

## ALA BOARD CANDIDATE PROFILES

### Robyn Ober (NT)



I have served on the ALA Board for the past two years and have enjoyed my time learning from my colleagues and sharing my experiences with other Board members. I am the only member from the Northern Territory, so I feel it is important to have good representation from the diverse educational contexts in adult teaching and learning sectors across the Territory.

I am an Indigenous Australian educator with over 30 years of experience in early childhood, primary and tertiary education in remote, rural and urban contexts in the Northern Territory and southeast Queensland.

In 2019 I completed my PhD thesis titled: 'Aboriginal English as a Social, Cultural and Identity Marker in an Indigenous Tertiary Educational Context'. I have been involved in research and evaluation projects over the past 16 years focusing on: Indigenous education, language and linguistics, educational leadership and both-ways philosophy and practice.

I am currently the Indigenous Research Practice Leader at Batchelor Institute, mentoring and supporting Indigenous Australian research associates who are enrolled in the PhD and Master course program in Indigenous Philosophy. I feel I have much to contribute to the ALA Board drawing on my experiences and expertise in education and research.

### Fleur Lerwill (SA)



Fleur Lerwill is a former solicitor with a Master of Law and over 35 years of experience in legal and business development sectors at an international level, including governance, business growth, stakeholder engagement, client experience, and financial acumen.

Fleur has vast cross-cultural experience in education, training, and advocacy in multinational organisations, which have required responsibility, accountability, and leadership across various industries.

Her strong interpersonal and communication skills focus on her ability to be culturally competent, engaging with audiences from a range of ages, cultures, and socio-economic backgrounds, enabling her to offer a respectful and culturally sensitive service. Fleur adopts a partnering and collaborative approach with mutual participation and cooperation to address needs and challenges to achieve positive outcomes.

A migrant from a country with diverse cultures and socio-economic divides, and an educator and mentor, Fleur has supported multi-cultural international students. Fleur focuses on adult learning principles, including literacy and numeracy, using her lived experience and transferable skills to apply a person and strength-centred approach. She is passionate about making a difference.

### John Sheen (Vic)



I am an experienced leader in adult education, with a strong commitment to lifelong learning. As Deputy CEO and Director of Education at Wyndham Community & Education Centre, I have played a key role in the organisation's growth over the past decade, overseeing diverse education, employment, and community programs. I have also been instrumental in the development of the Wyndham Learning Festival, a major annual event that promotes lifelong learning across the community.

With expertise in governance and policy development, I have worked extensively with government, corporate, and community partners to create meaningful learning opportunities. I bring high-level strategic and operational leadership experience, having served on various boards and committees, including 10 years as Chairperson of Bridge Darebin, four years as Secretary of the Committee for Wyndham, and an appointee to the ACFE North-West Regional Council from 2019 until 2024.

I am passionate about adult education and committed to advocating for accessible and inclusive learning pathways. If elected to the ALA Board, I will contribute my experience, sector knowledge, and governance skills to strengthen the organisation's impact and advance lifelong learning across Australia.

### Christopher Ward (WA)



With 16 years as a VET practitioner and adult educator, my work in training, assessment and learning design has consistently promoted lifelong learning principles.

My experience spans formal VET qualifications and my earlier engagement in corporate training, reflecting the diverse landscape of adult learning that ALA champions. My academic qualifications, including a Master of Education, Bachelor of Adult and Vocational Education, and vocational diplomas, demonstrate my commitment to the sector. My current PhD research, at Deakin University, on the value of professional development for VET practitioners aligns with ALA's interest in supporting the ongoing growth of adult educators.

Based in Western Australia, I am passionate about the crucial role of adult and community education (ACE) and the national advocacy undertaken by ALA. My experience in policy analysis and development, coupled with my understanding of both vocational and non-vocational adult learning contexts, allows me to appreciate the breadth of ALA's policy agenda, including adult language, literacy, numeracy, and lifelong learning communities.

I am eager to contribute to the Board's strategic direction and support ALA's efforts in advising government, conducting research, and fostering innovative learning methodologies to benefit all adult learners across Australia.

**Ben Crothers (TAS)**

My overarching career goal is to improve the quality of life of people living with disadvantage through the promotion of training and education.

I currently work in a TAFE institute as an education manager after a 15-year period of teaching in the VET sector. My focus has been on the development of employability skills for adult learners, specifically people with additional learning needs. My teaching career came after a 12-year stint as a disability support worker, supporting people in their own homes and in the community.

Outside of work, I am a musician, a music producer, and a community radio host. I have undertaken voluntary roles on boards and committees of management throughout my life, often in an office-bearing role, including President of Tasmanian Youth Broadcasters Inc., and Hobart Fringe Festival Inc. and Treasurer for the Australasian Society for Intellectual Disability (ASID) Ltd. I have also been the Public Officer for each of these organisations at some point in time.

My time on the governing bodies has provided me with governance skills and experience in developing and maintaining strategic plans, operating under a constitution and associated State or Federal legislation, and financial management including budgets, financial reports and audits.