



QUEST

JULY 2021

IN THIS ISSUE

- ◆ Click goes the classroom shears
- ◆ Adult Learners Week 2021
- ◆ DIY custom-made coffins
- ◆ View from the Board
- ◆ ACE Update

TIPS AND TRENDS

Top tips for #ALW2021 events

Click go the classroom shears

Australia may well have been built on the sheep's back but getting the wool off the sheep is harder now than it's ever been.

In 2019 there were 2874 resident shearers in Australia compared to 12,000 in the mid 1980s. The shortage has been exacerbated by drought and the travel restrictions of COVID.

A \$1.2 million Victorian government initiative aims to increase the quantity and quality of shearer training across the state.

Opening up courses

Glenn Haynes, Executive Officer SCAA Shearer Woolhandler Training Inc., an RTO and Learn Local based in Hamilton, says that until recently there's been limited course availability and a decline in on the job training, making it difficult for people wanting to enter the industry.

'My parents probably always thought they'd have to keep looking after me. But they are so proud of me because I have a future now.' Lauren Stirling, shearer

Now SCAA Shearer Woolhandler Training Inc runs introductory and certificate level courses across Victoria linking graduates to employment through their job network and supporting them on the job.

'We create a pathway for our students into the industry. We give them follow up training in the shed to reach the goal of shearing 100-120 sheep a day,' Glenn says.

Twenty-six year old Lauren Stirling is one of more than a hundred students who have completed new accredited shearing qualifications as part of the state government initiative.

After she left school at 16, Lauren had trouble holding down a job. 'I've been a spray painter, a drover, I've worked at the races, in a supermarket. I've had a lot of jobs but I could never stick anything out. I'd always chuck it in.'

Now she can't see herself doing anything else. 'It's so much fun. I love, love, love it.'

For Lauren on the job experience to help her reach the industry standard was vital. She worked as a woolhandler based out of Ballarat and took every opportunity she could to refine her skills.

You have to build up your experience once you've done

(Story continues on p. 3)

 ala.asn.au

 Like us on Facebook



ADULT
LEARNING
AUSTRALIA

Lifelong and
lifewide learning
for all Australians

Message from the CEO



The Tasmanian examples highlight that adult learning and education has a wide application across our communities from formal, non-formal to informal.

On a recent trip to Tasmania, I was fortunate enough to see firsthand a diverse range of adult learning and community education programs operating in different parts of the state. I was privileged to meet with literacy coordinators and some prisoners inside Risdon prison near Hobart. One of the prisoners I met was developing a weekly newsletter for prisoners, another was recording and editing prisoner stories, and yet another was providing information in the prison library of books and resources. Other prisoners were able to access one to one literacy support if they requested it.

In Devonport, I visited a Certificate III TasTAFE class for bakery apprentices at the Drysdale Cookery and Bakery school. I visited the new UTAS campus in Burnie which houses a Makers' workshop and the Devonport Library which runs adult literacy and learning programs including support for volunteer literacy tutors.

I was welcomed to Ulverstone Neighbourhood House to discuss their successful lunch and learn program, study groups and support classes for learner drivers and met members of the Ulverstone Community Shed. In Launceston, I came across a vibrant and colourful flamenco class being held in a local park.

How fortunate that we have so many different ways to learn. The Tasmanian examples highlight that adult learning and education has a wide application across our communities from formal, non-formal to informal and that each type of learning has distinct attributes that should be valued for the unique opportunities they provide.

Over the last year, I have been part of the Department of Education, Skills and Employment's VET Stakeholder panel where I aim to ensure adult community education (ACE) is properly understood and considered during the implementation of the Australian Government's Skills Package. Whilst ACE is a small player in terms of providing VET compared to other sectors it has a significant place in supporting people through VET pathways, whether through foundation skills programs or through informal learning that builds the learner's confidence to go the next step. But as the Tasmanian examples above attest, learning is more than about qualifications and accreditation and one of the challenges is breaking down the siloed approach to adult learning so that ACE is recognised for its broad application and reach.

In the coming weeks, I will be presenting along with ALA Board member Ros Bauer, a literacy expert, at the Parliamentary Inquiry into Adult Literacy, Numeracy, and Problem-solving Skills in Australia, following on from our recent submission. I hope that the Inquiry will shine a light on the needs and gaps in Language Literacy and Numeracy provision but also on the possibilities that ACE can provide to connect adults to the wider world of learning.

Finally, many thanks to outgoing ALA Board members Cath Dunn and Donna Rooney who have both served ALA for many years. Cath, as past President and Treasurer, has been a great steward of our organisation and never flinched in helping us in her Executive roles. Wishing them both all the best. New Board members Nigel Wilson SA, Stephen Billett Qld and Rebecca Arbon NT join us bringing a variety of experiences that will strengthen the capacity of the Board to actively plan for and respond to these challenging and changing times.

Jenny Macaffer, CEO



SCAA Shearer Woolhandler Training Inc provides nationally accredited training for the wool industry including certificate courses in shearing and wool handling across Victoria and South Australia.

(story continued from p. 1)

shearing school. So for practise I would jump on a stand at lunch time and shear all the belly wool off the sheep in a pen for the shearers. And then if you were lucky a shearer might give you a nod at the end of the day to come over and shear his last sheep for him. It's kind of like a thank you from the shearer and an exciting moment when you are new to it to get to shear a whole sheep.'

These days Lauren is a full timer and hasn't looked back. 'It's the best job. You don't have to worry about what you wear, you can have music roaring, and you're part of a team and it's so much fun. I feel really guilty if I have to have a sick day, I really care about it. It really has changed me.'

The Certificate gave Lauren practical skills in preparing and using her equipment, safe work practises and teamwork. But it was the physical handling of sheep that initially had her worried.

'I'm 55kg and most of the sheep weigh more than me. But girls make good shearers so the teachers focus on teaching you the right footwork for balance and setting the sheep up correctly which is so important to getting good blows. I learned how to manoeuvre my feet and weight and by changing things like how low I crouch so the sheep is comfortable and it doesn't kick or squirm. That way you can shear it as quickly and cleanly as possible.'

Shearer profile is changing

Glenn Haynes says shearing students now come from a variety of different backgrounds and range in age from 16 to 60. 'Eighteen months ago they came from farming backgrounds or they had a friend or a dad who was a shearer but the last 12 months we've seen everyone from carpenters, people working in aviation, management and hospitality wanting to work as shearers. A very good work ethic is pretty much all you

need. You just have to rock up and be willing to do a great job.'

And commitment is strong. 'The retention rate in shearing five years ago was 30% now it's 60 to 70%. It's also classified as an essential service and people are looking for work in essential services.'

A third of new shearers are women and they bring particular skills Glenn says. 'Girls are unbelievable to teach. You never have to get them to slow down and focus on quality, they have perfect hands, and they're not interested in racing against the person next to them, they're not interested in being competitive, they are focussed on doing a great job.'

Glenn says shearing takes mental toughness too. 'You're thinking on your feet all the time, having to adapt, for example, to changing breeds. You have to be able to work through heat, dust, flies, prickles. You've got to be mentally strong because you could be working somewhere there's no phone service, the closest town is 100kms away so if something goes wrong you've gotta work it out. You have to be prepared to repair all your own equipment so you have to think ahead, take along spare radiator hoses, that sort of thing.'

While there's plenty of local work Glenn says it's an ideal job for people who want to travel. 'They can chuck their gear and their swag in the back of the car and travel all over Victoria, Qld, WA, anywhere. They get to see the best parts of the country, parts most of us would never see.'

A chance to shine

Glenn says often the best shearers are people who struggled at school. 'Some of the young ones are little ratbags but that's what you need – the kind of people who have too much energy who need somewhere to use it. They're the sort who could never sit still at school,



Modern shearing sheds are much more inclusive now than in the past and there's been a significant growth in the number of women training to be shearers.

who always wanted to be outside. I was like that myself. Then you find they get the bug for shearing and they make big money and away they go. They often go on to be our championship shearers.

One of the best things about shearing is that young people who battled at school, can go on, as long as they've got a good work ethic, and can make \$500-\$600 a day. There's no other industry where they can do that.'

Course graduate and new shearer Paddy Hansford agrees. He didn't enjoy school and left at 16. 'I have a massive work ethic but just not when it came to school.'

Paddy is the son of a shearer but rather than following the traditional path of passing skills on from one generation to another, Paddy's father encouraged him to do a course instead.

'My dad said he wouldn't teach me because he'd just pass on his bad habits. So I did a certificate course and I learned from the best.'

Paddy says the rewards are worth the hard work. 'I really love the lifestyle. There's three or more of us in the team and we all get along really well. I love the hard work and the money. That's what drives me. I want to buy a farm one day. But I won't be shearing my own sheep, I will hire shearers for that.'

Training shearing teachers

As part of the Victorian government's commitment

'I love work, I love making money, I love to sweat I love to feel I've earned my keep, earned my meals, and earned my sleep.'
Lauren Stirling, shearer

to increase the number of qualified shearing teachers SW TAFE, in partnership with the Shearing Contractors Association Australia's Shearer Woolhandler Training division, Rural Industries Skills Training and the Victorian Farmers Federation developed a training course for shearing teachers.

South West TAFE executive manager – education Louise Cameron says it was always going to be a challenge to attract experienced shearers to undertake a training qualification.

'It's a very physical job so it attracts people who are very hands on. They are not the kind of people who enjoy paperwork. So getting them to undertake a course like the Certificate in Training and Assessment which is very academic and uses a whole different kind of language meant we had to plan to offer a lot of support.

'They know their job very well but being able to map industry skills to the training package requires a very different mindset. So this was a big barrier. And people don't use computers when they're shearing, so digital skills were an issue. The average age of a shearer is late 40s and they are widely dispersed geographically. So getting them in one place at one time, and engaging them with a fairly academic course was a big ask.'

To overcome these barriers SWTAFE offered scholarships so shearers continued to receive a wage and learning assistance to support them through their training.

Applicants were recruited from across the state and on the basis of their industry skills.

'We were looking for people who had a good record of achievement, who were respected in the industry who would be good role models for their students. And people who wanted to give something back,' Louise says.

Of the 10 who were selected, nine completed the



Minister Gayle Tierney (R) with graduates from South West TAFE's sheep shearing trainer course

training, which ran from February to November 2020. With the disruption of COVID lockdown, training shifted to a virtual classroom. The rest of the time was spent at SWTAFE's Hamilton campus and local farms.

Louise is 'ecstatic' about the results. 'Graduates said they learned so much and benefitted from being pushed and supported during training.

'The shearing industry is the backbone of rural Australia. It was great to see such a successful program that offers really strong professionalism to its trainers and new people coming into the industry.'

Janiece Butler, Teacher, Professional Education at SWTAFE, took the group through 37 weeks of intensive training.

'It was very challenging at the start because of COVID there was not as much face to face teaching as we'd hoped.'

Workplace visits to observe training in action were limited too.

'We couldn't go out to see them on farms or in shearing sheds so we had to observe them teaching via video conferencing.

'The beauty of the Certificate IV in Training and

'If you're an electrician or a motor mechanic you can look at a manual and it will give you diagrams and instructions for doing things. But there isn't a manual for shearing. It's a practical physical skill. You have to do it to learn it.' Louise Cameron, South West TAFE executive manager – education

Assessment is that when it's group and industry based you can use peers as learners and mentors. So they could deliver theory to each other and get rich feedback on technology and teaching techniques.'

Despite the class being dispersed interstate and on farms in remote and regional areas attendance was 'fantastic,' Janiece says. 'They would log in from all over to attend classes and workshops. Someone even pulled over and logged in from their car on the side of the road with their headphones on using their laptop. They were so committed.'

Janiece said participants were undaunted. 'Shearers really know how to deal with a challenge and break it down and work through it. I was completely blown away by their ability to adapt to using 21st century digital tools to achieve results.'

For some the scholarship program was lifechanging.

'I had a student who had had a very good career as a shearer and really wanted to be a teacher but had no digital skills. He'd never sent email, he didn't know how to use a laptop or a computer. Now he's out training young ones, using the shearing app with his young trainees and he's quite comfortable doing things like sending out links to connect with them via Zoom. At the end of course he said, "I never thought I would ever be able to do this in my life. I thought my working life was over."'

Graduates from the Certificate IV in Training and Assessment are now employed as shearing instructors to deliver accredited training to students in shearing sheds across the state.

'Now they can go out as accredited trainers and assessors. Their passion is to professionalise the industry — to work from the inside to make it better.' Janiece says.

Adult Learners Week 2021

1-8 September

Join in the Australia-wide celebration of lifechanging adult education



Change your story

The theme of this year's Adult Learners Week, 'Change Your Story', promotes the power of learning to alter the course of people's lives.

For tens of thousands of people across Australia taking up adult education is a means to discover hidden talents, develop new skills and find a way to a better future.

Adult Learners Week is aimed particularly at people who may be hesitant about re-engaging with education, those people who are most likely to benefit from the rewards and pleasure that learning can bring.

Taking up a course or a class can be a way for people to improve their chances of finding work, help them on the path to further study, improve their reading, maths and digital skills or increase their mental and physical fitness. But the benefits of adult learning extend beyond the classroom. Meeting new people, improving self confidence and a sense of belonging and achievement are just some of the positive side effects of returning to learning as an adult.

Get involved

Adult Learners Week is a time to celebrate the achievements of adult learners who have turned their lives around through adult education and the lifechanging community organisations who make it happen.

If your organisation offers any form of adult learning such as courses, classes, exhibitions, tours, training, tutoring, discussion groups – then participating in Adult Learners Week is an opportunity to celebrate the work you do, not just to people within your community but to government departments, to policymakers, to the private sector and to the media.

Ideas for celebrating

Depending on social distancing rules in your area,

some celebrations may need to be online rather than face-to-face.

Check out the Adult Learners Week website for event ideas.

Register your event

Whatever your planned activities for Adult Learners Week, register them on our Adult Learners Week website to ensure they are promoted widely and reach your audience.

Be an early bird

Organisations who list their events before August 9 will go into the draw for cash prizes to help with event costs.

Nominate a learner

Enter an adult learner with an inspiring story for an Adult Learners Week scholarship before August 20. Nominees stories will be shared across social media and winners will be announced during the launch on September 1.

Use the hashtags

Add #ALW2021 #ChangeYourStory hashtags to your social media posts so we can share and amplify news of exciting Adult Learners Week news and activities. Follow #ALW2021 on social media and like Adult Learners Week Facebook page.

Get support for your #ALW2021 celebrations

Adult Learning Australia will be co-ordinating a range of activities as part of the national celebration. Our website includes tools, tips and downloads for sharing and making your event a success.

adultlearnersweek.org

Top tips for your #ALW2021 events

Here's some expert tips from the winners of last year's 'Best Event' awards on how to make your Adult Learners Week celebrations a success.



1 Be an early bird

Register your event early so you can go in the draw for an early bird prize. It's a great way to build buzz and get staff, volunteers and learners excited about and involved in planning Adult Learners Week.

2 Offer choice

COVID has prompted a huge change in the range of learning activities you can offer and how people participate. ALW events can take place in person, online or in social media, or a combination of all three. Last year Macquarie Community College offered COVID safe classes in how to use Zoom so people who weren't confident with technology didn't miss out.

3 Pick winners

Plan activities that have proved popular or address a problem or interest of your target audience. Have a look on social media for the kinds of learning activities that might draw a crowd. Check the Adult Learners Week website for ideas.

4 Don't be afraid to experiment

Offering something new or different can be just the drawcard to engage your target audience, so it's worth thinking outside the box.

5 Rope others in

Who do you know that has a specialist skill they'd like to share? Tap your friends, colleagues and learners and encourage them to teach others. Clare Library (SA) put the call out for borrowers to share their expertise and were bowled over by the positive response.

6 Showcase your work

Offer samples of some of your classes, give guided tours, launch new programs or projects and share your

successes. Central Coast Community College used an iPhone to make engaging videos of students and trainers doing fun classroom activities which were a hit on social media and caused a spike in new enrolments.

7 Be playful and have fun

Make the learning activities unique and interesting to make sure that everyone including staff and trainers have a ball.

8 Be a storyteller

Explore this year's theme of 'Change Your Story' by sharing stories of people whose lives have been altered by adult education. Ballarat Neighbourhood House used this strategy last year, sharing stories of former students and their achievements on social media to inspire others.

9 Keep the media in mind

Keep your local media outlets updated with your plans for Adult Learners Week. Sending out a press release well ahead of time will improve your chances of media coverage and send your message far and wide.

10 Finish on a high

An awards night or a wrap party that recognises the achievements and work of all the people involved is a fantastic way to end the week. ATWEA capped off last year's celebration with an awards night that they live streamed for people at home.

Thanks to last year's winners of the 'Best Event' awards for their advice:

Macquarie Community College (NSW), Ballarat Neighbourhood Centre (VIC), Clare Valley Library Service (SA), Central Coast Community College and ATWEA (NSW)

DIY custom-made coffins

A coffin making class at West Moonah Community Shed in Hobart is breaking down taboos and lowering funeral costs.



Jill Warwick, 73, signed up for a coffin making class because she's always up for an adventure. It also made financial sense.

'I had been very involved in organising a friend's funeral and I was horrified at the price of her coffin. The minimum for a coffin for cremation was four and a half to five thousand dollars.'

Jill persuaded three of her friends to join her. By the end of the six week class at West Moonah Community Shed, each of them had designed and built their own custom made caskets.

Jill says the class was not all doom and gloom and offered an emotional outlet. 'It wasn't the least bit depressing, it was fun and we laughed ourselves sick.'

Jill involved her four children and their families in the design, each of them choosing a colour for its brightly striped exterior.

'I sent paint charts out to family in the US and Adelaide and everyone chose a colour. I painted the lid of the coffin yellow because I believe that's the international colour of peace. Then we divided it up into 21 different colours and all the kids who were here came to the house and we did it together. They thought it was a scream. They'd say to friends "No, I can't go out to lunch today, I'm helping to paint mum's coffin."'

Jill believes that making a coffin together helps with the mourning and grieving process.

'My family and I drank many glasses of wine and

'With every class, I feel like I'm still learning. Peter Marshall, course leader,' Coffin Club

had many laughs while we painted it. One of the best things about doing it was that it forced us to be honest about how we all felt.

Lifting the lid

'Burying someone you love in a coffin that is handmade and beautiful becomes part of how they remember you. For my kids the memories of decorating it with me will be equally important. They will all laugh about it and remember the day the coffin fell off the stand.'

Jill found the class empowering in other ways. 'It became political for me. The more I learned about the funeral industry the more I thought, Why should we be intimidated? Why should we feel we have to buy a coffin from a funeral director? I discovered that you don't need a hearse, you can pick a coffin up in a ute as long as it's covered. But how many people know that?'

Joining the class was also a great way of expanding her social life Jill says. 'We were nervous about meeting new people when we started. At my age you tend to mix with your old friends so when you go to something like this there are all these new people to meet from completely different walks of life. It's a great way to make new friends.'

From cabinets to coffins

Inspired by a similar project in Ulverstone, the West Moonah Community House in Hobart set up a Coffin Club in 2017. Soon afterwards the founder of the project left, and Peter Marshall, who was already a volunteer at the Shed, took over.

At first Peter was reluctant. He is a cabinetmaker by trade but he felt unprepared to teach the class. 'I've had plenty of experience measuring and building boxes but I'd never made a coffin before.'



Peter Marshall teaches participants practical skills for making their own personalised coffin.

He visited a couple of local funeral parlours for advice on what was required, he practised by making a prototype and was fortunate to find a local with just the right expertise and time to help him.

'I was lucky that Scott Turnbull, who has over 30 years experience in the funeral industry, volunteered. He's been invaluable.'

Classes are kept small and Peter takes each person through the process of design and construction adapting to the needs of the individuals in each group.

'Some people are very capable and just need a bit of direction but there are others who can't drill a straight hole so you are teaching them the very basic skills.'

At the end of the course, each participant leaves with a good practical knowledge of woodworking tools and how to use them safely and their own personalised casket made to industry standards.

The Coffin Club runs for three hours a week for six weeks. And places fill fast. Participants range in age from 30 to 85 years old. And a lot are women.

Not all doom and gloom

While it might sound morbid, Peter says classes are anything but. 'People get a sense of achievement

'It's a comfort to know that the coffin is downstairs and the kids don't need to worry. I bought a beautiful old Indian sari and I have left instructions that my family use it as a shroud. They know what I want, they just have to take the sari and tuck me in.' Jill Warwick, participant

from doing it, they feel happy to have done it.'

People sign up for the course for a range of reasons. 'Some are upset at the cost that funeral industry charges which can be up to \$10,000 for a coffin. Others want to learn how to use tools and walking out with a coffin is a bonus.'

And some come along with a sense of urgency, having had news that time is running short.

Of the 42 coffins produced since the club began, two have been used. Peter built one for a close friend who died unexpectedly. 'He was a mate I've known for 50 years so it was an honour to make his coffin.'

A chance for creativity

Each coffin is based on a pattern that is adapted for the size of the person who will be using it. But apart from the basic blueprint, the rest is a matter of personal taste. Some people go for plain and simple. Others like the idea of personalising their coffin like the Bunnings worker who made his coffin out of Bunnings pallets.

Some store their coffin away under the house or in their shed until they're needed. Those who are fit and healthy make practical use of them in the meantime. 'We've had 5 or 6 who've turned them into shelving for record collections or books or displays of animal skulls. One guy painted his shiny black with 100mm legs and on Friday nights he has the boys round and uses it as a bar top or a coffee table.'

Peter says it also fosters curiosity about end of life issues. 'In the process of making the coffin other subjects come up. I've organised monthly talks on things like care packages and palliative care because people are interested in learning more. I've also worked with "You and Taboos" which offers alternative



Discussions about death in a coffin making class tend to be matter of fact says Peter Marshall from West Moonah Community Shed.

burials. One bloke wanted a bushland burial, a natural alternative to a grave. So we had to build a coffin that was environmentally friendly, that didn't use screws or pine and had rope handles.'

The course is task focussed and talk of death tends to be matter of fact. That doesn't mean people aren't feeling distressed, particularly if they are making a coffin for a loved one. 'I haven't had anyone break down, but they often tear up. Some come back and show me pictures of the funeral.'

Funeral costs can be expensive and making a coffin relieves some of the financial pressures on families left behind.

Prompting bigger questions

Jill says, 'What I liked so much about the Coffin Club was that it opens up the subject of death and dying which many people in their older years want to avoid talking about. It was such an important thing to do and such a great talking point. One lady in our group was so quiet and subdued and didn't join in but by the end she was as bad as the rest of us! We've got photos of us doing things that you would expect teenagers to do, like lying in our partly built coffins. It was fun and it saved us money and it educated us. I think it takes away the fear. I don't want to die but now I don't have that fear.'

'Learning to make a coffin is also an emotional process. The coffin is made to be used for the saddest time of the family's life but mine was made with laughter which helps to lessen the grief.' Jill Warwick, participant



Jill Warwick and her family decorated her coffin.

Join now

Being a member of ALA is a great way to support lifelong and lifewide learning in Australia and join a thriving national network of adult educators.

To find out more about all the benefits of an ALA membership, go to: ala.asn.au/join-now/



ADULT
LEARNING
AUSTRALIA

View from the Board

Meet Stephen Billett, Professor of Adult and Vocational Education in the School of Education and Professional Studies at Griffith University and one of the new members of ALA's Board.



What educational experiences shaped you?

Many of my formative learning experiences occurred outside of formal education.

After I left school I completed a two year vocational education course in tailored garment manufacturing. But my studies had left me unprepared for that kind of work. I got a job as an assistant designer and had to spend some months at the sewing machines of the production lines making trousers, vests and jackets. I learned a range of skills that were not covered in college and I came to understand the logic and the whole process of manufacturing garments from conception, design to production. It was a very rich and powerful learning experience.

I travelled extensively when I was a young man, including spending time living on a kibbutz where one of my jobs was in an engineering workshop where everyone from the engineers to the volunteers were part of an unpaid community, the manager was elected and everyone was included in decision-making. This experience shaped my views about how effectively work practices are in a respectfully democratic environment that draws on workers' skills and capabilities and the inappropriateness of remote and top down management structures. Also, whilst I was living in a Moshav (i.e. collective farm) I experienced a model of leadership in which those who lead were on the front line and would never ask others to do what they would not or could not. These were powerful learning experiences about work and leadership.

Years later in Australia after working as a clothing teacher in TAFE and in policy work during the Dawkins era, I was seconded to Griffith University to teach in a TAFE teacher preparation program which also included undertaking a PhD. I started to think about my own experience and how much of my learning had happened outside the classroom and in workplaces. That became and still is my

key area of study and research.

Why did you nominate for the ALA board?

I want to contribute in some small way to the adult and community education sector being given the attention and resources it deserves and needs. I would like the sector to be seen as more than service delivery and for it to be able to feed into and shape government policy about adult and community education. Victoria is alone in having a dedicated adult education board whereas other states and nationally there are limited mechanisms for advice from the local level having policy impact. This must change.

How do you continue learning in your own life?

I am extremely privileged. My project work constantly involves gathering data from people, analysing and identifying findings and advancing understanding. What I find most interesting are those unexpected findings that challenge and extend my thinking in ways that are profound.

CHECK OUT OUR
ACE SHOP
For teaching resources,
merchandise & more.

ala.asn.au/members/cart

The advertisement features a green background. At the top, it says 'CHECK OUT OUR ACE SHOP' in white and yellow text. Below that, it says 'For teaching resources, merchandise & more.' in white. There are two images: a white tote bag with a black silhouette of Australia and the text 'Unlock Smiles' and a book titled 'SPELLING' with a blue cover. At the bottom, there is a white URL: 'ala.asn.au/members/cart'.

ACE Update

In **TAS**, Neighbourhood Houses Tasmania has welcomed its new CEO, Michael Bishop, who has worked for many years to improve health services to rural and remote Australian communities. A founding member of the Mental Health Council of Australia, his work in de-stigmatising mental illness has been recognised by the Australian Human Rights Commission. www.nht.org.au

In **WA**, In the wake of the state election, Linkwest is offering training to member centres on how to develop strong, ongoing relationships with local and state politicians and advocate for the work that centres do in local communities. Linkwest is preparing a pre-budget submission and building the case for more sustainable funding for the sector. www.linkwest.asn.au

Nationally, the Australian Neighbourhood Houses and Centres Association ran a successful Neighbourhood Houses and Community Centres Week from May 8 to 15th with a livestream lunch event in Melbourne featuring Senator Penny Wong and celebrations in each state. www.anhca.org



Photo: Shearing Shed by Indigo Skies CC BY-NC-ND 2.0

In **Victoria**, Neighbourhood Houses Victoria celebrated Neighbourhood Houses and Community Centres Week with awards in five categories: Reducing Inequalities; Community Resilience; Climate Action; Gender Equity and Social Enterprise. www.nhvic.org.au

In **SA**, Hackham West Community Centre was awarded the Learning Changes Lives Foundation 'Literacy Changes Lives' small grant for its Perks of Coffee Project. The grant will fund an education project to support 40 adult learners to develop the skills for further learning, training and/or work using a project model that can be repeated and replicated. learningchangeslives.org.au

Nationally, ALA held its AGM and Board elections with guest speaker Dr Keiko Yasukawa, from the School of International Studies and Education at UTS who spoke about the role of adult education in women's empowerment. The Board welcomed new members Nigel Wilson (SA), Rebecca Arbon (NT) and Professor Stephen Billett (NSW), congratulated Annette Foley and Chris McCall on their re-election and farewellled Donna Rooney and long serving member and advocate Cath Dunn from WA who retired at the end of her term.

ALA brought together seven other national peak groups for a joint written submission to The House Standing Committee on Employment, Education and Training inquiry into adult literacy, numeracy and problem-solving skills in Australia. ALA representatives will present in person at the next Committee hearing which has been postponed due to COVID restrictions.

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

Jenny Macaffer

EDITOR

Gina Perry g.perry@ala.asn.au

2021 ALA BOARD

PRESIDENT

Assoc Prof Annette Foley (VIC)

VICE PRESIDENT

Kathleen Priestly (TAS)

SECRETARY

Judith McKay (NT)

TREASURER

Dr Ron Wilson (VIC)

BOARD

Rebecca Arbon

Ros Bauer

Prof Stephen Billett

Dianne Borella

Sally Brennan

Chris McCall

Dr Nigel Wilson

CONTACT



Adult Learning Australia
Henderson House
45 Moreland St.
Footscray VIC 3011



03 9689 8623



ala.asn.au



**ADULT
LEARNING
AUSTRALIA**

Lifelong and lifewide
learning for all
Australians