



QUEST

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Digital at the depot

When a council decides to go paperless there are some workers who will find the switch to electronic documents easier than others.

For office workers using computers as part of their daily work, the transition is straightforward. Others less experienced with technology can find giving up paper-based manual systems is a struggle.

When the City of Sydney decided to move from paper-based HR systems to electronic, many of its outdoor workers needed help to develop digital skills they had never needed before. Since 2014, the City has been running 'Digital Literacy for Outdoor Workers' training in conjunction with TAFE NSW.

Glen Freaney is one of over 300 staff employed by the City of Sydney to provide 24/7 cleansing and waste services to keep litter bins empty, streets clean and garbage collected.

'These are practical blokes who leave me for dead when it comes to fixing cars and driving boats. They are skilled at using all kinds of technology but this is more difficult for them because it's using unfamiliar technology in a context that is new to them.' Jill Finch, literacy teacher, NSW TAFE

'I'm 65 so computers are not in my blood, not like younger people in their 20s and 30s who are brought up with them,' Glen says.

Before he did the digital literacy course Glen used his home computer for fun and entertainment. 'I used it for things like eBay and YouTube and email but that was about it. I'd never used it for business so I had a lot I wanted to learn.'

With the move away from paper-based systems at work, Glen wasn't confident lodging timesheets and leave forms online.

'I wasn't sure what I was doing. It was a pain in the neck asking people at morning tea to help you because they're missing out on their break to give you a hand. A lot of the paperwork that used to be done by team leaders is now done by workers so you have to step up and learn how to do it.'

NSW TAFE literacy and numeracy teacher Jill Finch, who runs the 12 week course, says modern workplaces are demanding higher levels of literacy and digital literacy than they have in the past.

'There's a cohort of employees who started work several decades ago when digital literacy was not a big requirement in the jobs they did. It's a big issue at the moment for

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Message from the CEO



The ACE sector could play a much greater role in building community resilience post COVID-19 by offering targeted education and pathway programs; particularly for displaced workers.

Only months ago, Australia was literally on fire, with hundreds of bushfires burning around the country. These catastrophic bushfires were preceded by years of drought in many areas. Then COVID-19 arrived stopping us all in our tracks. With no time to recover, people are now facing uncertainty and fearing for their health, jobs, education and futures.

In response, the ACE sector has shown itself to be both agile and dedicated. Almost overnight, ACE educators found new ways of working. Many were communicating with their students online for the first time and preparing remote learning packs to keep them engaged. This can be challenging, particularly with vulnerable or disengaged learners.

As the stories in this issue show, ACE providers have had to react quickly and creatively in the face of the pandemic. When staff at PRACE in Melbourne's north realised that lockdown was imminent, teachers contacted students to find out what technology they had and what they needed to stay connected, hand delivering iPads and Internet dongles to ensure nobody was left out. In Wynyard Tasmania the local U3A swung in to action to ensure its members continued their learning online.

In times like these, inequities are exacerbated. Our recent member survey identified a range of issues and challenges:

- lack of access to online systems that support flexible delivery
- lack of access to technology; particularly for disadvantaged and vulnerable people and those in remote and some rural areas
- increased need for access to mental health services
- logistical difficulties in maintaining engagement with hard to reach adult learners.

These challenges are not insurmountable. In fact, they could be resolved with adequate resources. The ACE sector could play a much greater role in building community resilience post COVID-19 by offering targeted education and pathway programs; particularly for displaced workers. This makes sense, both socially and fiscally.

In the wake of COVID-19, adults with low literacy, numeracy and digital skills (LLND) are going to be even more vulnerable to social isolation and unemployment as low-skilled jobs disappear and demand for these skills escalates. But we currently do not have enough skilled LLND educators to meet this demand. Plans for Australia's recovery from COVID-19 must recognise the economic value of higher levels of LLND skills and invest in growing a qualified and highly skilled practitioner workforce.

ALA is committed to maximising the impact of initiatives that support recovery and regeneration of the Australian community and economy. We have been vigorously advocating for recognition of the work of ACE and a solution-focused response to COVID-19 through submissions, representations to Ministers and lobbying the Commonwealth Government.

We know that the most vulnerable people take the biggest hit during a crisis like COVID-19 and that these times tend to expose society's weaknesses and inequalities. Research indicates that as COVID-19 restrictions ease, many people are moving from feelings of isolation and loneliness to anxiety and worry about the future. Yet our responses to COVID-19 have also shown the potential, generosity and compassion that lives deep within our communities, through small acts of kindness and connection. The ACE sector has been at the forefront of efforts to maintain contact and connection with adult learners despite the disruption that COVID-19 has inflicted.

These are extraordinary times. With your continued support, we can rise to the challenge and work towards a more just world.

Jenny Macaffer, CEO



Modern workplaces are increasingly reliant on technology and demand higher level literacy and digital literacy skills from employees.
Image credit: Katherine Griffiths/City of Sydney

(story continued from p. 1)

employers who have workers who have never used computers. Sydney Council is very modern and forward looking. It has big plans to be progressive and green and sustainable so everyone working for Council has to be able to navigate and use complex corporate systems. The digital literacy required is different from the personal and informal communication of using Hotmail on your phone.'

The 12-week course runs for 2 hours a week. Typical students are men aged between 45 and 70, mostly shift workers from the cleaning and waste areas, many of whom left school at the minimum age, which for some of the older ones was 12 or 13. While most of them have mobile phones, most don't have smartphones and use their phone for calls and texts.

After an initial quiz to establish how much they already know, Jill takes the group through keyboard and mouse familiarisation, using Word and Outlook to compose and send emails, then logging on to and navigating around the City of Sydney's intranet.

By the end of the course, they can scan a doctor's certificate, attach it to an email and upload it into the system. They also learn how to register for and use MyGov and develop critical skills in assessing information from Google search results. And there's plenty of time to practise.

'These classes have been very popular,' Jill says. 'Apart from the practical skills they learn, people's attitudes about themselves changes. They are much more positive. It's common for people to say things like, "I was a real dummy when I started, but now I can do this or that and I understand it more too."

'The whole course was an eye opener. I've learned as much as I need to use the computer at work. But I would love to learn more. It's fascinating to see how we can use computers. It's a whole new world.' Glen Freney

Jill says being able to understand and use the system is very empowering.

'In the past if they wanted to act in the team leader's job while the team leader was on holidays, indicating their interest was a matter of sticking your head round the boss's door and saying "I wouldn't mind having a go". But now they have to apply through the Council's intranet. Previously they wouldn't have had a clue how to find the tab for internal job vacancies; wouldn't have been able to navigate through the drop-down menus, all those things. So doing a course like this empowers them to find more opportunities; to learn about what training is on offer; to know more about their rights at work and their leave guidelines.'

Glen says, 'I'm much more confident now. It's really helped at work. For example, I've been asked to go to other depots so I just go on Google Maps and then I know exactly where I'm going and how to get there. You don't have to get on the two-way and make an idiot of yourself.'

'It's a great course and I'd recommend it to others. Jill's knowledge of computers was really good. But she was very good at dealing with us when we got frustrated. She really encouraged us to keep going.'

The City of Sydney TAFE NSW program was funded through the federal government's Workplace English Language and Literacy (WELL) Program, which has since been discontinued. The new Foundation Skills for Your Future program offers scope for workplace training in literacy and numeracy. employment.gov.au/foundation-skills-your-future-program



Facebook for English

Well before coronavirus turned teachers and students to online learning, English language teacher Shveta Bhutani was using a Facebook group with her class.



When new graduate Shveta Bhutani began teaching her first English as an Additional Language (EAL) class she was keen to forge closer links between her diverse group of adult students at Preston Reservoir Adult and Community Education (PRACE) in Melbourne’s north.

The 17 students in her accredited Certificate II EAL class ranged in age from 28 to 65 and came from places as diverse as Somalia, Iran, Iraq, China, Greece, Ethiopia, Hungary, Libya, and Lebanon. Some were doing the Certificate to get a job, others because they wanted to go on to further study. Some whose children had grown were realising a long-held dream to learn English now that they had time on their hands, and some older people were there because they wanted to feel part of their community.

‘It was a great mix,’ Shveta says. ‘They’re all different.’

After working as a relief teacher, new graduate Shveta was excited about learning how to run her own class. ‘I realised I wanted to do more for my students.’

‘During my course I did research and read papers that showed that people learn better if they know each other. So I started thinking about ways of helping this along.’

She decided on using a closed Facebook group. The students were enthusiastic. ‘They said, “Let’s do it!”, “That’s great!”

‘I wanted to use it as a platform outside class for students to have fun and a place to use English — even if they were only

‘EAL classes are big on group work and working in pairs and students learn more from each other than they do from the teacher. A language class works best if all students are comfortable with each other.’ Shveta Bhutani

reading posts or writing one line — because in between classes so many of them are using their mother tongue at home.’

A few of the students needed help so she nominated more confident users as Facebook ambassadors to teach the others.

Shveta decided to keep it simple. ‘When I started, it was more of a place for us to interact and I would post a picture of something funny that happened in class. And we would all laugh about it. I also used it to share class exercises, organise class parties, and share information on English grammar or vocabulary.’

But her posts to the group were relatively last minute and ad hoc. ‘I was teaching Monday to Wednesday so I only had two days a week to be active on the Facebook group. By the time Thursday came around I would still be thinking, “What am I going to post today?”’

An opportunity for professional development

No one else at PRACE was using Facebook with their classes so when PRACE’s Education Manager Libby Barker heard about the idea she recognised its potential as a learning opportunity for teachers and threw her support behind it.

‘I’ve felt for a long time that professional development works best if teachers have the opportunity to trial new practices and reflect on what worked, what didn’t and why,’ Libby says. ‘Pairing a teacher with a second person, ideally a mentor or ‘expert’, to discuss issues and reflect with, really facilitates this. Setting it up as a project or trial takes the pressure off too so teachers can focus on what they’re learning instead of on outcomes.’

Shveta worked with Anna Morgan, Community Engagement and Innovations Coordinator, to give the project a clear direction; establish how much time to spend on it; develop a better understanding of her expectations of her group and decide on what to post. The aim was for Shveta to become a



Interacting in the closed Facebook group has built cultural understanding and friendships and improved students' English.

mentor and share what she had learned with other teachers who wanted to trial Facebook groups with their students.

She began experimenting. 'One day I would post on grammar and ask a question. The next week, I'd ask students to share a picture from their hometown with "Tell us something about the city you were born in". Or "Share your favourite restaurant in Melbourne that serves food from your country". And I would share a picture of my favourite Indian restaurant.'

'Anna suggested linking posts to units and encouraging students to complete a task. So I created a challenge. 'Can you find two phone numbers on the Centrelink website? That didn't get a single like or comment. Then I set up a quiz on irregular verbs. Same thing. Nobody was interested. It changed the way we thought about it. We found out what they wanted to do on Facebook and decided that we should stick to that.'

Encouraging conversations

Posts that worked best were like, "What are you cooking today? I want to see a picture of it tonight on Facebook". One student posted a picture of the meal she'd cooked and wrote "Come on guys share your pictures!" and that got 27 comments.'

'What we realised was that they were not interested in grammar and vocabulary and serious stuff. They were more interested in conversational posts they could connect to. For example, "What did you eat for breakfast?; How do you spend Friday night?; Show us with an emoji".'

Encouraging group members to interact has been key. 'For the Facebook group to work students need to feel that their

'Something that is fun that intrigues them that is light-hearted with lots of banter is still learning.' Shveta Bhutani

teacher will like, tag, and mention them in posts so I had to be quite involved to help them build this confidence.

'In class I say "Imagine that you ask me a question in class and I don't reply. What would you think?" And they say, "We would think that was very rude." And I say, "Imagine I ask a question in our Facebook group and no one replies. I can see that you have seen my post and still you don't interact." And they say "That's bad manners". So they can see how each other might feel about being ignored and it makes them more aware of responding to each others' posts.'

Shveta is more organised too. 'Anna and I sat down and decided if I created the posts beforehand, one or two a week, I could have 20-25 posts at the beginning of the 9-week term.'

Building understanding and friendships

Shveta has noticed the students developing relationships independent of the classroom. 'They think of this group as their place and their zone. Over time the students have been initiating more discussions, and sharing in the Facebook group without me and I want to build that.'

Her classroom is already a warm and encouraging place, Shveta says. But she's noticed a change in the group, apart from an improvement in their English. 'They are more affectionate towards each other and a more close-knit group. We have started to understand each other's culture better. And we are better friends.'

Plans for Shveta to work as a mentor for other teachers have been delayed by the coronavirus. But her class was better prepared than most when it came to the lockdown because they were more confident about using new technology and adapted well to online classes, Libby Barker says.

Lockdown learning

The coronavirus pandemic has forced people to learn to use digital technology in ways they would never have dreamed of using before.



Annie Heyes, an 'IT dinosaur' before coronavirus, is now a convert to technology. Image credit: Brodie Weeding/The Advocate

Annie Heyes describes herself as a 'perennial student' and attended classes 3 days a week at her local University of the 3rd Age (U3A) in Wynyard, Tasmania.

But the 70 year old had no appetite for learning digital technology. She doesn't like mobile phones and has never used social media.

'I was a dinosaur when it came to IT,' Annie says. 'When everything closed down, I thought that was the end of my U3A classes.'

But Rees Campbell one of the founders of Wynyard's thriving U3A and its President was not going to let a pandemic put her off. The last thing she wanted was to see passionate U3A members cut off from the activities they enjoyed.

'Annie was a really good example one of those wonderful engaging and engaged community members. She is involved with therapy dogs, the uke group, a choir, a writer's group – everything. Suddenly she had to stop.'

Rees says she scrambled to find a solution. Luckily she had a remote communications specialist in the family and called on her brother for advice. He recommended Zoom as a simple platform that would be easy for older people to use.

'He shortcut all my research which was just fantastic,' Rees says. But first she had to learn how to use it herself, then talk the U3A committee into it.

'Most of our committee are well into their 70s so for them it was a big leap of faith. I talked them through how to

use it and spoke to all of them individually on Zoom. Their response was, "This is fantastic!"

Annie took a little persuading. 'I was reluctant to try it but with some friendly coaching from Rees I learned how to use Zoom. It was relief to find how easy it was to use. It's been a terrific tool.'

Resuming classes and seeing her instructor and other students face to face was wonderful.

'I think it's changed my attitude to technology. I'm more receptive and less fearful and more willing to try new things.'

'I use Zoom now to meet with my writers' group, book clubs, and lots of U3A classes as well as staying connected with my family in Melbourne.'

'What it's taught me is that if an IT dinosaur like me can use it, anyone can.'

Teaching via video

Ukelele finger-picking teacher Margaret Cartwright thought she'd stay in touch with her classes using Zoom. But the technology had its drawbacks. Margaret says Zoom is cruel to ukuleles. 'It treats them like background noise and tries to blank them out.'

Playing ukes together on Zoom was almost impossible because of time lags. And muting everyone and playing one at a time was a bit intimidating for less confident members of the group.

A former lecturer in Nursing with a Masters in Computer Education, Margaret says she's not fazed by technology.

Margaret switched from Zoom to making videos for her classes instead, teaching herself how to do it by experimentation, trial and error. She has made 30 short videos so far that are published on the U3A website for people to access anytime.

'I've learned that if you don't have a go you can't possibly succeed. You can make a mess of things but you learn from it. And you do better next time.'
Margaret Cartwright, uke finger-picking tutor



Members of Wynyard U3A ukelele group have gone online to continue learning during the COVID-19 lockdown. Image credit: Mal Kearney

'I'm getting much better at doing them now. In some of them I've left the mistakes in and I just say, "I stuffed that up didn't I?!"'

Margaret says she's learned about herself as well as new technology in the process. 'I've developed more self-confidence.

'Seeing myself on video has made me worry a lot less about making an idiot of myself. It sounds ridiculous but I used to get stage fright every time I had to give a lecture and I never got over it. People tend to think I'm a lot more confident than I am.

'I don't worry so much about whether I look foolish and my singing is getting better. Now I can watch myself on video and I think "That doesn't sound as bad as I thought!"'

Margaret sees herself continuing to use new technology into the future. 'My husband and I won't be rushing back to communal gatherings of any sort any time soon. I'd particularly like to use it to keep in contact with friends and family so I'm trying to persuade them to adopt new technology to stay in touch.'

Passionate about U3A

Rees Campbell is excited by how well U3A members have coped and learned new skills during lockdown. 'U3A is my absolute passion, and I think it's heaven on a stick.'

After a career in adult education – teaching adult literacy and basic education, working in TAFE community services as well as in training of teachers in adult education – Rees left work due to a physical disability.

'Not being involved in adult education left an enormous hole in my life. I moved to Wynyard which is a delightful place to live.

'I have been amazed at how well people have adapted. It's exhilarating to be able to connect this way.' Rees Campbell, President Wynyard U3A

But adult education was a sector that had been starved out of existence by various governments and we felt its loss in our community. And U3A is undervalued education in so many ways.'

Together with local Janet Sell, Rees established the U3A in 2014.

'It's been an unmitigated success,' Rees says.

In six years enrolments have grown from 28 to 160, prompting a number of venue changes to accommodate the growing numbers of older people wanting to get involved.

'This area is a very blue collar area with high unemployment and although our name includes 'university' we really wanted people in our community to get involved in sharing their knowledge and skills. For example, my husband is an amateur ornithologist whose formal academic education finished when he left school in year 10. He has never tutored people before but he is master mariner and is our resident bird instructor. During lockdown, tutors like him took up Zoom and did a session on birds of the region for almost 30 of our members.'

'Wynyard is a little village and you'll find astrophysicists, geologists, poets, authors, so many people with fascinating interests and skills living in this area. U3A has allowed genuine intellectual exchange and has been incredibly successful. It's grown gradually enough for us to deal with changes and it's a really lovely community.'



Rees Campbell, President Wynyard U3A says the prospect of missing out on classes motivated members to learn new technology.

Tips for online teaching

The COVID-19 pandemic has forced the closure of many adult and community education classes. Here's some tips for online teaching.



Tips and Trends

1 Think lounge room not classroom

Allow for different home circumstances and their impact on adult students. For example, those who live in busy households or who juggle parenting and caring responsibilities or other demands can find home study particularly difficult. Tailor the methods and timing of home learning to enable them to participate as best they can.

2 Tailor for technology

Find out what technology learners have access to in designing material and activities. Whether learners use mobile phones or laptops, the cost of data, outdated technology or poor internet access can be barriers to people participating online. Provide alternative ways of accessing relevant material for those who are digitally disadvantaged.

3 Manage learner anxiety

Learners who are starting from a low base of digital literacy may find the transition to online learning overwhelming at times. Acknowledge people's feelings of stress and allow for it in planning activities.

4 Adapt to the medium

A one-hour video lesson on Zoom can be more mentally exhausting than a comparable face-to-face class. Avoid overload and manage use of the technology to avoid learner and tutor burnout.

Australians on the wrong side of the digital divide are likely to be people born in non-English speaking countries, those without a completed secondary education, people aged over 65, people with a disability and indigenous Australians, especially in remote and very remote locations. digitalinclusionindex.org.au

5 Break content into bites

Bite-size pieces of content enable learners to take new information onboard more effectively and are more accessible for people on a range of devices.

6 Keep it interactive

Quizzes, assessments and polls are activities that allow learners to test their knowledge, have fun, and enjoy themselves. Be active in the online space by commenting, discussing, and stimulating discussion. Allow time for question and answer sessions. This helps learners do better next time round and keeps them engaged.

7 Plan breaks

In face-to-face classes the coffee break is a chance to relax and catch up with other students. Provide opportunities for time out and the chance for social catch-ups online too.

8 Be clear about expectations

Establish guidelines for online etiquette, attendance and participation. Be flexible and allow time to review these as circumstances change.

9 Great creative

Involve learners in teaching one another. Encourage independent research. Use a variety of media from free to air TV, clips on YouTube or apps in your subject area to add variety and spark ideas.

10 Provide follow up resources

Links to supplementary materials and support for further learning give adult learners the option to pursue information and develop skills in their own time and at their own pace and encourages independent learning.

From street theatre to the global stage

RMIT's Associate Professor Robbie Guevara reflects on the influences that have led to his election as Head of the International Council of Adult Education.



In 1988, Robbie Guevara quit his teaching job at the University of the Philippines at Los Baños and 'ran away to join the circus.'

He spent the year touring with the Philippines Educational Theatre Association (PETA), a group of theatre artists and educators radicalised by the period of martial law, who used the power of theatre for social change.

It was the lead up to the UN adoption of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. PETA travelled around the Philippines performing in plays to empower and educate marginalised and disadvantaged people in urban communities and rural villages about the importance of equal rights for children and access to education.

It was a far cry from the kind of education Robbie was involved in as a high school and university teacher.

'We ran workshops and did performances for children, parents and child-care workers in basketball courts and community venues. It was education that was creative, engaging, and dealt with real issues that people were facing. I never looked back.'

The PETA experience cemented his belief in adult education for social change.

'It was community education that was linked to community organising. It was very powerful.'

His next job as an environmental educator for an NGO gave him experience of a more formal approach that combined his two passions — environmental science and community education.

'I believe that the individuals and institutions that are involved in adult education see themselves as part of a larger movement that advocates for change. While we may suffer from a lack of funding, we don't suffer from a lack of passion and commitment.'

It was a job that also brought him in contact with regional organisations like Asia–South Pacific Association for Basic and Adult Education (ASPBAE) and the German Adult Education Association, organisations that impressed him with their advocacy of relevant and accessible adult education for all.

When he arrived in Australia in 1994 to undertake his Masters in Environmental Science at Monash University, his ASPBAE colleagues welcomed him as part of the adult education community and gave him valuable experience. Through the same network he met his future PhD supervisor and completed his doctorate at Victoria University of Technology in 2002.

His philosophical approach to adult education has been shaped by his experiences and the influence of this network of international colleagues.

'I see adult education very much as a social movement, and I am very much a Freirean. I'm inspired by the colleagues who I have been so honoured to work with and who I used to read when I was studying. They gave me the opportunity to learn about adult education in a different context. While it might have been in a more formal setting, I was convinced that it had at its core the belief in the value of both individual and community transformation through adult education. It really gave me a grounding and an appreciation of how the movement itself transforms people along the way.'

Robbie went on to serve as President of ASPBAE for two terms from 2009–2016, then most recently as Vice President (Asia–Pacific) of the ICAE, as well as a Board member of the Global Campaign for Education (GCE) for Asia–Pacific.

Robbie says being elected unopposed as leader of ICAE is an honour.

'I know that I'm standing on the shoulders of people I have admired and respected for a very long time. Seeing them give me such a clear affirmation of support during the online handover ceremony was really heart-warming.'

View from the Board

Our new Board members outline their priorities and what they hope to achieve for Australian adult education during their term.



Annette Foley President

I think that Adult Community Education (ACE) is well understood to provide economic benefit to the community through non-accredited and accredited programs that improve foundation and vocational skills. But what I think is less well recognised is the link between adult learning and health and wellbeing and the impact and value of this to the economy. As ALA Board President I would like to raise the profile of the important community and socio-cultural benefits of ACE especially in rebuilding communities after crises such as our recent bushfires and COVID-19 pandemic.



Ron Wilson

I feel honored to share my experience and expertise as a member of the ALA Board.

With well over 35 years in the adult education sector I would like to share my learnings and experience as a practitioner and senior manager with colleagues both in the ALA Board and across the wider adult learning environment in Australia. I have an extensive history teaching and managing in the adult and youth justice sectors and was recognised in the 1996 Australia Day Honours for introducing vocational education and training into Victoria's adult and juvenile justice systems. I am committed to contributing my skills and experience to realise ALA's mission to ensure all Australians can access lifelong and lifewide learning.



Judith McKay

Membership of the ALA Board is an opportunity for me to give back to the sector, represent the NT and inform or influence future national policy. As a member of the Board, I hope to foster greater awareness of the importance of Language, Literacy, Numeracy and Digital Literacy (LLND) skills in VET and the importance of developing a skilled human services workforce. Adult Learning Australia is an organisation that is well regarded by its members and other key national organisations who seek out ALA's comment and advice on current or new program implementation. I hope I can be active in contributing to this input. It is also an opportunity for me as a lifelong learner to continue to develop my skills and knowledge through collective decision-making processes.



Kathleen Priestly

As a Board member, I hope to contribute to policy and advocate for Adult Community Learning across Australia in all of our different communities and to continue to see ACE grow and expand in Tasmania. I am also very keen to promote cultural change within learning organisations and advocate for issues and change perspectives on the needs of women and Indigenous communities.

I am a big believer in mentors and currently have three mentors for different aspects of my life. I would like to be seen as a positive role model by other women who want to seek leadership and Board roles and would love to work with young women and girls to develop their leadership aspirations.

Read more about our Board at <https://ala.asn.au/about-us/who-we-are/>

ACE update

Nationally, ALA welcomed state government announcements of funding to support the ACE sector through the COVID-19 crisis. The Victorian government's 'Skilling Up Victorians to Get Through COVID19' provided some certainty for the ACE sector Learn Local RTO organisations. The NSW government's relief grants enabled the continued operation of ACE providers in that state and in Tasmania, the government increased support for Neighbourhood Houses to continue support in their communities.

ALA continues to advocate for the ACE sector across Australia, most recently in writing to the Prime Minister in partnership with the Australian Council on Adult Literacy (ACAL) to stress the importance of recognising and including the building of higher levels of adult literacy, numeracy and digital skills as part of the COVID-19 recovery process. ALA held a successful AGM in May, appointing a new president and two new members of the board.



Photo: **Hanging Rock** by **Bea Pierce** CC BY-NC 2.0

In **Victoria**, the ACE-led Adult literacy and numeracy practitioner professional development program has successfully kicked off. Nineteen Learn Local trainers from across Victoria participated as part of a state government commitment to professional development for ACE teachers outlined in the recent Ministerial Statement 'The Future of Adult Community Education in Victoria 2020–25.' The online program developed by ALA and ACEVic improves teachers' skills in teaching literacy and numeracy in pre-accredited programs and features theory, practice, and opportunities for interaction and discussion with facilitators and peers.

In **WA**, LinkWest is hosting an information session for members about the implications of the recent Federal Court of Australia decision on casual workers being entitled to paid leave, a potentially significant issue for NFP employers. Linkwest has also released a recent survey of members which found that despite the disruption of coronavirus 96% of Community Resource Centres and Neighbourhood Centres surveyed continued to provide services during the crisis. linkwest.asn.au

In **NSW**, CCA welcomed the state government's one-off ACE relief grants to government-contracted ACE providers to support their operations and establish online and blended learning platforms in response to the COVID-19 crisis. A total of \$2m was provided to 32 providers by way of an amendment to existing contracts. CCA argues that Australia's ACE sector have an important role in the social and economic recovery from the coronavirus. cca.edu.au

In **SA**, despite COVID-19 restrictions, Community Centres SA ran four interactive online Adult Community Education (ACE) training workshops for centres across the state with trainers and participants adapting well to online delivery. The Department of Innovation and Skills (DIS) has recently proposed changes to ACE policy to focus adult education on people who are 'work-ready'. The training workshops included two newly developed courses that provided insight for Community Centres on how to navigate the new ACE system. This included a course on designing foundation skills courses with an industry focus. 'Many Community Centres [are] in a place at the moment where they are rethinking the kinds of projects that they are developing and offering communities', says CEO, Kylie Ferguson. communitycentressa.asn.au

QUEST

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