved.

Webinars are seminars or presentations that are conducted online using the Internet and that allow for interaction between the presenter and the participants.

Webinars are convenient – bringing professional expertise and presentations to your office or home. They also give you the chance to meet and network with people engaged in the same kind of work and interested in the same issues as you.

Here are our tips for getting the most out of the experience.

**1.** Don't be daunted by the technology. All you need is an Internet connected computer, a link to the webinar 'classroom', microphone and headphones. Make a list of the experience and qualifications your volunteer staff already have. Understanding what assets you already have will help you identify any gaps as well as look at ways of developing your current volunteer base.

**2.** Know what to expect. Webinars, like classes, are scheduled for a particular time and day. You can see as well as hear your presenter who can share PowerPoints, video and other content with you. In most webinars, you can interact with the presenter and other participants in real time through instant messaging.

**3.** Be selective. Some webinars are free, others aren't. Some organisations offer webinars as a means of attracting business or marketing a new product. Choose webinars that are worth your time and offer practical skills that you can use in the workplace.

**4.** Get there early. Let yourself into the classroom ahead of time to make sure you can access the room and to give yourself a chance to try out the tools and features you'll be using during the session. Arriving early also gives you time to test that your



All you need is an Internet connected computer, headphones and a microphone.

headphones are working OK and get any help you need before the session starts. If you miss the session, remember webinars can also be recorded and stored for later access.

**5.** Keep your questions in mind. Make a list beforehand of the things you want to learn in the webinar and the questions you'd like answered. Some presenters will allow time for questions during the presentation, others will leave them to the end. Either way, don't be shy.

**6.** Participate. You're not only meeting a new presenter at a webinar but other participants as well.

Don't be afraid to share ideas and chat. Be alert to potential collaboration and networking opportunities.

**7.** Turn your insights into action. After the webinar is over, review your notes and plan ways you will incorporate what you learned into your work.

**Upcoming ALA webinar:**  
Adult learning principles in practice

**When:**  
13 June 2014  
1:00-2:00pm AEST

**Register:**  
<https://ala.asn.au/events/ala-webinar-adult-learning-principles-in-practice/>

# Careers course provides direction



Learning to put together an effective resume that highlights transferable skills.

A new program in Adelaide's northern suburbs is helping young people get back on a career path. 'Where to from here?' at Adelaide's Mawson Centre is aimed at 17-24 year olds who've left school but aren't working or studying.

They're a group that course facilitator Kathryn Brady says can be vulnerable particularly if they are not entitled to Centrelink payments and, as a result, don't have access to the support services offered through Centrelink.

'They've really fallen through the gap and while they want to be independent, they don't have the information or the supports available to them to help them take next steps,' Kathryn says.

The seven week course aims to plug the gap by showing participants that there are many different pathways they can take to achieve their goals. The course aims to build confidence and communication skills that help

students make decisions and take action.

One day a week for seven weeks participants are engaged in developing teamwork and communication skills, goal setting, practical excursions and interview techniques.

Participants develop resume and letter writing techniques, receive career guidance and connect with local networks such as registered training organisations, Skills for All Providers and Northern Futures. Extra short workshops are offered according to the interests of the group such as Child Safe Environments, Safe Food Handling for young people interested in working in child care or hospitality. Although all twelve participants in the first program have completed year 12, their choice of subjects often limited the options they had for further study.

Confidence can be a big problem

too, Kathryn says. 'Most of them seem really confident from the outside but on the inside they aren't nearly so self assured so the prospect of going into the workforce is really a big step.'

And it can seem even more daunting if you haven't been doing much since graduating from high school. 'Around half had been sitting at home on their own since finishing school and that can be quite a depressing experience.'

One of the biggest challenges Kathryn says is developing a resume. 'Once we get to the stage in the course of putting their CVs together they know what employers look for but they have real trouble identifying transferable skills. We encourage them to replace their generic list of achievements and abilities with a specific list of skills that are relevant to the job they are applying for.'

'For example, one young man had done all the video recording and photography for a disability basketball match that had been offered across a number of schools. It was really a big project. By breaking it down we were able to help him identify that he was able to work effectively with a range of people from different backgrounds including people with disabilities, that he had manual handling and occupational health and safety skills, quite apart from his experience and ability in audio visual production.'

Kathryn says participants often focus on the end result of a project rather than the many skills they learn on the way. 'They will often resist and say "But I was only ...". It takes a shift in mindset for them to identify strengths and play down weaknesses.'

But by the time they get to interview practise at the end of the seven weeks they've got the idea Kathryn says. 'By then they know that it's important to talk up strengths and turn your weaknesses into something positive. I tell them "You



might start off saying you are a social butterfly but turn this around by adding I'm really good at building networks".'

Kathryn says offering participants a positive experience of learning is critical. 'Some of them have had negative experiences of education and that's why they are disengaged so we want to make sure they know that adult education isn't school.'

Kathryn says that despite having finished year 12, many participants have problems with literacy and numeracy. 'We make sure we mix up activities, and never do same thing twice to keep them engaged.'

How does Kathryn know if the program is successful? 'Success is them coming back each week and leaving with a smile at the end of each session. To me adult education is all about being engaged.'

Of the first group through the course, four have found jobs, and the remainder have gone on to accredited and non-accredited training.

'I'm very proud that these young people are able to move forward



Resume and letter writing techniques.

by the end of the course. There is nothing worse than people sitting behind closed doors, isolated and cut off. I love making sure people are engaged in the community whether it's in paid work or not. There's a huge need for volunteers and helping young people see that it's the skills you get through those experiences that will get them paid work in the long run is very rewarding.'

*The ACE Youth Career Awareness Program was developed by the*

*Mawson Centre (a joint partnership between the City of Salisbury, University of South Australia and the SA Department for Education and Child Development).*

*This course is funded through the ACE program, as part of the Government of South Australia's Skills for All initiative.*

Photo credit

Job application by [Taylor McKnight](#).  
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"Where to from here?" helps young people to identify career pathways.

## Meet the Board

# Cath Dunn



**Adult  
Learning  
Australia** INC

Lifelong and Lifewide Learning  
for All Australians



Cath Dunn has been an ALA Board member since 2012. She first came across ALA in 2000 in the course of her work with the WA Department of Training, where she was responsible for policy and projects related to equity in VET and adult community education (ACE). ALA along with local ACE organisations were part of the Department's ACE Advisory Committee, which contributed policy advice and helped plan major projects events and grants.

### **When and how did your involvement with adult learning start?**

I started work in TAFE in 1978 as a student counsellor. For the next 17 years – in both metropolitan and regional colleges – I met with and helped adults returning to study.

### **What do you see as best practice when it comes to adult learning?**

Adults come to learning for a variety of reasons, with a range of educational backgrounds and with different needs and goals. They bring with them all their rich life experience – some with positive expectations of themselves as learners, and many with negative ones. Good practice in adult learning makes use of this diversity and recognises and builds on each person's existing knowledge and skills. By making the learning

relevant, flexible, interactive and achievable, it builds the learner's confidence and motivation.

### **Why do you think an organisation like ALA is important?**

An association like ALA provides a central professional point where diverse organisations with common purposes can share ideas, learn from each other and present a united voice. This is particularly important where many organisations are relatively small and isolated and not well funded. I think ALA is doing a great job in using online forums, communication and workshops to get interaction and professional development across the sector, at minimal cost to participants.

### **What have you learned as a result of being on the Board?**

I have learnt a lot more about the breadth of activities ALA is involved with, how the finances are managed, and how efficient and responsible the administration team is. I've met the other Board members who are all professional and committed to the cause and bring valuable experience and perspectives. It's also been really interesting to see how ALA manages its relationship with funding bodies, as I have always previously sat on the government side of the fence.

## 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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