

# QUEST

DECEMBER 2021

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## Green skills for sustainable living

A Castlemaine course is helping people take steps that are good for their pockets and good for the planet.

On Thursday mornings Mel Willard (pictured) swaps her farm gear of grubby t-shirt and shorts for deodorant and clean clothes and heads off to teach 'Saving money, energy and the environment' at Castlemaine Community House.

The eight week course aims to demystify jargon and teach people simple steps to taking a more active role in sustainable use of resources and care for the environment.

Mel is co-owner of a local organic market garden and orchard Gung Hoe Growers and has first-hand experience of how small actions can have big impacts.

'I'm so lucky to be able to teach people about what I believe in. And it's such a contrast to the day-to-day

physical labour of planting and working on the land.'

The new course appeals to locals keen to learn more about environmental sustainability and positive and practical changes they can make.

Six months ago Lorella Burns decided she was tired of frequent visits to the supermarket.

'I thought why am I doing this? When I was a kid we hardly ever went to the supermarket. Our family grew all our own veggies and ate our own meat.'

When she saw the course advertised it struck a chord. But she was nervous about the prospect too.

'I was moving out of my comfort zone. I have dyslexia and I've become really good at hiding it. Every time I try something new there's a nervousness about doing something beyond what I'm used to doing at work and at home.'

She found a welcoming atmosphere and an approachable and enthusiastic teacher who brought the diverse group together.

'We bounce ideas off one another during class and really learn a lot from one another. We all get on so well, it's really lovely.'

(Story continues on p. 3)

'I really love working with people who are excited to learn about something I'm passionate about.' Mel Willard, tutor.

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# Message from the CEO



This story also reminds us that we still have a lot to learn about our First Nations peoples and that we need to renew the way we look at the world and ourselves and our interconnections with one another.

It has been a mixed year of challenges and achievements so if you are feeling a bit weary, you're not alone. COVID-19 has created deep disruptions over the last two years and has had a great impact on learners, educators and our communities.

The COVID-19 crisis has highlighted the importance of literacy in all its forms, including emphasising the lack of policy attention to adult literacy. That is why ALA has been calling for a national adult literacy strategy as part of a broader national lifelong learning framework. Earlier this year ALA submitted to the Parliamentary Inquiry into Adult Literacy launched by the House Standing Committee on Employment, Education and Training and appeared at an inquiry hearing. ALA also developed a declaration signed by eight other national peak organisations calling for improved literacy and numeracy for all adult Australians.

Our 'What works' series of webinars identified effective strategies for improving adult literacy and numeracy around Australia. ALA's charity arm, the Learning Changes Lives Foundation, has also provided small grants to assist adults to improve their literacy and numeracy, and break the cycle of disadvantage.

In 2022, and in the lead up to the federal election, we will continue to strongly encourage governments to support and resource adult community education to ensure that the most marginalised and vulnerable communities are not left behind. COVID-19 has shown us the fragility of our systems and how important it is that everyone has access to learning. As Stefania Giannini, UNESCO Assistant Director-General for Education stated, 'In this time of crisis which has pushed societies to the limits, let's make literacy a force for inclusion and resilience, to reimagine how we live, work, and learn for a more sustainable and just development path.'

We know how powerful adult learning and community education can be. Our feature story on the literacy program developed by and for the Kinchela 'boys' shows that adults learn best when they are actively involved in determining what, how, and when they learn. This story also reminds us that we still have a lot to learn about our First Nations peoples and that we need to renew the way we look at the world and ourselves and our interconnections with one another.

Undoubtedly, 2022 will hold new challenges for us all. We are working with our international partners for the Confintea VII in Morocco with the release of the Global Report on Adult Learning and Education which provides a comprehensive picture of the state of adult learning and education around the world. We will also be producing a special edition of the Australian Journal of Adult Learning devoted to adult learning and education for climate action.

My personal thanks to all ALA members and friends, including our Board and the ALA staff for maintaining engagement and being open to the possibility that we can make a difference and build a regenerative future for everyone. Our journey is not over but let's stay connected in action.

Season's greetings to all.

Jenny Macaffer, CEO



Buying food boxes of seasonal, local and organic produce reduces the environmental impact of food production and supports local farmers.

(story continued from p. 1)

'Mel is absolutely fantastic. The content of the course can be challenging but Mel does a great job explaining it. She gets us doing group activities and uses diagrams and things to put information in perspective. She encourages us to think about how things work in our own homes.

'I've got a more positive attitude towards sustainability now. I learned that making changes is not as hard as you think. It's not a matter of changing the world but of starting with what you can.

'Before I did the course I thought that sourcing local fruit and veggies would be really difficult but now I'm much more aware of how much local produce is actually available and how easy it is to buy.

'I'm more conscious of power saving. Since I started the course we've installed solar panels so I do things like baking during the daytime to make the most of our solar power.

'I also do a lot more meal planning than I used to. I'd fallen into the habit of using tins and jars and packaged foods but now I do a lot more cooking from scratch. And I get the kids to cook with me because it's so important for them to learn how to do it too!'

Lorella's discovered that she loves learning. 'I'm really enthusiastic now about doing more. At the moment I'm doing a youth mental health first aid course so I'm pushing myself because I know I'm capable, I just needed that bit of confidence.'

### Knowledge is power

Mel says teaching people about the bigger picture of energy, water and food systems and presenting information in an accessible and non-judgmental way is a crucial first step in helping them make changes.

'A course like this is exciting because once people understand they can act differently, it's really empowering.

'We immediately have this expectation of services and resources like running water, electricity and food at our fingertips. But once people become aware of how those systems influence each other it has a huge impact. They can see that we can be active participants instead of going along with what the world throws at us.'

Mel says setting achievable goals is important. 'It's easy to feel overwhelmed when you read about climate change. It can feel huge. What I've learned from working on community projects in our area is that there's a need to balance the grim stats and the hard reality with good examples internationally and locally to inspire people. So this course is about what you can do in your own context to make improvements in your own life and in your particular circumstances. It's very very exciting.'

Mel has already seen big changes in the class. 'One of the students was horrified when she learned about the environmental costs associated with her food. So she signed up for a Community Supported Agriculture program that connected her with local farmers. Now she's supporting a farmer by buying food boxes of seasonal, local and organic produce.

'The people in the class are very engaged and they want to do as much as they can. That's why it's such a great course.

'And it has a ripple effect. We all take what we're learning home and talk about it to those close to us so it makes an impact beyond the classroom.'

### Rosie gets the learning bug

Rosie Sandvik signed up for 'Saving money, energy



Rosie Sandvik has applied what she has learned in the sustainability course to make practical changes.

and the environment' because it was something she was interested in as well as being a chance to meet like-minded people.

Fifty six year old Rosie has retired from a career in disability services and lives in Guildford, a small town 13 kilometres from Castlemaine. She had had solar panels and water tanks installed on her property and was interested in learning more about how she could make a difference.

'I was excited but I haven't done adult education for a few years so I was a bit nervous that everyone would be using tablets and computers and I would be the only one using pen and paper. But it was a really positive experience from the start.

'The course is really interesting and practical. Before I didn't know anything much about energy apart from how to turn on a switch. Now I know a lot more about energy markets and companies that operate as middlemen.

'The other thing it taught me is how finite water is as a resource. Now I'm going to get the water tank plumbed so we can use tank water in the laundry and bathroom instead of town water.'

Rosie already had a veggie garden but she's started seed saving now. And she is much more aware of food miles — the energy, water and transport impacts involved in food production — and is more likely to buy local food than she was before.

'Working with people who want to learn is a joy. They are so engaged, excited and enthusiastic and we are learning together.'  
Mel Willard, tutor

Best of all the course was not intimidating. 'It's not a scientific course, it's hands on and covers basic principles about energy, water, recycling, and food production. It's good for anyone interested in the environment and saving a bit of money along the way.

'After this I'd like to learn more. I'm really interested in recycling which has been a bit of a disaster so it would be great to get some ideas on what to do to help change that.'

## Jobs and training

Castlemaine Community House Community Development and Learn Local Coordinator Kerrily Jennings says that the course also opens up education and job opportunities.

'We have so many amazing new businesses opening up here that have environmental concerns underpinning them. So there's a lot of job opportunities in this area for people who have an interest in that but who are not sure how to get a foot in the door or don't have the literacy and numeracy skills required. It's a good course for providing people with the skills and confidence for that sort of work.

'We also see it as a taster or feeder for other courses too. So it's a chance for people who aren't quite ready for a bigger study commitment to dip their toe in the water.'

The pre-accredited program was developed as a pilot by Jesuit Social Services as part of its Ecological Justice Hub and funded through the ACFE Board Capacity and Innovation Fund, which enables Victorian Learn Local providers to develop and implement new initiatives.

# Literacy classes help healing

A NSW literacy program is helping members of the Stolen Generation to reclaim an education cut short by institutionalisation.



Uncle Bobby Young is catching up on his formal education.

In 1964 seven year old Willy Nixon was taken from his family to the now notorious Kinchela Boys Home on the NSW north coast. He was one of around 600 young boys forcibly removed from his family and incarcerated at Kinchela, which was run by the NSW Government from 1924 to 1970.

Once they entered the home the boys were dehumanised, stripped of their identity, beaten and abused. And things were no better inside the classroom.

'We didn't get much learning at Kinchela Boys Home because you were too afraid to do things in case you got them wrong. If you didn't spell a word right, you'd be flogged. Education was forced on you and you were too scared to learn,' Uncle Willy says.

Uncle Willy is a member of Redfern's Kinchela Boys Home Aboriginal Corporation (KBHAC) — which was established for survivors of the 'home' — and is one of a group of Uncles taking part in a literacy program to reconnect them with formal education and recover culture and connection.

Uncle Willy attended the Kinchela Boy's Home from 1964 to 1969. He says that his time there scarred him for life.

'At the home they drummed it into you that they were taking the black out of you. They took away our language and culture. Now I can't pass it down to the younger generation. I can't take my grandchildren out in the bush and show them all about bush food. That was the worst part of it. That little boy should have learned from his parents instead of some bloke with a big stick in his hand who bashed all that culture out of us boys.'

After moving to Sydney, Uncle Willy got his first job at 13. But his poor schooling had left its mark. When a relative gave him a wristwatch Willy didn't know how to use it. 'He had to teach me how to tell the time. You never had that kind of learning, the kind of stuff you need to grow up in this world.'

'Kinchela made us really hard. It was a terrible life. When I got out and got to the streets of Sydney I put my punishment on poor innocent people. I was locked up in Long Bay when I was 16. It was a real rough jail. There was no help for you.'

Uncle Willy worked in manual and factory jobs for 40 years until his retirement in 2017. His reading and writing were enough to get by at work but the introduction of computers made work difficult.

'If I had to write things out like consignment notes I was all right but when computers came in you had to punch in codes on the computers. It made it really hard.'

The Kinchela Boys Home Aboriginal Corporation in Sydney's Redfern was established by the survivors of Kinchela to connect and support them, their families and descendants, who suffer ongoing pain and trauma from their institutionalisation and treatment.

Uncle Bobby Young attended the Kinchela Boy's Home from 1954 to 1965. Like Uncle Willy he says that his time in the Home was traumatic, and that he never really received a formal education.

'Our identity and culture were taken away from us and we were called by numbers. I was number 24 and my cousin was number 23,' Uncle Bobby says.

'We were punished regularly at the home, caned and forced to write a word 100 times from the blackboard even though our hands and bodies were aching from



The Kinchela Boys Home Aboriginal Corporation has converted a bus into a Mobile Education Centre for survivors to take their stories on the road, giving talks about their experiences and helping with healing. Photo: ComfortDelGro.

the cane. When I left, I still had very little education, so I went to work in the railways and then later as a driver for a freight company.'

### Addressing trauma

The NSW TAFE literacy program aims to help with a process of healing.

Staff at TAFE NSW and the Uncles from Kinchela worked together to build trust and develop a literacy program to meet the individual and collective goals of the group.

A strong component of the program has been integrating literacy activities with cultural and family history research to support the Uncles' truth telling that helps to address the trauma of their forced removal from family, community, country and culture.

Literacy teachers, Jill Finch and Sue Sim, work closely with Drew Roberts, a proud Bundjalung man and Cultural Mentor at TAFE NSW to tailor the program to suit each student's literacy levels, needs and interests.

Jill Finch says building trust has been crucial to the program's success. 'It was all about spending time getting to know each other and listening so that we could work in partnership. That was a really important starting point.'

**'It's so much more than a literacy course. It's created outcomes that ripple out into communities The uncles are positive role models in our community and education will be seen in a different light.'** Bobbie-Sue Wright, Aboriginal Education and Engagement Coordinator

'Tailoring the program to suit individual needs means each Uncle is in charge of his own learning whether it's a desire to be able pay his own bills, get a driver's licence or conduct family history research.'

### Changing perceptions

TAFE NSW Aboriginal Education and Engagement Coordinator and proud Ngemba woman, Bobbie-Sue Wright says the program has been successful at engaging the Uncles and helping them to change their perception of education.

'We knew that these Uncles had unfortunately had negative experiences with early schooling. So bearing their experiences in mind it was so important to show empathy and understanding and build rapport and a respectful environment. We had to work to break down that barrier and encourage them to engage with education again,' Bobbie-Sue says.

'This program has built strong relationships and helped to bridge the gap between a westernised education and our community. This shows in the weekly attendance. At first, the numbers were low and Uncles and descendants were reluctant to come into the room. But we've been consistent, showing up every week regardless and now the Uncles turn up early, ready to begin their learning and are happy to be there.'

One of Uncle Willy's goals was to participate more actively in the Foundation's public education program. The Uncles take a mobile education unit on the road and share their stories and the impact their experiences have had on them. But he was reluctant at first.

'Before I was really, really shy and I didn't know how to express myself. But the other fellas said, "Come out, you'll enjoy it". I went along where they do these talks



Kinchela Boys Home Aboriginal Corporation connects and supports KBH survivors. Photo: Sarah Barker

to students and government officials but I didn't say anything.'

Uncle Willy says he is now more confident in expressing himself.

'It was hard at first to do it and not start crying. Now it's really good I can handle that sort of stuff. If a person can listen to your story, they can pass it on and it echoes and lets people know there are still Stolen Generation people out there. I cleansed myself by telling my story and expressing myself and it helps the healing.'

Doing the literacy program in a familiar environment with familiar faces was important.

'It was good to do it with the other brothers at the KBHAC offices. I could have done other TAFE classes over the years but I couldn't feel comfortable about going into classrooms and going to school with people who were different to me. But when you're around people who are the same as you, you feel good with it.' Uncle Willy said.

Uncle Bobby says the program has completely changed his experience of education and increased his confidence in reading, writing, and spelling.

'In the past to get by I've mainly focussed on what people were saying at work and around me. I used to get frustrated because my wife and eldest boy would have to help me fill out forms and I'd like to be able to do that sort of thing by myself.

'I'm really proud of what we have achieved here. I have learnt a lot and increased my ability in reading and writing and spelling, which has helped with my confidence. I really look forward to it each week and I'm so happy already with how far I've come.'

## Two-way learning

Jill Finch says the learning has gone both ways. And it's made her a better teacher. 'I learn so much every week. I have relearned that adult education principles are key. They are largely forgotten in the modern world of VET. Putting the learners at the centre and making sure their experiences are valued is absolutely crucial. If I didn't know it before I certainly know it now.

'It's also deepened my knowledge of First Nations people's lived experience of colonisation and oppression. I considered myself reasonably well informed but looking back what I knew was just a drop in the ocean compared to what I know after hearing what they went through.

'Thirdly, a team-teaching situation with the three of us working together is incredibly rich and rewarding. On one hand it adds to chaos and challenge because we are always liaising and flying by the seat of our pants, at the same time we're supporting, questioning and learning from each other. It's such a pleasure.'



This image was probably captured during a visit to Kinchela in 1959 by an official government photographer and shows a sanitised view of the classroom that does not reflect reality. Photo: W. Pedersen. National Archives of Australia

# Sharing luck around

The recent SBS series *Lost for Words* highlighted the importance of adult literacy tutors like Tasmanian Jeff McNamara.



Jeff McNamara, volunteer adult literacy tutor, was thrown in the deep end the first time he worked with an adult student eighteen years ago.

'It was literally my final day of tutor training and I had just finished my course and the co-ordinator came over and said "I know this is pretty sudden but we've got a student outside who needs help with their English." I was petrified.'

Whenever Jeff is mentoring new tutors he remembers how he felt that first time.

'At first you think "Oh my God, how do I even start?"'

Jeff says developing confidence in his abilities and embracing opportunities to learn has been crucial in his experience as an adult literacy tutor.

He is one of around 25 volunteers who work across five libraries in Tasmania's central north west.

Jeff, 67, says growing up in Sydney's Blacktown was good preparation for his tutoring work.

'We were surrounded by chook farms, pig farms, and market gardens run by Maltese and Italians so from my early childhood I was mixing with people who had difficulty with English. Lots of the fathers of kids I knew who went into manual jobs like labouring,

trades and factory work had trouble with reading and writing.'

Many of Jeff's contemporaries didn't finish Year 12 but he enjoyed school. His transition to higher education was a case of good luck. The abolition of conscription meant he avoided the draft and the Whitlam Government's introduction of free tertiary education meant he could afford to go to university.

Jeff tutors in both adult literacy and migrant English and says adapting to the needs of each person he works with is crucial. He's currently working with a young man who left school early then worked as a farm hand before health issues meant he had to give up manual work.

'I've been working with him to improve his reading fluency and showing him how to use the internet, develop computer skills and do project planning so he can work in farm management because it will be that kind of work he does in future.

'He's naturally intelligent and a great problem solver but he hasn't learned how to learn. So, faced with something he doesn't know, he sometimes is unsure what to do next. I've been working with him on those skills — asking questions, doing research, gathering information and putting it all together like a jigsaw puzzle.

'People are often so embarrassed and ashamed about their reading or writing or spelling. Their self-esteem is poor because they've been told all their life that they're dumb or stupid and they come to believe it. But many develop an excellent memory to compensate. I think that when you can't read you recruit other parts of your brain to help you out. You can't rely on writing things down or using the internet so you have to rely on your memory.

'I'm a lucky man and I think you should share that luck around. A lot of people I tutor are not in the position they're in by choice so I feel it's a social obligation that if I've been given opportunities in life my role is to give something back! Jeff McNamara



Around 25 volunteer tutors work across five libraries in Tasmania's central north west — Ulverstone, Devonport, Penguin, Latrobe and Sheffield.

'The advantage of growing up in Blacktown is that I can tell people my back story, and use examples of people I've known to make the learners feel more comfortable. I use earthy language sometimes to put people at ease because there's sometimes that barrier that people think I'm some sort of toff. So I tell them about where I grew up and the kinds of friends I've had and they think, "He gets it".

'One guy I worked with had been in prison and wanted to get a job and was very motivated because he was scared of going back inside. So I told him about my background and he bounded ahead. He got his licence and a job and he gave me a card saying "Thank you for changing my life."

Helping people to be less self-critical is important Jeff says. A man who worked as a truckie came for help so he could read to his children. 'When I asked him to read to me, he was faltering, self-conscious and he was listening to himself, judging. So I got him to sit in his truck every lunchtime and read out loud. I said "No one will know what you're doing".

'It wasn't a strategy we'd been taught in tutor training but I wanted him to develop his fluency through practice. He did it for a month and then he came in one day and he read three pages to me without faltering. Now when his three year old asks him to read a book they do it together.

'If people are not literate they feel alienated from society. Once a 19 year old came along and you could tell he felt worthless, and he was pretty socially awkward, not much eye contact, that sort of thing. He could read to a point but he wanted to read better. And he did, he got the confidence and was soon reading his PlayStation instructions without a problem.

'I hadn't seen him for a while then one day I ran into him in town and it took me a second to recognise

him. He had his shoulders back, he was smiling at me, and walked with a bit of a swagger. He realised he was not stupid and got himself a temporary job. Once people develop that self-confidence they feel less like outsiders, less isolated.'

Kerrie Blyth co ordinates the Devonport adult literacy program on Tasmania's North-West coast and facilitates six weekly, two hour sessions on different topics for tutors.

The sessions are invaluable, Jeff says. 'The support I get has been outstanding. Kerrie gives us the best training. In our volunteer training group, we share what worked for us. It's a constant process of learning from each other. You think "I can use that". It's fantastic.'

Some volunteers specialise in particular areas such as numeracy, English as a second language, or developing literacy for getting a learner's permit. Kerrie pairs volunteers with learners according to need.

'I tend to match Jeff with younger men who lack good role models or people in their lives they can turn to for advice. Jeff is just the man for it. He is such an easy person to have around and I'm so delighted to have someone like Jeff as a volunteer. We are so, so lucky.

'My volunteers are so engaged and want to learn and share their experiences which makes my job a dream.

'They are so generous with their time and are very open to being lifelong learners themselves. I enjoy sitting and listening to them sharing their experiences. I learn so much from them.'

'What's the hardest thing about tutoring? I don't find it hard. It's invigorating and rewarding. I love it.' Jeff McNamara

# Coffee changes lives at Hackham West

There's a coffee buzz at Hackham West Community Centre in Adelaide's south and it's adding energy and bringing new people in the door.



The Perks Coffee program offers training to locals looking for entry-level work in hospitality and social opportunities to members of the local community.

Colly Lesker ACE co-ordinator at Hackham West says a grant advertisement from the Learning Changes Lives Foundation was the catalyst that got the project up and running.

'A coffee cart is a great way to train people. We have mums with kids, parents who are carers, people who've been out of the workforce and it's a great way to help them build confidence and the skills they need for hospitality roles.'

Working on the coffee cart develops participants' literacy and numeracy too.

'Quite apart from learning to make good coffee, participants learn to write orders, understand the ins and outs of food hygiene and safe food handling, and the customer service and communications skills that are such an important part of the job.'

Eighteen people have been through the ten-week program since it began in 2021, ranging in age from 19 to 50. The centre is located in Onkaparinga, one of the most socioeconomically disadvantaged areas in the state. Unemployment is high, school completion rates are low and social isolation is endemic.

For those who've been out of work and isolated for long periods of time, interacting confidently with

strangers is a new experience.

'It's a real skill that most of us take for granted.'

'For some of our participants, learning how to talk to customers is a huge challenge. It takes a lot of polishing and practice.'

'Connecting with customers, saying hello, looking people in the face and feeling confident comes from the inside. People need to feel worthy. And the way they feel about themselves shows in how they stand, how they look, the language they use. Developing confidence in speaking to strangers, taking orders and building those skills makes a huge difference.'

'Something that works is encouraging people to think of themselves as playing a role and putting on a work hat. Separating out who they are from the kind of work they are doing allows them to protect themselves and eliminates a lot of anxiety people feel about being judged.'

The coffee cart provides much needed social opportunities for staff and customers alike.

'The sort of connection with other people they get from being part of Perks makes such a difference to their lives. They have gotten used to making themselves invisible and are often highly anxious about attending. But taking that first step is the hardest. One young woman who came to be trained hadn't left home in two years. It took a lot of courage for her to get here. But now she feels safe and supported. She has goals and wants to work as a volunteer in the hospital coffee shop. She is just amazing.'

Industry experts who volunteer their time make a huge contribution to the program Colly says. 'They do an amazing job. I don't have the technical skill or know

'Feeling a part of the group is so important to feeling part of the community.'  
Colly Lesker, ACE co-ordinator



The Perks Coffee program combines practical coffee making with literacy and numeracy skills.

how so those volunteer baristas are worth their weight in gold.'

Award winning volunteer Alyssa Hand helped to cement the program and establish the social enterprise by taking the cart out and doing deliveries alongside the students.

'Alyssa just loves it. She is a great mentor and the students learn a lot from her. She shows them that if you remember a customer's name, welcome them, ask if they want their usual and have a joke with them then you are creating a real connection and people will come back. She's a dynamo and she's been fantastic for the program.'

Having one another's backs makes all the difference, Colly says. 'We really focus on the importance of teamwork. They are there to help and support each other. And we're happy for people to make mistakes because that's good learning for all of us.'

And they get lots of practice. Hackham West is a busy centre with over 70 volunteers, a creche, an out of school hours care program, and adult education classes so there's a constant flow of customers.

Colly says it's a great way to attract people through the door and bolster a sense of community.

'We don't have a coffee shop close by. So people who normally wouldn't be able to afford to go out for coffee can pop in and have one and enjoy the experience. It might be the only time that day that they get out see other people.'

'We couldn't believe it when we heard that we'd been successful in getting a Learning Changes Lives Foundation grant. It was really exciting to see that dream come true. I had a plan and a vision and suddenly I could see it happening before my eyes. Now we are training people up and giving them different opportunities and experiences and creating a social enterprise for the centre as well.'

The next round of Learning Changes Lives Foundation grants closes in March 2022. [learningchangeslives.org.au/grants](https://learningchangeslives.org.au/grants)

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[ala.asn.au/members/cart](https://ala.asn.au/members/cart)

'Hackham West is an amazingly vibrant centre with lots of different community programs to engage and bring people together and provide support and we're very proud of that.' Colly Lesker, ACE co-ordinator

# ACE update

In **TAS**, the state government has announced a \$2.8 million Neighbourhood House Community Care Adviser Pilot to better meet the increasingly complex needs of people engaging with Neighbourhood House programs and services. The funding enables the employment of highly skilled staff in selected Houses to provide support for people with mental health, addiction and relationship breakdown issues.

In **SA**, the Salisbury, Playford and Port Adelaide Enfield councils have formed a consortium to offer fully funded adult education programs to community members. The programs focus on basic numeracy, literacy and job skills that give people the skills they need to find employment. The training is funded through the Department for Innovation and Skills.



Photo: Fraser Island by Michael Dawes by CC BY-NC 2.0

Also in **SA**, Uniting SA Taperoo Community Centre won the CCSA/ South Australian Community Achievement Loneliness Cure Award for an innovative adult literacy skills development program using poetry and storytelling. The Awards recognise initiatives that tackle the growing epidemic of social isolation and celebrate the power of community connectedness. Congratulations to all the finalists. [communitycentressa.asn.au](http://communitycentressa.asn.au)

In **WA**, LinkWest has published its annual report highlighting the range and breadth of the state peak's activities and support for its member centres and will continue to offer its AGM online due to its success in enabling members from across the state to participate. [linkwest.asn.au](http://linkwest.asn.au)

In **NSW**, Community Colleges Australia (CCA) is calling for papers for presentations and workshops for its annual conference in April 2022 on the theme 'Rebuilding Community'. The call for abstracts closes on Jan 21. CCA has released a new factsheet drawing on NCVET data on the performance of the NSW ACE sector relative to other VET providers in reaching disadvantaged learners. [cca.edu.au](http://cca.edu.au)

State training awards have recognised the work of community-based providers around the country. Congratulations to Williamstown Community Education Centre, winner of the Community Training Provider of the Year (**Vic**), The Migrant Centre, winner Community Training Initiative of the Year (**Qld**) and Erin Jacob, Horticulture teacher at Central Coast Community College who won VET trainer of the year (**NSW**) for her work in designing trauma-informed programs for students experiencing hardship.

**Nationally**, ALA continues to develop and distribute training, resources, research, information and networking events for members and key stakeholders. The 2021 rollout of the highly successful Adult Literacy and Numeracy Practitioner Program (ALNPP) is in its final phases. ALA, working with Victorian peak body ACEVic, is also hosting an online community and ongoing professional development for the over 400 people who've completed the ALNPP training.

# QUEST

Quest is the national magazine for adult and community education. It is published four times a year by Adult Learning Australia.

## CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

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