



Daphne Ryan, store assistant at the Barunga Store.

# QUEST

ISSUE 1 2015

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## Taking training Outback

A training program for workers in remote Aboriginal community stores is part of an initiative to improve the availability and amount of affordable and healthy food in remote communities.

Sometimes it takes Ryan Buckley a flight in a light plane and a four hour drive across unmade roads to get to work.

Ryan and colleague Tina Gill are training officers with Outback Stores, which manages 37 community stores on remote Aboriginal communities in the Northern Territory, Western Australia and South Australia.

Stores in remote Aboriginal communities have a big impact on the diets of the people living in the community. Staff trained in how to promote and prepare nutritious and healthy food can have a big impact on what customers buy.

Ryan and Tina offer workplace training at small stores employing just two people at Epennara to large ones like Tennant Creek, with 72 employees.

Outback Stores was established as part of an initiative to improve Aboriginal people's health by improving the availability and amount of reasonably priced healthy food, drink and grocery items available for sale in local communities.

Outback Stores take on management and training at remote stores at the invitation of the local community, and in partnership with the community aim to run a fully stocked store comparable to that enjoyed by people in towns and cities.

Sometimes this means establishing a new store or refurbishing an old one, improving shelving, refrigeration and retail equipment. It always requires training local people in the variety of tasks involved in storing, preparing, promoting and selling a much broader range of merchandise.

# Message from the CEO



Australian culture favours a view of education as economic with a narrow focus on job training. It overlooks the role of education and lifelong learning in social cohesion, citizenship and democracy.

This edition of Quest includes a great story about the Glenorchy City Council's LEARN strategy, which stands for Learning, Engaging, Achieving, Respect and Networking. Glenorchy is a suburb of Hobart and the LEARN initiative is one of many fantastic grassroots lifelong learning initiatives occurring in the Apple Isle.

Learning in Tasmania appeared in the mainstream media recently for all the wrong reasons. According to reports from the ABC's 7.30 program, some unscrupulous for-profit training companies have looked at the pockets of poverty and educational disadvantage in Tasmania and seen a chance to manipulate people into huge debts for courses that they have little hope of completing and which have little educational value even if they are completed. The stories of impoverished people attempting to build a new life for themselves and their kids through learning are heartbreaking in themselves. The fact that others would manipulate these hopes and aspirations for private profit is reprehensible.

## Senate Inquiry focusses attention

ALA's recent submission to the Senate Inquiry into The Operation, Regulation and Funding of Private Vocational Education and Training (VET) Providers in Australia, outlined the experiences of many of our members who work with disadvantaged learners in neighbourhoods very much like those featured on 7.30. Many have personal experiences of receiving ads for lengthy courses offered in a fraction of the time with inducements like

iPads or Coles Myer vouchers. Some neighbourhood houses have been offered 'bonus payments' for every disadvantaged learner they refer. I live in Footscray, in Melbourne's inner west.

**I have personally been offered iPads twice by doorknockers, twice out the front of Centrelink and multiple times in the shopping mall.**

For-profit providers and their advocates like to suggest that the behaviours outlined above are the work of a 'few bad apples'. They also suggest that the fault lies with unregulated third-party brokers. I would suggest that the practice is too widespread to be anything but systemic. And it beggars belief that training providers are unaware of the tactics used when they engage the services of third-party brokers.

I would suggest that we are observing the natural end point of neo-liberal approaches to education, which view it as a set of individualised transactions, purchased rationally in a market as a form of investment in the self. Educationalists, on the other hand, recognise that education is essentially a social and distributed process that builds better societies and families as well as supporting individual aspiration. Or as the Glenorchy City Council will tell you, it's about Learning, Engaging, Achieving, Respect and Networking.



(story continued from p. 1)

The goal of staff training is to develop a workforce that will enable the community to take over and run a successful store themselves.

Profits from the store go back into the community to invest in better equipment and community projects.

Food in remote areas of Australia can cost 50% more than food in regional towns or cities. The cost of fuel, transport and refrigeration adds to food prices especially in areas where deliveries are affected by the weather. For example, during the wet season when roads are closed and food has to be flown in.

### 2011 comparison of food prices

	Melbourne	Beswick/Wugularr
Bottled water 1.5L	.77	4.04
Weetbix cereal 1kg	4.60	7.21
Tuna 425g	2.35	6.90
Frozen vegetables 1kg	1.71	7.00

Source: [Children of the Intervention submission](#)

By the time fresh produce reaches a community store, it is not only likely to be more expensive but far less fresh than it would be in urban centres. And if you're not there in time to catch the delivery, you can miss out on fresh produce altogether.

Not surprisingly, Aboriginal people in remote areas tend to buy cheaper food that lasts longer. But often it's poor quality food, low in nutrition, high in salt and sugar.

Outback Stores forms partnerships with suppliers in major food centres to supply more affordable produce to its stores. Having a remote community store stocked with cheaper and healthier foods means local people no longer have to travel long distances to shop and have greater choices when it comes to shopping.

## New produce means new practices

Outback Stores training officers Tina Gill and Ryan Buckley offer Certificate II and III in Retail Service so staff can learn how to do a range of jobs required in different parts of the store. This includes food safety, communications, providing product advice, operating a checkout, preparing and selling takeaway food, replenishing shelves and organising displays.

'It's work-based training where people practise what they've been taught. We talk about the theory behind why the employee is doing something, show them how to do it, watch them doing it and then provide feedback,' Ryan says. 'We make it fun. We work alongside them and talk to them as they go about doing what they do. They always ask you when you're coming back.'

Working as a trainer in remote communities requires not just formal qualifications but great skills working with people for whom English is a second language, Tina Gill says.

**'It's important to adapt the material to the learner's culture and experiences,' Tina says.**

'We don't assume everyone has literacy and numeracy skills and we use a lot of picture-based material, and we use stories and role plays to get our message across. You become really aware that words used in the training materials might not be used in communities. So you substitute them for local words – it's much more effective in communicating with people and it helps us update our procedures and materials.'

'We work alongside trainees, observing them and talking to them as they go about their work stacking shelves or using the register, asking them to explain what they are doing and why.'



Store staff learn how to prepare and cook a wider and healthier variety of food.





Shelf labels that highlight healthy foods are part of in-store nutrition education.

Tina's experience growing up on Groote Eylandt has stood her in good stead for the job. 'I can tell when someone's engaged and enjoying themselves as well as when it's not going well by their body language.'

'No day is the same, it's always different. I'm always learning,' Tina says.

## A happy store is a good sign

'You know training's been successful when you see a relaxed store manager, because you know that means well-trained staff where everything's running smoothly,' Tina says.

You can also notice changes in the people you've trained, Tina says. One man in his 40s who she's worked with for a year has a new perspective on the community store. 'He can see that the shop has become a social vehicle to educate others. He's one of the relief managers now and he wants to stay where he is. It's his mother's country and he feels very strongly about the place. He can see that the shop is not just a place to sell Coke and pies but a vehicle for greater learning and opportunities for healthier living.'

**'Education gives people choices,' Ryan says.**

'We encourage people to train for higher duties and look for promotion.'

He recalls one young woman he trained in WA. 'Two days in she said, "I'm gonna be the manager one day". She went through the workbooks herself, and humbugs her manager to do more advanced work things. She's got 4 kids that she fits around her job. She's really determined to make it work.'

Staff can take on management roles whether it's running the community store or taking on a role at Outback Stores. In 2014, five community stores were managed by trained local staff acting as relief managers while Store Managers went to a conference. That's a huge change,' Tina says. 'Not that long ago, there were no local relief managers. It's a huge achievement that makes us very proud.'

<http://outbackstores.com.au/>

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# Council strategy encourages community learning

Glenorchy City Council in Tasmania has launched a LEARN (Learning, Engaging, Achieving, Respect and Networking) Strategy to provide the community with opportunities to continue learning for life.

Glenorchy mayor Kristie Johnston.



The LEARN Strategy aims to address low participation and attainment in education and training across all age groups and create learning opportunities for the whole Glenorchy community.

'It's no secret that educational attainment and retention are quite poor in Glenorchy,' the Mayor of Glenorchy Kristie Johnston says. 'But education is so important in all areas of our lives. It underpins our success in employment, health and community wellbeing.'

Through the development of partnerships, the Council plans to improve education, training and employment outcomes for young people and encourage and support a culture of lifelong learning in Glenorchy. 'The Council doesn't provide educational services but we have a very important role in facilitating discussion and showing leadership,' Ald Johnston says.

The partnerships approach guided the Strategy's development. Over the last 2 years, Glenorchy City Council has consulted with over 200 stakeholders, including in-depth conversations with 42 key education, training and employment service providers.

The Strategy is informed by Australian Bureau of Statistics research and builds on a number of government plans. The research phase of developing the strategy also involved a review of plans and approaches to establishing learning communities in Australia and overseas.

'It was a fantastic experience for us to take part in this process and the whole Council was involved in its development,' Ald Johnston says. 'It was a learning process for the Council as well as for the community. Our extensive

community consultation and the research we undertook stimulated conversations that had not happened before. The process was a revelation to many on our Council.'

With the launch of the Strategy complete, a Leadership Group was established to develop projects, community campaigns and other initiatives.

'We're already seeing differences,' Ald Johnston says. 'People in the community are more aware of programs available and have a better understanding of what's on offer.'

<http://www.gcc.tas.gov.au>

**Retention rates in Glenorchy are low with 50.3% of the total adult population having left school at Year 10 or below.**

**One in four of the current student population in Glenorchy continues on to complete Year 12.**

**Job Service Providers in Glenorchy have reported that more than 10% of their total clients are 16–18 years of age at first contact.**

**Only 35% of 19–21 year olds living in Glenorchy are attending any educational institution.**



# Classroom chemistry: Teaching and learning Auslan

A move to Finland where she learned Finnish sign language helped Ida Rogers – head teacher at Deaf Society NSW – become a better teacher.



For Ida Rogers, Auslan is her first language.

Auslan is Ida Rogers' first language so she decided that if she was going to empathise with her Auslan students, she'd better learn a new language herself. So she moved to Finland and learned Finnish sign language.

'Now when I work with students I can say "Look I've been there, I know how you feel."

Teaching Auslan and educating people about deaf culture improves opportunities for deaf people to gain fulfilling work, get better access to information and achieve equal standing in society.

Teaching runs in Ida's family. 'My dad was one of the first Auslan teachers in NSW. I didn't know at the time but it was hard for deaf people to go to uni back then. But as a child I just saw my dad going to uni and I thought I can go to uni, there's no barriers for me. But when I look back I think "Wow", I really thank my dad because he really inspired me to go to uni and become a teacher.'

'I love teaching. I know my subject area and I want to impart that knowledge to students. I want students to use the language and become part of the community – they may even become my interpreters one day.'

At the Deaf Society, Ida's role is looking after the teaching programs and making sure things run smoothly.

'Good teachers have to understand the language and how it works as well as how to teach it. It's quite different from English, with different grammar, structure and rules.'

People enrol in a basic Auslan course for all sorts of reasons. 'They might have met a deaf person or Auslan has been something they've always wanted to learn. Some have deaf family members or parents, others want to become interpreters.'

Having a kit full of activities and information helps teachers plan and run classes, which are often demanding. It can be a challenge for an Auslan teacher to make sure 20 people are signing correctly. Each sign involves hand shapes, orientation, location, movement, and facial expression. There's a lot for students to learn and one small change in hand movement or facial expression can result in embarrassing gaffes.



Auslan teacher Ida Rogers shows a class how small changes in hand movement or facial expression can change the meaning of an Auslan sign.

Ida says that while it's important that students enjoy the process, it's a serious business and they need to commit time to practising and learning in between classes as well as in class. 'Students really have to be able to copy to learn and to be able to accept feedback when they're getting it wrong.'

When things are going right, pacing is critical. 'When a teacher gets excited they can sign very fast, so they have to remember to slow down.'

**Ida says good teachers don't just teach sign language, they teach a respect for deaf culture.**

'Our aim is to shift students' view of learning Auslan away from helping people with a disability to seeing themselves as a support for deaf people. In our basic Auslan classes if we've broadened people's view then we've achieved our goal.'

Beyond the beginners Auslan courses of Sign Language 1 and 2, students can progress through to the accredited courses. Certificate II to the Diploma of Auslan are generally completed over two to three years, then it is the Diploma of Interpreting for those interested in becoming an interpreter. 'It takes a few years for them to find their feet, their accent. They also continue to learn once they become part of the deaf community, which is so warm and welcoming. We really appreciate people wanting to learn our beautiful language.'

'My dream is that one day we won't need interpreters any more. It would mean I won't be disabled or disadvantaged in any way. And we'd all be speaking the same language.'

**Laura Lawrence is already fluent in three languages. Now she's picked up a fourth. She's studying beginners' Auslan with her husband and two friends on Saturday mornings at the Deaf Society's Parramatta campus.**

'I expected the Auslan class to be interesting but I didn't expect it to be so much fun,' Laura says.

'I wanted something completely different that we could learn together where we were all at the same level.'

**The Deaf Society runs around 90 face to face Auslan courses each year across New South Wales from beginners to the Diploma of Auslan as well as offering Sign Online.**

With four of us learning Auslan, it's a communal activity. It's great to have one another to practise with.'

There are practical benefits of learning Auslan too, Laura says. 'My husband has a problem hearing when there's a lot of background noise. He doesn't have a diagnosed hearing problem, just a worse-than-normal ability to hear when there's a lot of background noise. It'll make life easier – we'll be able to talk in crowded pubs.'

Laura knew from previous experience that learning a language could be dry and didn't expect that Auslan would be any different. 'I honestly expected it to be academic, sitting down, doing a lot of memorisation. But Auslan lends itself to a different style of teaching. There's a lot of interaction, it's hands on and you have to be very aware of your body language. It's like being back in drama class, where you have to mime throwing a ball or change your walk to show more of a stagger than a stroll. You have to get over your inhibitions and learn to laugh at yourself. It's so much fun.'

Learning Auslan has made a big difference. 'I'm much more aware of what deaf people have to deal with.'

**I've really started noticing how uninclusive so many things are for people who are deaf.'**

Laura and her group plan to continue learning Auslan once the beginner class is over. They are looking forward to applying what they've learnt. 'We're having a blast.'

In the meantime between classes Laura and her husband practise finger spelling together and both have made plans on how they can use their new skill. 'My husband works at Sydney University and he'd really like to get more involved with integration programs there.'

Laura is about to start a new job with a charity that works with sick children in hospitals. 'My first question is likely to be "Have you thought about teaching the Clown Doctors Auslan?"'

<http://deafsocietynsw.org.au>





# Corrections on course

For those with a criminal record or trying to adjust to life after prison, poor literacy is a burden that can make rehabilitation that much harder.

'There's often a link between poor literacy and poor decisions', says Norman Alexander.

A Tasmanian adult literacy program helps former prisoners and offenders get back on their feet.

Most of the offenders who arrive at Community Corrections Centre in Hobart to get help with their literacy aren't there voluntarily. Some are there because a court has ordered them to attend or because their probation officer has recommended it or simply because it will help to keep them out of jail.

'It's a matter of finding the hook, the thing that will motivate them,' Norman Alexander, literacy coordinator-Justice says. 'I tell them "I need to hear what you want to learn". They find that incredibly liberating. They might say, "I want to be able to read to my kids". One young fellow saw me signing a form and he pointed at my signature and said, "I'd love to be able to do that!"

Norman is one of three literacy coordinators in the state's LINC network who work with justice system clients at Risdon Prison and Community Corrections in the North/NW and South.

Tasmanian Prison Service Education and Training Strategic Plan 2011–2016 states that all prisoners' sentences and release plans will include a learning plan.

Literacy skills are generally measured by a person's ability to use and understand the information they need to function in everyday life. Without good literacy skills, life is much harder.

'People develop incredible mechanisms to cope with poor literacy. The prospect of going to Centrelink and filling in a form for example can be very intimidating, so people find ways around it. They might say they've forgotten their glasses so someone else has to help them, or they might say they have to leave to pick up the kids and they'll take the form home. For a while the strategies they use work for them. They might take a form home and get their wife/girlfriend/dad to read and fill it out for them. But they also might avoid doing it all together which creates all kinds of extra problems.'

Avoiding situations where reading or writing are required can mean people aren't able to access resources and programs such as vocational re-training, personal development programs like anger management or drug rehabilitation. Without access to these support services and assistance, they are more likely to end up in trouble with the law.

But getting reluctant learners to admit to a problem they find shameful and embarrassing can be difficult, especially given so many were unsuccessful at or hated school. Norman keeps the initial assessment meeting as informal as possible. 'Asking a whole bunch of questions or putting pen to paper can be very off-putting for people. It can really scare them off.'





Volunteer tutors enable people with low literacy to gain confidence in themselves as learners.

## Don's story

Don, 40, first came to Community Corrections seven years ago after being referred from a drug treatment program. 'He was an absolute mess. He was very flighty and nervous and couldn't focus or concentrate. He couldn't write any more than his name.'

Since he started one on one with a literacy tutor, Don's become a conservation volunteer and has joined group classes at TasTAFE. He's started breeding finches as a hobby. Don uses his new found literacy skills to write notes to himself to inspire him to comply with his treatment program and overcome 'dark days' and is hoping to do a Certificate 2 or 3 in Horticulture.

For the first time in many years Don feels that he has something to look forward to, and something to lose.

Once assessed, Norman matches each person with a tutor for 20 weekly sessions. Individual tutoring rather than a group or classroom approach ensures tutors can focus on helping reluctant learners overcome barriers and make progress.

'Their self-confidence and self-concept change and they start to feel great. They gain confidence in themselves as learners. Literacy improves the quality of life people can enjoy. They can participate in society and can give something back instead of being looked down on, and that can be quite a profound shift.'

Many learners continue with their tutoring after their court order has expired or when attendance is no longer mandated. The goal is to help them make the transition from individual tutoring to group literacy classes and beyond.

'Once they get to see what TAFE has to offer – training in retail, hospitality, barista work, carpentry, almost anything, really, they suddenly see the possibilities and a different path ahead.'

Currently seven learners are attending pre-certificate and certificate level classes at TasTAFE, and two are in university preparation programs.

'Literacy gives people choices,' Norman says. 'It gives people a sense that life can be different to what it used to be, that they can develop skills and knowledge to have a life they never thought they would. It acts as a circuit breaker.'

## Are you an ALA member?

Becoming a member of Adult Learning Australia is a fantastic way to support lifelong and lifewide learning across Australia.

To find out more about all the benefits of an ALA membership, go to:

[www.ala.asn.au/join-now](http://www.ala.asn.au/join-now)



# Some simple rules of social media

Our recent research into ALA members' social media use shows you don't have to be a big organisation to have an effective and influential social media presence.

## Tips and Trends




Here are our tips on going back to social media basics.

1. Put links to your social media accounts on your website. It seems obvious but a surprising number of member websites don't mention or link to their social media accounts. Make it easy for your audience to share information on your web pages with their social networks and help them follow, like and connect to you with a click.
2. Use your organisation's other communication channels to promote your social media accounts. Ask all staff to add the details to their email signature and business cards. Review your signage and promotional materials.
3. Make your social media accounts easy to find. Use consistent and informative names that are easy to remember. And be wary of using acronyms in your account names. For example, WAEC doesn't tell us anything about your organisation but Wallaby Adult Education or even the shorter Wallaby Adult Ed is much more effective.
4. Replace default Facebook, YouTube and LinkedIn page addresses – that long and ugly string of letters and numbers – with a name that is shorter and easier to recall.
5. Have a plan and set goals for your social media account/s and track your progress. All of the major platforms offer free analytics, including data about growth in followers, post popularity and the best times to post.
6. Don't spread yourself too thin. Focus your efforts on those social media platforms your target audience uses.
7. Don't just broadcast news of your organisation, it's a turn off. Be social. Interact with others, be helpful, offer answers, praise and humour. On the other hand, you can ask for advice, do research, and get suggestions and tips from others as well as developing your networks and community.
8. Share great content – things that are timely, helpful, funny, informative and interesting from blog posts, photos, news stories, surveys, videos, infographics that you know your audience will appreciate. Comment on what you're sharing or ask questions to promote conversation and interaction.
9. Use tools to help you find content for sharing. Free tools like [Google Alerts](#) or [Talkwalker](#) track keywords you input and send alerts any time new content is published.
10. Check out the competition. Analyse what organisations similar to yours are doing in social media and what works for them.

82% of ALA's organisational members have a Facebook page, 44% have a Twitter account, 41% are on YouTube and 34% have a company page on LinkedIn.





# Disengaged young people on path to learning

The SA Government has allocated \$1.142 million dollars to Community Centres South Australia to fund a one-on-one program to help people who have previously found it difficult to study or find work.

Young people unable to complete school or to move into further education or work face a difficult future.

The Community Centres SA Personal Support Program offers mentoring and individualised learning opportunities for people who are struggling to find work, have been out of the workforce for a long time, have never studied or have never had a job.

The program came about through submissions Community Centres SA and others made to the state government about people who were disengaged from work or study requiring a flexible, individualised approach to helping them overcome barriers to participation.

Community Centres SA is the peak body for more than 150 community and neighbourhood centres and affiliated organisations across South Australia.

Alison Harker, Deputy CEO at Community Centres SA says, 'There are so many people falling through the gaps. For example, young people who've had really negative experiences of education and have been unemployed for more than a year are particularly vulnerable.'

Three Personal Support Project Officers will mentor participants one-on-one to discover their interests and aptitudes and enrol them in programs or in activities that will help build their confidence to interact more within their communities and then the workforce. 'Employment is not the sole focus,' Alison says. 'In most cases, the first step will be helping people undertake an adult and community education program.'

Plans developed between Project Officers and the people they mentor will be highly individual because each person's needs will be different, Alison says. 'One person might have poor oral communication, another might have poor relationships skills or difficulties with literacy. It's about developing different and individual success criteria for each person.'

The Project Officers need very diverse skills, Alison says. 'They have to have great communication skills and be able to do an assessment in a very sensitive way. They need to win the trust and confidence of participants without encouraging dependence. It can be hard to get people to talk openly about problems they might have. They might feel ashamed or embarrassed and may have worked hard to hide problems they have with learning. By allowing the conversation to develop as a story, a person is likely to feel more confident and be more talkative and, as a result, their Project Officer can get a much better picture of what they might need to take the next step.'

The Project Officers have been selected for their accepting and positive

ALA's recent policy paper 'Disengaged Youth and ACE' outlines how Adult community education (ACE) provides an avenue for re-engaging young people in education.

approach to the work. 'People need to feel they're not being judged for what might be their inappropriate behaviour and that they will instead be applauded and praised for the changes and improvements they make. If these are people who've had intolerant teachers in the past or strong negative messages about their ability to learn, then someone who celebrates their success – no matter how small those improvements might seem to us – is likely to make a big change.'

## Individual support and pathways

'Participants are likely to be lacking in the Foundation Skills and might need individualised support to succeed,' says Paul Mulroney, Workforce Development Manager at Community Centres SA.

'We will help participants identify a pathway and then get them into an ACE program where they can build skills and resilience so that in future when they suffer setbacks like the loss of a job, they have the networks and the strategies and a better capacity to get help.'

Project Officers will recruit young people aged 17 or older who:

- aren't currently enrolled in school and/or
- have been out of work for more than 12 months and/or
- haven't attended a community centre in the past 12 months.

News of the project has been welcomed by welfare and community groups. 'They're really excited about it,' Alison says. 'One of the things we are going to have to manage is a big demand for the service.'

'The Department of State Development has been fantastic,' Alison says. It's really been a true partnership where we work on solutions together.

'It's exciting and it's evolving, to my knowledge nothing like this has been done before and the Department is extremely supportive.'

'We want to develop a really good model that provides us with a way of working differently, of opening up new opportunities for study and work for people who are very disadvantaged.'

'I feel like we're writing history here,' Alison says.

The four year Personal Support Program will run from three centres:

- Hackham West Community Centre covering Hackham, Christies and Noarlunga
- Gawler Community House covering Hewett and Peachey Belt areas
- Glandore Community Centre covering the inner west and southern areas of Adelaide.

<http://www.ccsa.org.au/>

Feature photo by [Bert Kaufmann CC BY 2.0](#)



Recently appointed Personal Support Program project officers  
Gordon Russell, Dulce Diaz and David Skene.

# 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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