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Headstones from the heart

Many of the graves of Indigenous people at Nambucca Heads cemetery are either unmarked or have simple wooden crosses as headstones that have weathered over time, making them difficult to read. A TAFE NSW course in Macksville is helping to change that.

Cheryl Donovan was working on cleaning up family graves when she heard about a course in building mosaic headstones for loved ones being offered at her local TAFE. She and her husband immediately signed up. 'It seemed to fit perfectly with what we had been trying to achieve.'

Indigenous students in the eight-week course learn how to design and produce a mosaic headstone and can get their inspiration from the use of found objects, shells, stones or bring things that are personally significant to incorporate into their design such as the person's favourite footy team.

For Cheryl doing the course has been a great opportunity

'It's such an important and sensitive process and creating a lasting tribute for their loved ones enables a sense of closure for a lot of families and the wider Aboriginal community.'

Lorrae O'Brien, Head Teacher

to be able to commemorate her mother in a creative and meaningful way. But initially it was daunting.

'I really, really wanted to do it. But it was like that old saying, once I started I thought "I have bitten off more than I can chew".'

'I thought about doing something basic and simple but the teacher told me that whatever I wanted to do I could do it. And other students made suggestions. I wanted to do angel's wings on the back of mum's headstone but I thought it was too much work and that I'd never get it how I wanted it.'

The course helped Cheryl develop confidence in her artistic ability. 'It really helped me get some creative juices flowing and then I thought, "Nah, I can do this".'

'I learned lots of skills. It was the first time I had ever done mosaics. I'm in my 60s and I've never done grouting in my life. And that in itself is a healing process, working with my hands in making the headstone. It's just helped me so much. It's been really, really good for me. My husband has enjoyed it as much as me. We go together and work together and help each other.'

Making a headstone also had a therapeutic effect.

'I found it part of my healing process. There were younger people in the class too and they had different ideas and just

(Story continues on p. 3)



Adult
Learning
Australia

Message from the CEO



We have learnt that we are connected and interdependent and that together we can make a difference. Sometimes it takes a tragedy, emergency or pandemic to remind us that we rely on one another and that we are all creatures of this world.

The uncertainties of 2020 have deeply impacted many people's lives, stability and wellbeing. Despite this, we have witnessed generosity, compassion and resilience in communities that have weathered drought, bushfire, COVID and other hardships.

As ALA celebrated turning 60, our members and supporters rose to meet the challenges of 2020 head-on. They experimented and extended their learning reach in creative ways. They provided safe and thoughtful programs, both online and face to face, while managing COVID.

So, what have we learnt this year? We have learnt that we need to equip and train people for current and emerging jobs. But we need to do more than just fill skills gaps. We need to offer people opportunities and spaces to discover their talents and fulfil their potential. After all, what is learning for?

We have learnt that we are connected and interdependent and that together we can make a difference. Sometimes it takes a tragedy, emergency or pandemic to remind us that we rely on one another and that we are all creatures of this world.

Learning matters. It helps us to re-imagine ourselves and who we are as individuals, as communities and as global citizens. It changes how we relate to ourselves and the wider world. It gives voice to the future – and helps us to think and ask important questions. How do we envisage the future? What matters? Where should we focus our attention? How can adult learning and community education help us articulate who we are and help us get to where we want to go?

In a recent interview Sir Alan Tuckett, Honorary Fellow at UNESCO's Institute of Lifelong Learning said that despite the fact that adult learning is increasingly narrowly defined in terms of its vocational value, he is hopeful about its future.

I think this applies equally to our situation here in Australia, where funding for formal adult education is largely about job training, and adult education that fosters wellbeing, creativity and fulfilment, curiosity and pleasure has been squeezed to the margins.

Yet community providers continue to design programs in the best interest of learners, innovating and experimenting to find new ways to address the challenges that individuals and communities face and that's clear when you look at the kinds of stories we feature in Quest. Nautilus College came about as a response to mainstream schools' failure to deal with young people disengaged from education. Macksville TAFE began its course in making headstones after the local Indigenous community requested it. And The Bridge is responding to the rise in women fleeing domestic violence by developing financial literacy classes for women whose access to and knowledge of finances has been limited by an abusive partner. I find such hope in these stories that demonstrate how community based adult education continues to offer opportunities for people to grow, develop and take on new challenges way beyond the workplace. But government support for the full range of adult education opportunities is crucial.

Extraordinary efforts were made this year through tough times. I extend my heartfelt thanks for the way the adult education sector has mobilised and transformed a year of difficulties into something memorable and special.

I wish everyone the best for the festive season. I hope that your time with friends and family nourishes you. With your continued support, we look forward to a hopeful future, one where adult learning and community education continues to make a difference, where we can reimagine our world as a peaceful and sustainable place and where we act to enable meaningful lifelong learning for all.

Jenny Macaffer, CEO



Headstones created as a tribute enable those left behind to commemorate the lives of loved ones. Photo: QLD Heritage Register.

(story continued from p. 1)

looking around and seeing how they do things was really great. A lot of us have used bright colours on the headstones and when people see those bright colours it makes them feel happier and helps with grieving as well.

'We all looked at what each other was doing and praised each other's work. One young lady who had lost her mum to cancer suggested "Why not put a halo above an angel's wings?". I thought that was a really lovely idea. After I got it done I said, "Thanks for suggesting that".'

Cheryl says the course is an emotional experience for everyone involved. 'Everyone's doing it from the heart, that's what makes it so special – everyone is there doing it for people they love.'

Cheryl is very happy with the final result. 'It took a long time but I stuck to it and it really came up beautifully. I took a photo and sent it to the family and they were all over the moon and they said, "This is fantastic".'

Creating a beautiful tribute to someone who has died has inspired others, Cheryl says. 'People when they saw the headstone I made said, "That's fabulous, I should have come along".'



The students are keen to keep going. 'A lot of us are talking about meeting up once a week and sharing resources and we've been talking with our local Land Council about the kinds of materials and tools that we need.'

Lorrae O'Brien, Head Teacher of Creative and Design Ideation at Port Macquarie, Wauchope,

Kempsey and Macksville campuses said the course originated at Lismore campus 400 kilometres away where it was developed in consultation with the Indigenous community. And news soon spread.

'There's a lot of connections between the communities so when people heard about the course up in Lismore they came to us and requested the course down here, which is the perfect scenario really because we're responding to the needs of the community. There's a big need for the course and it's very meaningful for the people who take part.'

Lorrae says teaching the course requires sensitivity. 'We've got to be extra respectful. The people in the course go through a lot of emotions and it's very much about healing. Each person goes through their own personal journey but that's their story to tell.'

Creating a headstone involves a whole range of skills and participants learn to use new tools, plan a creative project, gather material and resources, work in a new medium and plan and implement a creative work.

The course has proven very popular with people coming from across three communities – Bowraville, Nambucca and Macksville.

'Because people are coming to the course from the community they are surrounded by people they know so there's a sense of collegiality and they feel a real sense of achievement so there's lots of positives involved for people who take part. And bringing people back into education is a critical component of the course too.'

Lorrae says creating and installing the new headstones helps people deal with loss.

'I think because the artistic process of creating the headstone is driven by their love for that person and everything they put into that process is in honour of the individual it can be very healing.'

The perfect pitch

A mentorship program is helping non-profit leaders connect with philanthropists.



Chris Lombardo (left) with the team at Bridge Darebin in Melbourne's North.

It's February 2018 and Chris Lombardo, CEO of Bridge Darebin, steps up to the stage and takes the microphone. She's about to try to convince an audience of 200 people to give her money.

The idea Chris wants the audience to fund is for a support worker for the Bridge's disability training program who could assist young people with learning disabilities to get work experience and support them as they move to full employment.

Chris' six minute talk looked natural and relaxed. You'd never know that inside she was terrified.

'It was nerve-wracking. I have been doing this job for 19 years and public speaking scared the hell out of me.'

Once her pitch was over, Chris, along with two other leaders of organisations in Melbourne's north, left the room so the bidding could begin.

'It's like auctioning a house. After you've left the room the MC says "Who wants to open?" and then someone might say, "I want to give \$500 to Bridge Darebin. It's very exciting".'

Chris' confident delivery was the result of months of practise. With help and mentorship from The Funding Network (TFN) she worked on her presentation until it was pitch perfect.

Established in 2013, TFN hosts live crowdfunding events to connect grassroots non-profits to people and organisations interested in investing their money to directly help people in need and to drive social change. The audience's pledges of financial support are matched by funds from corporate

'I've got such great people here at Bridge Darebin. If you have the ideas, they are the team to make them happen.' Chris Lombardo

partners. TFN's crowdfunding events have facilitated over \$14 million for more than 340 non-profit programs.

TFN provides free professional pitch coaching to successful applicants with mentors coaching presenters in how to inspire and engage an audience and motivate them to donate. Chris had no idea on the night how much money she would raise. So she was thrilled with the outcome.

'I was blown away with raising \$26,000 which was what we needed to fund the position. It was awesome.'

'Afterwards you feel this absolute adrenaline rush. And the feedback I got later was great. I thought, "Hah, I can do this!" It was really one of the times in my professional life where I thought, "I've got this".'

Chris says that the pitch coaching was invaluable. 'They give you fabulous training and mentors. It was hands down the most valuable PD I've done in my life. Since then I have successfully pitched for additional funding or partnerships. Without the TFN training, I just wouldn't have had the confidence.'

Earlier this year TFN approached three alumni from three different states and invited them to take part in a virtual crowdfunding event. Chris jumped at the chance.





The Bridge pitched for funding for a financial literacy course aimed at women whose access to and knowledge of finances has been limited by an abusive partner. Image by Xavier Mouton.

'I thought of the idea of a womens' financial literacy course straight away because we've heard a lot about the rise in domestic violence during the lockdown and I knew it was going to become even more important post-COVID when women will be trying to leave violent situations, but will leave with nothing.'

'The virtual event was similar to the live in-person pitch. After we each delivered our pitch, people would pledge in the comments and you could see their bids scrolling down the side of the screen. It was a pretty slick operation. It was also a lot of fun. So doing it virtually was easy in comparison. I was just sitting behind my desk.'

Chris raised \$12,000 and since then has received an additional \$2,500 and plans to run the financial literacy course next year. 'I would encourage anyone in the sector to have a go. It's all about having great supportive mentors who are people willing to give you their time. These pitch mentoring programs are absolutely targeted at people who can't pitch. Before I did the training, I could never imagine myself standing up and asking for anything, let alone asking for money. But I guarantee that after the pitch training anyone will be able to. And it resonates through the rest of your work. I've found it so useful in building partnerships, for example. I know how to frame things in a much more effective way and I sound and come across as really confident, even if I am shaking a little inside.'

Chris says understanding the psychology of persuasion and effective storytelling are key. 'The mentors teach you a bit about people's psyches and what will help in persuading people to give money or enter into an agreement with you. The number of times you say something, for example, can

flip someone's brain to a 'yes'. And personalising the story you are telling, and articulating the impact it will make – the lives it will change! A lot of people think you shouldn't talk about your personal experiences but there are people in your audience who your story will resonate with and they will prick their ears up. I remember before my first pitch I ran my pitch idea past a colleague and she said, "You can't use that it's about your son, you need to step away from that". Then at the pitch mentoring they asked us to write down two pitch ideas and I read my two out including the one about my son and they said "which do you think you'll go with?" And I told them what my colleague said and they said, "That advice was wrong. Go from the heart, use your personal story". That was an 'aha' moment for me.'

'For the financial literacy pitch I asked the audience to imagine a woman who has left a violent partner and loaded up her car with her three kids and she's now arrived at a motel. It's the third motel she's been to that night. The first two wouldn't give her a room because she had no credit card to use for a bond. She's never had bank accounts in her own name. So she's arrived at the third motel. She's exhausted and the kids are crying. She's got cash and she just wants a room. How will she pick up and start all over again? If she's going to survive, she has to know where to go to get started, how to open a bank account, and if her English isn't good it's even harder.'

'So I talked about what we can do to help women like her to get ahead of the game. We know anecdotally that there are many women out there who might have phoned a refuge because they're worried and thinking about leaving but don't know where to start. So if those women are directed to a financial literacy program beforehand, then if and when they do leave, they know how to start to set themselves up.'

'For anyone thinking of getting involved with TFN I'd say what I say to my staff when they come up with a new idea. "Just have a crack. What can go wrong? Let's see where it takes us".' thefundingnetwork.com.au

'The training you get at The Funding Network is something you would normally have to pay big money to be a part of.' Chris Lombardo

Nautilus offers fresh start

An alternative high school in NSW is helping young people re-engage with education.



Shearna Russ used to wag school. When she did attend she was bullied and felt disconnected. 'I used to sit in class but I wouldn't do any work and I'd play up and get in a lot of trouble. I was going to drop out just as soon as I was old enough.'

But she's hardly missed a day of school since switching to Nautilus College, an independent school set up by Mid North Coast Community College for young people disengaged from education.

At Nautilus, Shearna has turned over a new leaf. 'It's so much better. It's like a second home. I come here and do my work and then I go home. I don't run around all over the place like I used to.'

The school offers year 9 and 10 studies to young people who have dropped out of mainstream education and have a diagnosed disability. Most of the school's students have disabilities says principal John Beaumont.

'We have young people with autism, anxiety, depression, ADHD. And all of them are struggling to cope with their individual disability. Many are seeing psychologists or psychiatrists and most of them are on medication. Some have addictions to drugs or alcohol or have been involved with the justice system. So they can have real difficulty regulating their emotions and their actions.'

All have had negative or traumatic experiences of mainstream high school with a history of truancy or

expulsion. Before they arrived at Nautilus their daily lives were unstructured and often chaotic.

But John sees big changes. Establishing a routine and a purpose, and experiencing a sense of achievement at school have a big impact.

'Now all of them want jobs and want to progress. And they recognise that to get there they need education to be marketable.'

'Attendance is a wonderful measure of success. So is being polite and respectful towards others and being able to regulate your emotions.'

Having the chance to start afresh in a supportive environment is all that some need to take steps to a brighter future, John says.

'They need to get help with their disabilities and they need a school that is safe, non-threatening and offers a calm environment.'

John says that the increasing demand for places in the school indicates a widespread problem and need in the community. In 2019, 19 students were enrolled, but demand meant they had to find larger premises. Currently 54 students are enrolled and numbers look set to rise again next year.

'We are different from mainstream schools. Here students call teachers by their first names, and there are no uniforms and we don't expel people. We are the last bastion for a lot of these students and if we fail then the student has to go back to a department school, often the same one they were expelled from.'

'Staff focus on building rapport and responding to the needs of individual students. We promote a culture of respect and we have open learning spaces where we are all together in one big room. We don't have lessons as such but students work individually or in small groups.'

'I keep coming back so I can get my education. I've woken up to myself and now I'm focussing on school and work. I've got a two week old brother at home so I want to be a good role model for him.' Shearna Russ



Nautilus principal John Buchanan says feeling a sense of achievement has a big impact on young people.

'We have academic booklets on a range of subjects from English and Maths to history with a diverse range of activities from easy to more difficult and students are encouraged to work at their own pace but we are also circulating through the room and offering to help.'

Nautilus students can also participate in classes at the Community College. 'We offer barista training, food handling courses and white card training so that our students have more certificated training at the end of year 10 than others in their age group.' Apart from the qualifications, learning alongside other adults gives Nautilus students exposure to people from all walks of life and helps them develop confidence and communication skills.

John says that the commitment and expertise of the staff is the key to school's success.

'I have a fantastic team. They are wonderful staff and it would be impossible to run this place without that team effort.'

The atmosphere at Nautilus makes a big difference Shearna says. 'You feel welcomed as soon as you come in here. We all work together and everyone knows everybody and the teachers are very helpful. I get on well with everyone else.'

'I've surprised myself. I have PTSD so it's been pretty hard dealing with anxiety and coming out of my bubble. I've gotten a job as a cleaner in a resort.'

'We treat every student as an individual. Each student has their own particular story and individual learning plans which we often adjust daily to build on their strengths and address each students' particular needs.' John Beaumont

'I've got money in my pocket. I enjoy the people I work with and the experience of learning new things. I really enjoy feeling independent.'

Shearna now has dreams for the future. 'At mainstream school, I always wanted to be a nurse but I never thought it would happen. I was going to drop out as soon as I could in year 10. But once I came here I got really excited about finishing high school. I've got a lot of confidence now about my ability.'

'I hope to see myself being a midwife or running my own daycare centre. I've got bigger dreams now.'

John says that when he met Shearna she was very introverted and completely disengaged from education, having been expelled from a number of schools.

'Now she's a member of our leadership team, she has a future, she is a fantastic young woman and those doors that used to be closed to her are now open.'

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/

Learnings from COVID

Three adult education providers describe the challenges and changes of COVID.



Zoe Support, Mildura

Merinda Robertson, Manager of Zoe Support, which offers wraparound services to help young mums re-engage with education says they were fortunate to have a young client group. 'They are much more comfortable with technology than the staff, so that transition was easier.'

But Merinda says the length of the lockdown had an impact. 'Initially everyone was very positive, "We can do this, this is fine." But as the months dragged on it got harder and harder.'

While some pre-accredited programs such as Bridging Literacy and Numeracy and Financial Literacy made the transition to flexible delivery, Merinda said others such as the retail skills program run at the Little Sprouts social enterprise opportunity shop were suspended.

Making the change from in person to remote learning has tested staff skills in creativity and innovation. One example was the Earth to Table pre-accredited cooking program which moved from face to face to home delivery. 'Our amazing tutor Karen did a mountain of work to keep this program going in a new format. She worked out a menu every week, then made instructional videos of herself cooking, and created boxes of all the ingredients that she and Margie, our bus driver hand delivered to all of the young mums in the course.'

Demand for the course soared, going from 5–8 in the onsite classes to 18 during lockdown. 'It was really great, the mums were really engaged and taking photos of what they'd cooked

and sharing them on Facebook. They posted some great photos of their kids participating too and seeing the kids standing on stools and stirring and preparing ingredients was really great. Usually the kids would be in childcare while the mums do the class but because they were doing it from home the kids got involved too.'

Merinda says keeping clients connected despite the lockdown was a priority. 'Staff were in constant contact with clients — through text messages, sending links to activities for kids, and using Facebook groups to stay in touch.'

'I think what we'll hold onto once things are back to normal are programs where mums and their kids can participate together because we saw that offered just a fantastic connection and opportunity for bonding.'

'And in our Bridging program we'll continue to use apps and iPads and tools in teaching that we made such good use of during COVID lockdown.'

Wellsprings for Women, Dandenong

Wellsprings for Women, based in Dandenong in Melbourne's south-east, engages around 500 women each week from across the municipality. The women come from 39 different countries and speak 33 different languages.

CEO Dalal Smiley said training and access to technology was a priority. 'We distributed laptops and PCs to about 90 women and dongles and internet access to many more. We also set up an IT helpdesk so we were able to support women to connect with their classes.'

'Staff starting calling each one of the 500 women enrolled as soon as lockdown started to find out about their capacity for remote learning.'

'We've been able to engage the majority of the women involved with us but for some life has been quite difficult. For women with very low digital literacy and limited English

'Our phone bill quadrupled during lockdown. I nearly fainted when I saw the first phone bill but I got in touch with Telstra and they were lovely and gave us unlimited calls because they understood the necessity of what we were doing.' Dalal Smiley, Wellsprings for Women



Wellsprings for Women in Dandenong in Melbourne's south-east set up an IT help desk to help women get online.

online learning was impossible so we offered English lessons by phone.

'Lockdown has forced us to invest more in our digital capability and technology and this is the way forward for next year and beyond. We will continue to make our courses and services available both face to face and online. Necessity pushed us into new areas of growth.'

'With our IT help desk, I am hoping that we can continue that. We contracted a young man who has been really helpful to both participants and staff. It's so important to give our participants equipment but often they need support in knowing how to use it. He went out and delivered laptops and pcs and showed women how to do things like use Zoom, and create and set up an email account.'

'A lot of the women have no presence online so they were starting from scratch. It's amazing how many feel so confident now and are loving it. It's so liberating for them. They now have things like myGov accounts and through access to the internet they are discovering the joy of being able to do things in a very convenient way.'

'I think what has emerged is the importance of recognising the value of a diverse workforce. All of my staff are from different backgrounds. They speak different languages. To be able to speak to families in their own language has been such a blessing. Translated material is not nearly as effective as direct communication. We are very fortunate to have staff who don't have to waste time trying to build rapport with

'When we surveyed our students, they said they missed the social interaction and classroom-based learning but overall they were positive about the quality of the training and studying at home.' Carla Dawson, MTC

people in our community because that trust is already there.'

MTC, Sydney

MTC offers training at 16 venues across Sydney and ceased face to face training in April in the best interests of the students.

Carla Dawson Instructional Design Manager says she and her team of eight have been 'crazy busy' during the pandemic. 'We've been flat out. Our workload increased exponentially.'

'Our biggest focus was our Skills for Education and Employment (SEE) students because they have little or no digital skills or access to technology. We developed hard copy booklets that were topic based but designed for multiple levels of English literacy.'

'We haven't just offered paper-based correspondence classes we tried really hard to keep students engaged using Teams for online classes even if they only dialled in on their phones. It was a great way of catching up and learning, especially in terms of oral communication.'

'I am amazed and blown away by the reaction of teachers and students to online learning. They just kept at it. Students maintained great attendance and teachers were really pleased with these great results.'

'I think we've developed so many things as a result of COVID. We're saving so much paper because we've streamlined our processes by digitising paper-based forms. We've now got digital resources and there are so many things we can do with these in the future.'

'Online delivery offers our students much more flexibility in how and when they attend. As for my team, we have benefited from being thrown in at the deep end. It was a case of learning as you go and not being afraid to make mistakes. They've done an amazing job.'

'Overall COVID lockdown has improved both our services and our teaching.'

Six decades on and still going strong

ALA's 60th anniversary is a time to reflect on our origins and look to the future.



In October 1960, a disparate group of people engaged in adult education from around Australia gathered in Hobart for the Commonwealth Adult Education Conference and founded what we now know as Adult Learning Australia.

Some attendees came from university extension programs, others came from libraries, branches of the Workers Education Association and the Country Women's Association. By the end of the conference they had formed a national organisation, the Australian Association of Adult Education (AAAE), later renamed Adult Learning Australia.

It was, according to one of the founding members W G K Duncan, an organisation that was long overdue. 'The need for some sort of nation-wide organization in the field of adult education has been felt ... for over forty years,' he wrote. But it was a challenge. Establishing a national organisation required that people with diverse educational philosophies put aside ideological differences, abandon narrow definitions of what constituted adult education and be inclusive rather than exclusive of the variety of organisations and activities involved.

But Duncan observed that the founding of the organisation boosted morale amongst Australian adult educators and gave them a shared sense of purpose.

In 1989 the organisation was renamed Adult Learning Australia, a name change that reinforced the centrality of learner interests in our organisational focus and advocacy.

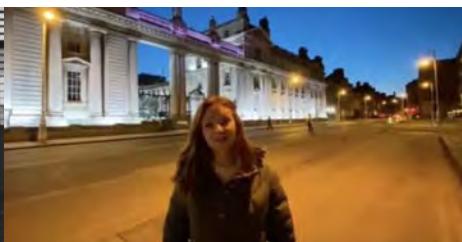
Our membership reflects the diversity of the sector. Adult education providers go by a variety of names in different states

and territories including Neighbourhood Houses, Workers Education Associations, U3As, Men's Sheds, Learning Centres, and Community Colleges. However, while community based adult education providers have maintained a focus on adult education for personal interest, over the last two decades our members have become increasingly involved in providing adult education as a pathway to further study, training and work.

The challenge with such a diverse group of organisations offering such a wide variety of programs across such a broad geographic range has always been to forge a shared identity. We have done this in a variety of ways — holding professional gatherings and conferences; publishing a journal for sharing research; providing professional development that is relevant and addresses the challenges our sector is grappling with; promoting and sharing stories of innovation and continuing to advocate nationally for the recognition of adult learning and community education.

Internationally, ALA has from the beginning been a respected participant in the international education movement. ALA actively supported and fostered the regional adult education organisation Asian and South Pacific Bureau of Adult Education (ASPBAE) and the International Council of Adult Education (ICEA). We enjoy strong relationships with similar national peak bodies in the USA, Ireland, New Zealand and Canada.

As part of our 60th anniversary we have compiled a timeline of milestones in our organisational history, a video on the history of adult education in Australia as well as a presentation by Professor (Adjunct) Barry Golding AM, Federation University, to mark the occasion. ala.asn.au/ala-60-years/



ACE news from around Australia

Victoria's Learn Local Awards celebrate outstanding adult learners and the adult educators who inspire them. Due to COVID, winners were announced during a Virtual Gala Series.

The Awards are an opportunity for learners, teachers and education providers from across Victoria to be recognised and celebrated for their achievements in transforming lives through community education.

The Minister for Training and Skills, the Hon Gayle Tierney MP, says 'Victoria's Learn Local sector offers a world of possibility and inspiration to adult learners who want to build their confidence, learn new skills, meet new people, and expand their horizons'.

Learner awards went to:

Colleen Forbes a participant in a Kickstart in Hospitality and Retail Course at Community College Gippsland won the Ro Allen Award, which recognises excellence in pre-accredited learning. It took courage and determination for Colleen to return to study, but she flourished and is now employed and has her sights set on becoming a Koorie educator, advocate and leader.



Bryanna Paynter-Harvie

Bryanna Paynter-Harvie of Noweyung won Victorian Learn Local Young Pre-accredited Learner Award for her determination to overcome mental health issues and her commitment to learning in the Kick Start Your Career in Health course.

Practitioner and volunteer awards went to:

Vivian Della Valle from the Centre for Adult Education (CAE) won Victorian Learn Local Practitioner Award in recognition of her commitment to helping her ICT students set goals and define a clear path toward further studies or employment.



Vivian Della Valle



Winner of the Ro Allen Award – Colleen Forbes from Community College Gippsland.

Rosewall Neighbourhood Centre – Learning and Creative Team won the Learn Local Volunteer Team Award for their English Conversation and Sewing Group which boosts the confidence, morale and employability of newly arrived migrant women.

Program awards went to:

The Centre for Continuing Education's Getting There program won Victorian Learn Local Pre-accredited Pathway Program Award for its success in helping people to break the cycle of disadvantage through adult education.

Heyfield Community Resource Centre won the Learn Local Creating Local Solutions Award for its Kickstart Your Career in the Health Industry course addressing skill shortages in Gippsland's health sector.

Cloverdale Community Centre won the Victorian Learn Local Collaboration Award for their collaboration with The Gordon TAFE in the co-design and delivery of courses for vulnerable learners that gave them the foundation skills to move into accredited courses.

This year a special Innovation in the time of COVID Acknowledgement Award was added. Congratulations to winners Leslie Snart, Laverton Community Education Centre; Phillip Island Community and Learning Centre (PICAL)'s Digital Matters Program; Wellsprings for Women and Glen Eira Adult Learning Centre.

learnlocal.org.au/learn-local-awards



Rosewall Neighbourhood Centre

In **Tasmania**, Minister for Education and Training Jeremy Rockliff launched the state's *Adult Learning Strategy*. The Tasmanian Adult Learning Strategy – Skills for work and life 2020–2023 was developed with input from across government, community and business sectors and aims to ensure all Tasmanians are better supported to engage or re-engage in learning to improve their employment opportunities and build their personal confidence and mental health and wellbeing: <https://bit.ly/2KJm4Qs>. The strategy comes on the heels of a recent state government report which quantified the socio-economic impact of the state's investment in Adult Literacy and Numeracy through the 26TEN Tasmania Strategy in 2018–19. It found that every dollar the Tasmanian Government invested yielded a \$5.20 return and that the state's \$5.3 million investment yielded around \$27.2 million. The report concluded that the benefits of developing skills and confidence in literacy and numeracy flow to individuals, families, communities, and workplaces and provided significant social, economic and cultural benefit to the state: <http://ow.ly/9WHh5AOIz>.

Also in **Tasmania**, the Tasmanian Prison Service and TasTAFE have agreed to an integrated prison education model and TasTAFE campus has been incorporated into the Risdon prison site as part of the new arrangement. The new education model ensures prisoners are provided with more training pathways from the time they enter prison to when they leave and beyond. Full implementation of the new model will begin in semester 1, 2021 with recruitment of staff currently underway.

In **SA**, where data indicates that very low numbers of Aboriginal people engage with community centres, CCSA has partnered with Reconciliation SA to deliver a series of interactive forums in 2021 that explore issues related to Reconciliation to enable centres to more effectively engage and connect with local Aboriginal communities. communitycentressa.asn.au

In **WA**, LinkWest has partnered with the Country Women's Association, Men's Sheds of WA and Australian Seniors Computer Clubs Association to train over 100 mentors to help older West Australians to become more digitally literate. linkwest.asn.au



Photo: [Southbank Brisbane](#) by Steven Penton CC BY 2.0

In **NSW**, Community Colleges Australia (CCA) welcomed the state government's release of its Adult and Community Education (ACE) policy statement. The policy statement, the first in twelve years, articulates the value added to the community by the ACE sector. CCA also recently announced the winners of its Student of the Year Award. Congratulations to Kristal Barlow, from Atwea College and Ayva Steel, from Tamworth Community College. cca.edu.au

Nationally, ALA has joined with leading peak bodies in the community sector to call on members of federal parliament to allow an inquiry with public hearings into the Climate Change Bill 2020, so the community, business and people can have their say. ALA has also partnered with Victorian peak bodies ACEVic and Neighbourhood Houses Victoria to provide a submission to the Victorian government's inquiry into access to TAFE for learners with disability, arguing for recognition of the important role adult and community education plays in assisting vulnerable learners, including learners with disability, to transition into further education, training and employment.

QUEST

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