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Circular Head celebrates its new Literacy Action Plan.

## Literacy takes a big step forward in regional Tasmania

**Circular Head, in Tasmania’s top northwest corner, has been talking the talk about literacy and numeracy for at least 25 years. And now visitors can actually walk the walk!**

The Walking Words Literacy Trail is the latest initiative to be developed by a community committed to “creating a space where everyone who wants to learn, can”. This interactive walking trail pairs words with images and uses fun activities to both improve literacy and increase community awareness of the importance of literacy and numeracy.

Around 8000 people live in the Circular Head area, which covers about 5000 km<sup>2</sup> and includes the main town of Smithton and the well-known tourist town of Stanley. Several key Tasmanian industries operate in the area, including beef processor Greenham and building supplier Ta Ann. Both bring workers to the area from non-English speaking backgrounds, many of whom face challenges with literacy and numeracy.

“We hear from a lot of employers who tell us that low literacy is having an impact on their employees’

abilities to do their jobs,” says Kate Grey, 26TEN community coordinator.

In 1999, the Circular Head Education and Training Consultative Committee (CHETCC) – an alliance of community, industry, and council – started working to promote lifelong learning. In 2019, this work led to the area becoming one of four Australian members of the UNESCO Global Network of Learning Cities (the others are Wyndham and Melton in Victoria and Canning in Western Australia).

People within the Circular Head community can now take part in a range of learning programs to suit their interests and needs – for work, for school, to make social connections, or just for fun.

In her role, Kate has guided the Literacy Trail to life and recently oversaw the launch of a new [Literacy Action Plan](#), which strongly encourages people to consider learning regardless of their circumstances.

“It doesn’t matter if you missed a lot of school or went to university, there’s always something new to learn if you’re willing to give it a go. You don’t have to love

(Story continues on p. 3)

# Message from the CEO



This year, we encourage everyone to find joy in learning something new, whether it's picking up a skill, meeting someone different, or exploring a new idea. Our ALW2025 tips and resources offer plenty of ways to get started and connect with others through learning.

As global challenges continue to reshape our lives, adult education offers more than just knowledge - it offers hope. By renewing trust, reimagining possibility, and rediscovering the strength of communities learning together, we can build a more inclusive, connected and equitable future.

This vision is reflected in our 30th anniversary theme for Adult Learners Week: Celebrate Learning Together. It is both a call to action and a message of optimism which encourages us to come together, foster social cohesion, strengthen community connections, and build a culture where shared knowledge and learning empower people to shape their futures.

ALW2025 is a chance to recognise and celebrate the many inspiring stories of adult learning taking place across the country, especially the creative and community-led approaches embraced in places like Circular Head in north-west Tasmania, a UNESCO Learning City. My visit earlier this year to the Walking Words Literacy Trail was a reminder of what's possible when passionate people come together. The Council's commitment to literacy and lifelong learning reflects the enduring potential of the human spirit to spark change, and create new opportunities especially in our regional, rural and remote communities.

We also welcome new energy and fresh perspectives to our national work, as we celebrate 65 years of Adult Learning Australia. The new Board members featured in this edition bring a renewed commitment to inclusive, accessible lifelong learning that supports people at all stages of life and learning journeys.

This year, we encourage everyone to find joy in learning something new, whether it's picking up a skill, meeting someone different, or exploring a new idea. Our ALW2025 tips and resources offer plenty of ways to get started and connect with others through learning.

## Why it matters

In Australia, previous data indicates that 1 in 5 adults struggle with everyday literacy and numeracy, and up to 9 million adults have low levels of digital literacy. A range of barriers limit their ability to fully participate in work, learning, and community life. Yet we know that when adults return to learning, the outcomes are transformative: improved wellbeing, better employment opportunities, stronger civic engagement, and increased social inclusion.

We are interested to see more updated figures once the Jobs and Skills Australia Survey: Understanding Skills Across Australia, is completed in 2026. This survey aims to gather up to date insights on literacy, numeracy, and digital skills levels across Australia's adult population. It will be important in shaping policies and targeting support to ensure that all adults have the skills and training they need for a changing world.

We look forward to seeing your events, reading your inspiring learner nominations, and celebrating the new STAR Award recipients who reflect the best of what adult learning can offer.

Thank you for your continued commitment to lifelong learning. Wishing you all a joyful, connected, and inspiring ALW2025.

**Jenny Macaffer, CEO**



(story continued from p. 1)

reading or be a maths wiz, there will be different ways to get involved and places to learn,” she said.

Kate moved to Circular Head 16 years ago after studying community development and is now using the extensive networks she built to link people into literacy and numeracy programs.

A community connection brought a young learner to Kate who was struggling with a lack of literacy skills. Kate connected Jenna Eastwood into literacy and numeracy programs run by Libraries Tasmania’s Adult Literacy [Service](#) and is thrilled by how well she has moved through these programs and built a new level of confidence.

For Jenna (pictured above right), it’s the one-on-one contact that makes adult learning so different to her schooling, where she struggled as a “very, very afraid child” to put her hand up and get the help she needed.

“Everyone here is so lovely and always happy to have a chat and really get to know you, as well as help you to learn,” she said.

Starting with learning how to improve her reading and writing skills, Jenna then moved on to numeracy and is now planning to learn sign language. “I have excelled a lot quicker than everyone expected me too,” Jenna said. Read more about Jenna’s learning story [here](#).

“Stories like Jenna’s and the impact of lifelong learning are what makes my job pretty special,” Kate said.

Kate says she meets people of all ages and stages of life who need support to improve their literacy skills. “We are also seeing that the COVID period is having an

ongoing impact on young people who missed out on developing some of the basic skills during that period. This is now having an impact on being able to get into training or gain certificates to be able to enter the workforce.”

Kate is about to start a project with local rural health services to run literacy awareness sessions, with a focus on health literacy. “Not having health literacy skills can have life-changing impacts so we’ll be





Pictured above, Jenny Macaffer, ALA CEO, visited Circular Head recently and met with (l) Kate Grey and (r) Amber Power, Circular Head Council.



talking about what is needed to address adult literacy and what they can do as health providers.”

Over the next 18 months, Kate will continue to oversee the development of the Walking Words Literacy trail – which is now attracting visitors from around Tasmania, interstate and overseas.

Produced in conjunction with local artist, Hannah Bruce, the trail is located along the local scenic river trail, which includes running behind the McCain Foods factory.

McCain's main ingredient, potatoes, provided the inspiration for the initial stage of the trail – a variation of the “Simon Says” game called “Spud Says”. Some 17 spud-based characters encourage people of all ages to read through different, fun activities.

Other stages include I Spy and Find the Bone sections alongside a large dog park. Massive paw prints call people to count as they move along.

Several stages are still to come including sections based around colour and Auslan. An Indigenous languages section, being designed in collaboration with the local Aboriginal Corporation, will feature local animals and their Indigenous names.

As Kate says: “You’re never too old or too young to learn. We can learn by ourselves, with someone to lend a hand, or in small groups. We can all learn for life!”



**People within the Circular Head community can now take part in a range of learning programs to suit their interests and needs – for work, for school, to make social connections, or just for fun.**

# Celebrate our 65th Anniversary with us



## We hope you've been enjoying our 65th celebratory messages on our social media platforms.

You can also see them here: <https://ala.asn.au/ala-60-years/ala-65-years-in-2025/>.

We would love to include you, so send us a short congratulatory message (up to 100 words). We are aiming for 65 messages, and we are well on our way!

We will keep sharing messages in our social media and collate them as a record of our sector in 2025. Send your quote to us at [comms@ala.asn.au](mailto:comms@ala.asn.au). We would also welcome an image.

You can also add your voice to our sector by joining ALA in 2025. Members receive access to free professional development webinars, the Australian Journal of Adult Learning (AJAL), Quest, e-member news, and our networks – plus support our ongoing advocacy for the future of lifelong learning in Australia. Find details here: <https://ala.asn.au/join-now/>



**ADULT  
LEARNERS  
WEEK**

**CELEBRATE  
LEARNING  
TOGETHER**  
30  
YEARS OF ALW

**1-8  
SEPT  
2025**

In this special 30th year of Adult Learners Week, we are honouring and celebrating the many ways we learn together - in the classroom, in the community, in the paddock, in the kitchen and around the table. From growing food to growing knowledge, we celebrate the learning that nourishes our communities and connects us all.

Whether you are learning to grow food, working with your hands, creating something new, or sharing knowledge on the job - this is a time to celebrate the many ways learning connects us to each other, to the land, and to our future.

It's how we grow — as individuals, as communities, and as industries.

**#CelebrateLearningTogether #ALW30Years #ALW2025**

We chose this year's theme because it speaks to what makes adult learning so powerful - the way it brings people together, opens new possibilities, and helps us grow.

We also want to shine a light on the incredible learning happening outside our major cities - in rural towns, farming communities, and regional centres across the country. That's why we're planning to launch this year's celebrations in a regional - Devonport Tasmania - to show that learning can happen anywhere and everywhere.

**New 30th Anniversary STAR Award for an outstanding student mentor**

To celebrate this year's milestone, we are introducing a STAR (Student Teaching and Relationship) Award to recognise an outstanding adult learner who demonstrates exceptional commitment to mentoring fellow students.

This new award celebrates learners who go above and beyond to support other learners through guidance, knowledge sharing, and leadership. Do you know a learner who fits this description? [Nominate](#) an exceptional learner who mentors others and shines like a STAR by **28 July**.

**Register events**

Open days, come and try sessions, online classes, awards ceremonies - whatever activities you have planned for Adult Learners Week, [register your events](#) on our website to have them promoted nationally.

**Be an early bird and win a cash prize**

Organisations which register their events before 4 August can win 1 of 20 \$200 prizes to cover costs.

**ALW Best events**

Three events will win \$1000 after Adult Learners Week.

**Nominate a learner**

Stories about students whose lives have been turned around by adult education are inspirational to others. [Nominate](#) an adult learner with an inspiring story for an Adult Learners Week scholarship before **22 August**. Nominee stories will be shared across social media and winners will be announced during Adult Learners Week.

**Check out the Adult Learners Week website and Facebook page**

Find ideas, tips, and tools for sharing and making your #ALW2025 celebration a success.

[www.adultlearnersweek.org](http://www.adultlearnersweek.org)

[www.facebook.com/adultlearnerswk/](https://www.facebook.com/adultlearnerswk/)

# Ten tips for exploring this year's ALW theme: Celebrate Learning Together

1. Make a list of what you'd love to learn. Whether it's learning a new language, changing careers or going back to school, write down what you would like to explore and discover.
2. Make a plan. Think about how you can begin or go back to learning. Break each step into achievable goals and set yourself a timeline.
3. List your skills. Put down all the things you've learned already. Identifying what you already know can help you pinpoint gaps and build confidence in being able to learn more or in different ways.
4. Look for inspiration. You'll find many people who have decided to switch gears, change their lives, and pursue their dreams through adult education. Talk to someone you know who learnt something new as an adult or seek out other people's stories, like this one about singer [Karise Eden](#) returning to finish high school after winning The Voice.
5. Discover learning opportunities. Start with what's on offer in your neighbourhood. Browse informal or formal classes, courses, workshops and activities. If you've been away from education for a while, try something that's fun to get yourself into the swing of learning again.
6. Identify barriers. Pinpointing things that might be holding you back is the first step in overcoming obstacles. Low self-confidence, fear of failure, or lack of information about what's available can inhibit you. Talk to someone you trust about what's stopping you and how you can tackle these barriers.
7. Find a learning buddy. Having someone to share your learning experiences with can keep you motivated and on track. Regularly checking in on how you are both going is a great way to stay focussed and committed.
8. Set up a learning space. Find a comfortable spot where you feel relaxed and alert. Having a space dedicated to learning can help you develop the habit, whether it's at home, or somewhere like your local library.
9. Make learning fun. Try listening to an audiobook or a podcast on a topic you'd like to know more about or watch videos that can teach you how to do something more efficiently. Being creative and trying a variety of channels is stimulating and fun.
10. Document your progress. Keeping track of how you're going and what you've achieved is a great way to build your confidence to take even bigger steps. And you can inspire others. Take a photo of yourself learning something new and post it on social media with the hashtags #ALW2025 #CelebrateLearningTogether #ALW30Years



# Meet Our New Board Members



Dr Robyn Ober, Research Practice Leader. Batchelor Institute (Northern Territory)

Robyn has been re-elected after joining the ALA Board two years ago. As the only member from the Northern Territory, Robyn says she is glad to be able to represent the Territory's diverse educational contexts in adult teaching and learning sectors.

Robyn is 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, she completed her PhD thesis entitled Aboriginal English as a Social, Cultural and Identity Marker in an Indigenous Tertiary Educational Context.

For the past 16 years, Robyn has been involved in research and evaluation projects focusing on Indigenous education, language and linguistics, educational leadership and both-ways philosophy and practice.



John Sheen, Deputy CEO and Director of Education, Wyndham Community & Education Centre (Victoria)

John is an experienced leader in adult education, with a strong commitment to lifelong learning. He has played a key role in the growth of the Wyndham Community & Education Centre over the past decade, overseeing diverse education, employment, and community programs. John has also been instrumental in the development of the Wyndham Learning Festival, a major annual event that promotes lifelong learning across the community held to coincide with Adult Learners Week each year.

John also has extensive high-level strategic and operational leadership experience, having served for 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.

Click [here](#) to find out more about all our Board members.



Fleur Lerwill, Lecturer/Subject Coordinator at the Kaplan Business School (South Australia)



Christopher Ward, Vocational Education Practitioner (Western Australia)

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

As an educator and mentor, 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.

Fleur adopts a partnering and collaborative approach with mutual participation and cooperation to address needs and challenges to achieve positive outcomes.

Christopher has worked for more than 15 years as a VET practitioner and adult educator and has consistently promoted lifelong learning principles in his work in training, assessment, and learning design.

Christopher has a Master of Education and Bachelor of Adult and Vocational Education and is currently conducting PhD research, at Deakin University, on the value of professional development for VET practitioners. Based in Western Australia, Christopher also has extensive experience in policy analysis and development and is passionate about the crucial role of adult and community education (ACE).

# New AJAL Co-Editors

AJAL has recently welcomed two new co-editors



Dr Cheryl Ryan

**Dr Cheryl Ryan** is an academic lecturing in adult, professional and applied education at Deakin University and course director of the Graduate Certificate of Higher Education (Learning and Teaching).

Cheryl's teaching, scholarship and leadership in higher education are informed by her critical reflections on experiences from six significant careers spanning 47 years. Each career involved adult learning, community and peer-based teaching and learning projects, and leadership roles developing and managing social, educational, and professional services.

Cheryl's research interests focus on adult education and learning, professional practice and learning, lifelong learning.



Dr Piper Rodd

**Dr Piper Rodd** is a lecturer in the School of Education at Deakin University, specialising in social justice and critical pedagogy.

Piper has two decades of professional experience in the secondary, vocational and tertiary education sectors as a leader in teaching and social and educational policy in adult and community learning.

Piper also works in the community sector supporting not for profit organisations to better support young people and their families, recognising the complex socio-economic contexts in which they must operate, for all to thrive. She is Chair of the Board of Future Connect, a local learning and employment network (LLEN), and was elected to the ALA Board in 2024.

**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 a ALA membership, go to our website:

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

# Member Round Up

Dr Margo McNeill has taken over as the new CEO of the **Canberra Institute of Technology**. Margot was most recently Chief Product and Quality Officer at TAFE NSW, where she was responsible for leading curriculum development and quality assurance. She completed a PhD on technology in tertiary assessment and has extensive experience in the vocational education sector, including teaching and managing roles at TAFE Institutes and dual sector providers over many years. Margot is a passionate advocate for accessible, high-quality vocational education and training.

ALA member, **Associate Professor Jose Roberto (Robbie) Guevara** was recently the international keynote speaker and a panel member at the **2025 ACE Aotearoa Conference**. The three-day gathering looked at bridging artificial and ancestral knowledge, including fostering dialogue that honours Indigenous knowledge while embracing innovative applications of artificial intelligence in community and educational contexts. Robbie is pictured here with Lara Draper, General Manager, Adults and Seniors, Deaf Aotearoa, and Peter-Clinton Isaac Foases, President, Asia South Pacific Association for Basic and Adult Education.



The work done by **Cape York Employment** has been showcased in the recently released 2024 Cape York Partnership Impact and Empowerment Report. The report includes statistics and stories showing how different organisations in the area are creating education and training opportunities for young people and adults which are having real impact in employment, financial literacy and health. Read it here: [https://capeyorkpartnership.org.au/wp-content/](https://capeyorkpartnership.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2025/04/2024-CYP-Impact-Empowerment-Report-Download.pdf)

[uploads/2025/04/2024-CYP-Impact-Empowerment-Report-Download.pdf](https://capeyorkpartnership.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2025/04/2024-CYP-Impact-Empowerment-Report-Download.pdf)

**Sunshine Coast Libraries** has compiled a range of online tutorials and platforms for members to be able to learn at their own pace. There are self-paced beginner to advanced tutorials on computers, tablets, smartphones and TVs and digital photography, along with guides to developing software, creative and business skills.

Check it out here: <https://library.sunshinecoast.qld.gov.au/learn/self-paced-learning>

The **Australian Institute of Training and Development** recently held its national conference and 2025 Excellence Awards. Catch up with the highlights here: <https://www.flickr.com/photos/196763057@N07/albums/72177720326424640>



# Sector Update

Looking for some new resources appropriate for adult literacy learners? The ABC has a range for learners from language backgrounds other than English and English speaking backgrounds. Browse here: [Learn English - ABC Education](#)

The Indigenous Skills and Employment Program (ISEP) is a First Nations specific, flexible, place-based employment and skills program which designs projects from the ground up to respond to service gaps within communities. The program is delivered in partnership with First Nations communities and stakeholders to design and deliver activities together that address local needs, gaps or barriers in employment support and respond to regional priorities. Find out more: <https://www.niaa.gov.au/our-work/employment-and-economic-development/indigenous-skills-and-employment-program-isep>

TAFE students are invited to send their best picture or pictures celebrating TAFE, with the winners to be exhibited in Canberra in September. Students can photograph facilities, student diversity or hands-on training in either natural or staged shots. Entries are open until 7 July via [aeufederal.org.au/photography-comp](http://aeufederal.org.au/photography-comp). Each state winner will win \$1000 and a trip to Canberra for National TAFE Day, 9 September, where their work will be exhibited. The overall winner will win \$5000 and publication in the TAFE Teacher magazine.

Research, which includes successful case studies, has been released which shows how RTOs can best support students throughout their learner journey, The research identified six key characteristics of effective student support, when and how support needs are identified and provided to students through their learner journey, and the barriers faced by RTOs and students when delivering and accessing student support. Read more: <https://ncver.edu.au/research-and-statistics/publications/all-publications/student-support-enabling-the-learner-journey>

## Coming Events

### LinkWest Playing to Our Strengths

20 – 22 August, Perth <https://linkwest.asn.au/Conference/Conference/Home.aspx>

### ACAL Inclusion, empowerment, employment: Literacies for a dynamic future

4-5 September, Melbourne <https://acal.edu.au/wp/25conf-home/>

### CEA 2025 Conference

25-26 November, Sydney <https://cea.org.au/conferences/2025-cea-annual-conference-save-the-date/>



# QUEST

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