

ISSUE 3 SPRING 2002

# ADULT LEARNING AUSTRALIA



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Adult Learning Australia Inc. (ALA) is the peak body for organisations and individuals involved with adult learning in Australia. ALA informs and fosters networks of adult educators; advises and lobbies government; promotes policy development; represents Australia on international education bodies; coordinates Adult Learners Week; and more.

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## FROM THE EDITOR

**Y**ou will be looking at this edition of the newsletter just as Adult Learners' Week gets underway. I'd like to wish all who are involved in an ALW event every success. For those who want to know what is happening go to the calendar at [www.adultlearnersweek.org](http://www.adultlearnersweek.org). I'm delighted to say that we have attracted high level support for the week, including from the Prime Minister and the Federal Minister for Education, Science and Training. Dr Nelson wrote to all federal members of parliament encouraging them to get involved in the week and I am sure that with your encouragement many will do so. He will also be launching the week on 1 September 2002.

As you will see from my report on a visit to the United Kingdom in May, one of the lessons I drew from Adult Learners' Week there is the importance of identifying the best of what is happening in adult learning and of telling the world about our achievements. That was the impetus for a new section in the newsletter, *On the Ground*, which gives you the opportunity to tell us about what's happening in the field. I know from my travels in Australia since taking up the position of Executive Director that there is much to be proud of and believe we should be sharing the knowledge of best practice. This will not only put us in a

better position to encourage excellence among fellow practitioners, but will also give us the wherewithal to back up our statements about the importance of learning to the well-being of the nation.

The benefits of lifelong learning cannot be denied but have, for too long, been mouthed as platitudes rather than a call to action. There are welcome signs that this is changing. The Ministerial Declaration on ACE is a step in the right direction, as is the fact that the ALP has incorporated the idea of lifelong learning accounts into its policy review process. And there is plenty of scope to inject broader concepts of learning into the Federal Government's Higher Education Review. ALA's response to the overview paper can be found on our website. With all this activity in the policy environment, I strongly urge all members to become engaged in the debates. One way to do this is to join the discussion groups we have set up on the website.

Museums are a theme in several of our articles. For me the award ceremony at the Victoria and Albert Museum in London was the most lively I attended, for it involved the creators and their families, with an air of exuberance more formal occasions cannot replicate. For Linda Ziegahn, the experience of

visiting two Australian museums led to some serious reflection on questions of reconciliation here and in the United States. For John Cross, our resident evangelist for the museum as a learning space, a conference at the Australia Museum in May uncovered some fellow believers. The ALA National Office will be seeking more converts at its ALW event at the National Portrait Gallery in Canberra.

I will end on the slogan for this year's ALW: Never Stop Learning! ■

*Francesca Beddie*

### ADULT LEARNING AUSTRALIA'S Annual General Meeting

will be held in Canberra on Friday 1 November 2002.

Further information will be provided.

Check the ALA website at [www.ala.asn.au](http://www.ala.asn.au).

### FEDERAL GOVERNMENT CONSULTATIONS

As mentioned in the editorial, ALA has made one submission on the overview paper, which introduced the higher education review. There are now several more discussion papers, all of which address issues of relevance to adult learning. They can be found at

[www.dest.gov.au/crossroads/pubs.htm](http://www.dest.gov.au/crossroads/pubs.htm).

In addition, ALA attended a consultation forum on VET to University, Access for Disadvantage Groups on 21 August.

ALA has also been invited to consult with the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations (DEWR) on its Active Participation Model for employment services. The new arrangements for employment services announced in the Federal Budget will include the introduction, from July 2003, of Job Seeker Accounts. These will be available to Job Network members to purchase specific assistance for job seekers based on individual needs. They will include funds for training.

Further developments in these areas will be communicated to members, who are also encouraged to convey their views to the National Office. ■

*Francesca Beddie*

### ROUND TABLE ON INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY AND OLDER AUSTRALIANS

On 14 May, the Federal Minister for Education, Science and Training, Dr Brendan Nelson, announced a four-year, \$23 million initiative to improve the computer skills of 46,000 unemployed workers. The scheme will offer such persons information technology (IT) training to the value of \$500 to assist them to gain the skills needed to participate more effectively in today's workforce.

Further to this announcement, the Minister convened a meeting of key stakeholders to explore the wider needs of older adults in relation to information and communication technologies and to canvass possible strategies for responding to these needs.

Among those participating were: Adult Learning Australia, Association of Independent Retirees; Australian Computer Association; Australian Libraries Association; Australian Local Government Association; Australian Seniors Computer Clubs Association; Clubs Australia; COTA; National Farmers' Federation; National Seniors Association; NSW ACE Council; NSW BACE; and the Smith Family.

Among the more significant points to emerge from the long but rewarding discussion were:

- ▶ the significance and value of intergenerational teaching

- ▶ the need to strongly pursue a range of initiatives to get more older adults more involved in learning generally
- ▶ the possibility of getting licensed clubs more involved (some already have established internet cafes for their members)
- ▶ the need to get better quality hardware into the hands of the older adult at a reasonable cost.

The meeting had a very pleasant and cooperative tone, largely set by the Minister who is very interested in the question of IT and the older Australian. ■

*Roger Morris*

### NEWS FROM QUEENSLAND

Last year the Queensland Branch, on advice from the ALA national executive, decided to become an unincorporated body. At the same time a new organisation, the Lifelong Learning Council Queensland (LLCQ) Inc, was formed.

ALA and LLCQ share many common members and objectives and continue to work in close cooperation on activities such as Adult Learners' Week. ALA has a national focus and is striving to put lifelong learning on the Federal Government's agenda. In addition to its advocacy work ALA serves a network of learning providers across the nation by providing information and

professional development opportunities.

LLCQ is now the peak body for lifelong learning in Queensland with a number of state-based projects under way. These include the development of a statewide network to support ACE practitioners and organisations in regional, rural and remote locations and the compilation of an on-line directory of Queensland ACE stakeholders. LLCQ is also holding a series of discussions with other organisations involved in ACE to inform its policy development and lobbying of Queensland government agencies.

LLCQ strongly supports ALA and urges its members to join or maintain ALA membership. LLCQ membership subscriptions are \$20 for individuals and \$22 for organisations. Enquiries about LLCQ can be directed to the LLCQ Secretary: Terry Clark on 07-3225 8898 or email [t.clark@LNQ.net.au](mailto:t.clark@LNQ.net.au). Terry Clark is also a member of ALA. Georgiana Poulter, another Queensland member, sits on ALA's national executive.

*For ALA membership enquiries, please contact Margaret Bates on 02 6251 7673 or [info@ala.asn.au](mailto:info@ala.asn.au).* ■

*Francesca Beddie and Terry Clark*

### NEWS FROM SOUTH AUSTRALIA

The South Australian executive has decided to recommend disincorporation of the South Australian Branch of ALA to its state members. A Special General Meeting is being organised for Monday 16 September at 6pm at the Workers Education Association, 223 Angas Street, Adelaide. Members will consider this recommendation and decide whether to continue being incorporated or to disincorporate. A postal vote will be available for those unable to attend the meeting. South Australian members are welcome to contact the state executive if they wish to have further information about this issue. ■

*Ann Lawless at [ann.lawless@adelaide.edu.au](mailto:ann.lawless@adelaide.edu.au)*

### FACTS AND FIGURES

#### ABS Study on Education and Training

According to a recent ABS survey on education, of the 13 million people aged between 15 and 64, one in five people not at school wanted to, but did not, undertake some study or more study in the 12 months prior to the survey.

*Further details are in *Education and Training Experience, Australia, 2001* (Cat. No. 6278.0). [www.abs.gov.au](http://www.abs.gov.au)* ■

### VET in rural areas

From 1995 to 2000, the number of VET students in rural and remote areas increased by 47 per cent, from 379,000 to 559,800. Most enrolments are in the non-award course category, followed by AQF Certificate Levels II and III, there being a lack of diploma courses and VET in schools in rural and remote areas.

In terms of qualifications completed, students from rural areas tended to perform slightly above the national average, while those from remote areas were below the national average.

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*Source: National Centre for Vocational Education and Research; [www.ncver.edu.au](http://www.ncver.edu.au).* ■

SPENDING TWO AND A HALF MONTHS IN AUSTRALIA RECENTLY WAS AN UNEXPECTED GIFT FOR LINDA ZIEGAHN. HER PARTNER TOOK A SABBATICAL AT THE AUSTRALIAN NATIONAL UNIVERSITY (ANU), SO SHE CONVERTED HER OFFICE AT ANTIOCH UNIVERSITY IN OHIO, USA TO A VIRTUAL ONE IN CANBERRA.

## A Not-Too-Modest Adult Learning Project: Australia



Work aside, my real interest was learning more about Australia. I can't say that this was a conscious decision; it was more an awareness that my daily interactions and observations were actual grist for learning, and that by active reflection, I could perhaps begin to better understand Australian culture. Mind you, I don't know that I really understand my own American culture, but given my general ignorance about what I've always thought of as The Land Down Under, I welcomed any new insights.

Where did I look for inspiration?

### THE INSTITUTIONAL LEVEL

Through Adult Education colleagues at the University of Technology Sydney, I made contact with ALA and had a series of conversations with adult educators. Each person suggested new places to explore and people to talk to. I had to give up on coming away with any deep

knowledge of adult education in Australia but did gain certain insights:

- ▶ Much is being done to better understand the cultural experiences of new migrant students now studying in Australia. I saw examples of innovative curricula for teacher training and staff development around intercultural communication, as well as some superb videos for trainers working internationally. It was interesting to see the incorporation of some of the same "culture general" principles that have guided intercultural communication training in the US. It was even more interesting to note the specific cultures relevant to international cross-cultural training in Australia, mostly notably, a variety of Asian cultures. While the US and Australia are very different on some levels, we share such common values of individualism, high priority given to timeliness, a flattened hierarchy, direct communication—values which often clash with the more collectivist, nuanced communication of many Asian countries. The questions these insights raised include: Are the more individualistic values representative mostly of Australians of European descent (as they are in the US)? What other cultural values are represented across Australia, and how do they affect communication?

► On any number of global fronts—trade, national security—American political decisions affect life in Australia. While I was aware of this, it was sobering to learn more specifically of the impact of US subsidies to American farmers and decisions to step up the “war on terrorism”. In both countries there are frustrations about the lack of the truly “public” dialogue about such global issues. I touched on these questions in a workshop on intercultural communication at the University of Canberra and was interested to learn about ALA’s Learning Circles around issues of democracy and reconciliation. Truly, we have a lot to learn from each other!

## MUSEUMS

Visits to the National Museum in Canberra and Australia Museum in Sydney taught me about Aboriginal traditional culture, relations between Aborigines and the dominant Australian culture, and about how powerful museums can be in leading people into discussion and reflection on difficult issues. (Of course, I learned a lot of other things at these museums, though realise my focus was on learning more about Aboriginal culture, as this seems to be what I’ve chosen to write about!). I was struck by the similarity between the history of oppression of Aborigines in Australia, and the oppressive treatment of Indigenous groups in the US. The question that arises is how we take the resulting “white guilt” and turn it into a positive force? Clearly public dialogue is critical; knowing how to “talk” about

culture respectfully, but forcefully, is an important first step. I have followed with interest the reconciliation movement in Australia, and find myself wondering whether the term “reconciliation” would ever be embraced in spirit or in practice to address the injustices in the US toward a number of groups.

## PUBLIC OBSERVANCES

As I’m writing this I realise that much of my learning has related to global issues. Would I be asking the same questions if I had spent several months in Australia before September 11, 2001? Before coming to Australia I was only vaguely aware of the significance of Gallipoli. Knowing it was an important marker in Australian military history, we attended the Anzac Day observances in Canberra. It was a beautiful autumn day, marked by reverence and remembrances. I learned about the long “digger” tradition and was reminded of Australia’s participation in so many of America’s wars; I was really surprised by the participation in the parade of so many former enemies (I don’t think I’ve ever seen this in the US—but then have I ever attended American Memorial Day parades?).

## TAKING A CLASS

A friend asked me to join her in her French conversation class, an informal group that met regularly at ANU. Given that my French is always in need of improvement, I readily agreed. But the conversations I initiated inevitably centered around trying to make sense of the day’s headlines (What’s the range of opinion on immigration in Australia? Who is Rose Porteous, and should I care?), and learning more about a group of Australian

citizens, half of whom were first generation, immigrating from Wales, Greece, Ireland, or France (our native informant).

### THE MEDIA

Newspapers and TV were great sources of learning, especially in getting to know about the sports culture in Australia. I was amazed at the level of support, and the endless (OK, that's an exaggeration) kinds of "footy" available, all of which seemed to converge in Australian Rules Football. I must see that game in real life someday. The World Cup coverage was blunt, colorful, and pleasantly partial! As an aside, I overheard a group of men in a cafe wearing the leather aprons of the fish shop, talking about the latest women's tennis match. Somehow, I can't visualize this conversation in the US.

But the movies were the best—particularly "The Rabbit Proof Fence", and "Beneath the Clouds", again teaching me about Aboriginal past and present. I was struck by the filmmakers' refusal to romanticise the stories in either of these films. Or leave the viewer with any feeling of resolution. How do you overcome the present pain of past injustice?

### FICTION

I read several short stories and three books during my stay—True History of the Kelly Gang by Peter Carey, Eucalyptus by Murray Bail, and Voss by Patrick White— all suggested to me by friends or bookshop clerks. I particularly loved the first—there is no such hero in the US as your Ned Kelly. The paintings in the National Art Museum by Sidney Nolan on the Kelly saga topped off the experience. The second novel was not only a lovely story, but provided a veritable short

course in Australian eucalypts, many of which I'd gotten to know strolling through the botanical gardens in Canberra. The third was frustrating but ultimately rewarding: the disparate cultures, separated by language, social class, and faith, that came together to tackle the wilderness, and the incredible obstacles they encountered.

### THE PUBS AND THE CLUBS

These were certainly lively, and reminded me of the more recent immigration of many Australians, and the extent of ties back to their native countries of Ireland, Greece, Poland etc.. I learned not to second guess who would have what kind of accent!

As I read over the above list, I see certain themes—politics and cultural inclusion—stand out which suggests that I'm somehow, for better or worse, attuned to learning in these areas. Connections were tempting. I often found myself saying, "Yes, this is just like in the US", but then forcing myself to question whether, in my quest for parallels, I was missing something unique. Similarly, when I saw the same trait in several people, it was tempting to jump to a conclusion. At what point is a characteristic "typical" of a group of people, in this case Australians? And how do we keep the natural need to figure out cultural trends so that we can better understand a new culture from degenerating into stereotyping? These are not questions answered in a short stay. I will have to return very soon! Any reflections on my cross-cultural learning odyssey would be most welcome (lziegahn@mcgregor.edu). ■

*Linda Ziegahn*



# ALA's Community Learning Leadership Program

## WHY HAVE A LEADERSHIP PROGRAM?

ALA's leadership program offers an opportunity for those who are playing a leading role in planning and facilitating learning and change in communities to strengthen their practice and find peer support on a national level. At the heart of the project is an attempt to develop a next generation of community learning leaders in Australia and to consolidate the connections among those people working in different areas of adult learning activity.

The impetus for the program was a recognition that there has not always been a strong sense of professional identity among those who work in the field of adult learning. Many people are responsible for planning and facilitating adult learning but their primary work identities lie in their particular fields of practice – to name just a few: agriculture, environmental advocacy, health promotion, youth work, and legal support. For example, practitioner may work with a community health centre and facilitate adult learning, but in most cases will identify as a health worker rather than as an adult educator. The ALA leadership program is not seeking to convert people to identify primarily as adult educators but rather to help them strengthen their common

efforts in planning and facilitating adult learning. By bringing leaders from diverse fields together it is anticipated this will add depth and breadth to a national and collective vision of learning.

ALA's 2001 policy statement on lifelong learning asserted that:

*'Learning' is at the centre of discourse in education and increasingly beyond what has been traditionally understood as education. It is now commonplace to hear and talk about, not education or training, but learning – lifelong learning, learning organisations, open and flexible learning, learning cities and communities, a learning society, a learning culture, the learning age.*

Community learning leaders will be at the forefront of efforts to advance this vision of lifelong learning.

## WHAT DEFINES COMMUNITY LEARNING LEADERSHIP VS OTHER TYPES OF LEADERSHIP?

Two important qualities of leadership are the ability to (a) influence and bring about change and (b) clearly know the purpose of the change being sought. A central question for a learning leader will always be: 'What do people want and need to learn to better facilitate change and how might that be best supported?'. There are leaders who introduce technological solutions, make

management interventions or policy decisions, or simply convey inspiring and persuasive messages. Learning leaders look behind all these interventions and contribute to sustainable change by creating opportunities for dialogue and learning alongside any actions.

## WHAT DOES THE LEADERSHIP PROGRAM OFFER?

In 2002 the ALA leadership program includes: a three-day residential workshop followed by two more workshops of two days each, over a period of six months. Participants receive support from peers and university consultants to plan both individual and collaborative leadership projects.

The course covers leadership principles and practices, as well as current issues facing adult learning and social change. But the most dynamic content is generated by the participants themselves. When one brings over twenty passionate and talented community learning leaders from different parts of Australia together it does not take long for a robust process of exchange and sharing to get underway. ■

*Rick Flowers, University of Technology, Sydney*

# The Best of British: ALW in the UK



Francesca Beddie outside the Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

London in spring was usually about the same temperature as Canberra in autumn. But one day the mercury climbed to 25 degrees and the sun shone. Somehow Londoners were able in an instant to replace their mackintoshes and sturdy shoes with summer dresses or bare chests and strappy shoes. In the Underground signs went up to warn people who were feeling the effects of the heatwave (sic) not to board the train until they recovered.

For Ned Dennis and myself, who travelled with Margo Couldrey and Liz Keyes from ANTA, there

was not much time for sunbathing. Instead, we battled London's clogged transport system to dash from one event to the other.

Our first official function was the launch of Adult Learners' Week at the vast Queen Elizabeth II Conference Centre, adjacent to Westminster. This was the first of several 'posh frock days', as Alan Tuckett, the head of the National Institute of Adult Continuing Education (NIACE), describes such formal occasions. This was an award ceremony which showcased learners' achievements, both to inspire other learners and to demonstrate the difference learning can make, thereby garnering support from government, industry and other celebrities.

NIACE has succeeded in persuading the broadcast media to become heavily involved in Adult Learners' Week. In return each television network had the opportunity at the launch to show how it had profiled or supported learning. I was

particularly struck by the presentation from the BBC, which is working to go beyond educational programming to providing interactive learning opportunities. It offers an internet-based program called Skillswise to enhance literacy and numeracy skills and has a great 10 hour on-line course called 'Becoming Web Wise'. And in Sheffield, the BBC office has been transformed into an open learning centre, where people can drop in and take a computing lesson on one of the terminals set up in the foyer. Take a look at

[www.bbc.co.uk/southyorkshire](http://www.bbc.co.uk/southyorkshire).

What a contrast the launch was to our next meeting, at the Ford factory at Dagenham. Dagenham must be one of the most depressed towns in southern Britain. Even the paint on the local Macdonalds has all but peeled away. The Ford Motor Company is the major employer in the area, though it has just shed a substantial number of jobs. This restructure had been anticipated and its impact

somewhat cushioned by the introduction of the Employee Development and Assistance Programme (EDAP) in 1987.

EDAP offers employees an allocation of up to £200 (non-taxable) a year (the company contributes £80 for each employee) to pursue non-job related learning (in their own time). At Dagenham the most popular courses are number one a gym pass, number two chiropody (remember these workers spend long shifts on their feet) and number three golf. But there is plenty of other activity taking place on site. In addition to classrooms for music and languages, and of course the gym, there's also a learning centre, complete with cyber café, a family learning space and workshop for the bricklaying class.

The take-up rate is high, with over 70 percent of employees having participated at some stage and many proceeding from recreational type courses to more formal education. But this doesn't happen by itself. EDAP has dedicated local committees made up of management, the trade unions and local education advisers who drive the programme. The advisers, from the local college, offer guidance on courses, as well as arranging for tutors and so on. At one plant, they managed to get a huge crowd to a Saturday

workshop on feeding goldfish (or carp as our hosts put it!).

From the factory floor back to the House of Commons, to a tea party to celebrate Adult Learners' Week. In Britain, the Secretary of State for Education and Skills is assisted by several junior ministers, one the Minister of State for Lifelong Learning and Higher Education, another the Parliamentary Undersecretary of State for Adult Learning. The Minister of State was at the reception, as were her opposition colleagues, all of whom are enthusiastic about engendering a culture of learning.

The current focus in Britain is on improving basic skills, a response to the fact that up to 3.5 million workers employed in the UK do not have the ability to read, write and speak English well enough to function and progress at work. But the Government's initiatives take a broad approach to skills development and recognise the need to foster a love of learning if they are to succeed in broadening access to learning.

In addition to a policy commitment, the Government has made very significant budget allocations to adult learning. For example, in 2001 it established the Learning and Skills Council (LSC), which is responsible for funding and planning education and training for over 16-year-olds in England.



*Ned Dennis(R) and Margo Couldrey(L) learn at work with a British colleague.*

The LSC had a budget of £7.3 billion and operates through 47 local offices. Its vision is that by 2010 young people and adults in England will have the knowledge and productive skills matching the best in the world. The LSC's work covers adult and community learning as well as work-based training and workforce development. It is early days for the Council and it will be worth watching how it develops. Go to [www.lsc.gov.uk](http://www.lsc.gov.uk).

Much of the second part of our week was organised by the Campaign for Learning (COL), a British NGO which is working 'to create an appetite for learning in individuals of all ages that will sustain them for a lifetime'. The Campaign's contribution to Adult Learners' Week was a Learning at Work Day on 16 May. Over 4,000 organisations across Britain took part in the day with 750,000 individuals learning something new for themselves and the company. (In a previous year, Alan Tuckett swapped his NIACE job with a bouncer at a nightclub, one of the few things I shan't try to emulate!).

[www.campaign-for-learning.org.uk](http://www.campaign-for-learning.org.uk)

To start our Learning at Work day, we attended a breakfast launch of some COL research on coaching. I was impressed by the speech from a senior Lloyds TSB manager, Roger Nicholls. He asked why we expect nothing less than the best in coaching for our elite sportsmen and increasingly for our CEOs but not for the rest of us. That, he said, was changing at Lloyds where learning had become an entitlement for every employee. Training at Lloyds is now delivered through the company's corporate university and integrated into strategic management.

We then headed out to Heathrow where British Airways, another company to have its own university, were hosts for a session in the mind gym. Here, problem solving was taken out of the box, with the brain exposed to all sorts of sensory stimuli.

In a subsequent seminar with corporate, government and NGO participants the dominant theme was again the need to tailor training to learners' needs and to transform organisations into ones in which learning is central rather than the poor HRD cousin.

Not all our time was focussed on the workplace. Ned and I had two sessions at the Victoria and Albert Museum [www.vam.ac.uk](http://www.vam.ac.uk).

The V&A has a number of outreach programs. This was evident in its ALW award ceremony which celebrated artworks inspired by exhibits from the museum created in various community colleges. It was pleasing to hear that the educators in the museum have managed to build strong collaborations with curators as well as with business and the community. Several projects have concentrated on attracting young people to the museum. Against objections that a youth evening would bring drugs and vandalism, the museum persevered and the V&A is now a popular pre-clubbing venue on the last Friday of the month.

The last visit of our trip was to Bluewater in Kent. There's something extra-terrestrial about this site, which includes the second largest carpark in Britain. It has risen out of an abandoned chalk mine, the man-made cliffs the backdrop to a vast shopping centre. What has been achieved in this exercise is a private-public effort to bring learning first to a building site and now to the retail industry. The results have been remarkable for the local employment scene as well as for the community college which now boasts cutting edge building courses as well as a dynamic learning shopfront in the centre. See [www.learning-shop.co.uk](http://www.learning-shop.co.uk) for more.

Some of the lessons I drew from the visit were:

- ▶ we must be vigorous in our campaigning for greater political and business commitment to lifelong learning. As part of this exercise we need to muster the evidence to back our arguments about the importance of learning for the wellbeing of society
- ▶ we need to find the stories which will attract the media to our cause—so please, please tell us your success stories, especially those which strengthen the case for flexible, learner-centred learning that will attract the disillusioned and marginalised
- ▶ we must reward best practice through awards and publicity, so nominate your peers for awards and find your champions for learning. ■

*Francesca Beddie*

THE MAORI EXPRESSION “KOIA KOIA” MEANS LITERALLY “IT IS SO. IT IS SO”. IT IS USED AS AN EXCLAMATION MEANING “STOP AND PAY ATTENTION!”.

## “Koia Koia”



*Alan White, NZ; Robbie Guevara, Philippines; and Allan Arnott, ALA Executive at the NZ Conference.*

### ACEA CONFERENCE AUCKLAND NEW ZEALAND MAY 2002

**K**oia Koia was also the title of the report of the Adult and Community Education (ACE) Working Party on the role of ACE in New Zealand and formed the basis of discussions at the Adult and Community Education Aotearoa Conference in Auckland in May.

The Conference was an opportunity for those involved in the ACE sector to look at future directions and re-launch ACEA Adult and Community Education Aotearoa. Their aim was to create a “revitalised and collaborative ACE sector”.

The conference opened with the traditional Maori “powhiri” where all were warmly welcomed with words and songs from the people of Waitekere and representatives of the NZ Government. It was a moving ceremony.

Then it was time to register for some of the very interesting workshops covering a wide variety of topics ranging from “Adult Learning Principles in a Samoan Setting”, “Research Needs, Priorities and Possibilities for ACE” to “Adult Literacy – Stopping and Starting Learning” and many others. For those who wished for something a little different there was the “Hip Hop Workshop” or the visit to the Earthsong Eco Neighbourhood Project.

The major focus of the conference were consultations with stakeholders on the future of the ACE sector in New Zealand. Those stakeholders included ACE providers both from the city and rural areas, learners, academics, schools representatives and the Government both from the bureaucracy and from the political side.

In all my discussions during the conference the message was clear: recognition and support for the ACE sector was paramount for the future of lifelong learning in New Zealand. Fortunately, that support was forthcoming in addresses given by the Associate Minister for Education, Marion Hobbs, Judi Altinkaya, the newly appointed Chief Adviser in Adult and Community Education at the Ministry of Education and Andrew West, Commissioner with the newly created Tertiary Education

Commission where all tertiary learning, including University, Polytechnic and ACE, will be overseen in line with the Tertiary Education Strategy. In addition an ACE Board reporting to the Tertiary Education Commission is being established. There will also be funding for ACE but those seeking funds will have to develop a charter outlining their strategic direction. The charter will also have to be aligned to the Government's Tertiary Education Strategy.

Together with the Government's commitment a number of positive decisions by the conference delegates will lay the foundations for the way forward. Most important was the establishment of a membership based association to be called Adult and Community Education Aoterea New Zealand to represent the interests of

those involved in the ACE sector and the identification of the first regional ACE network

The conference ended with a ceremony where Alan Arnott and I had the opportunity to say a few words of support and appreciation to the conference organisers and the people of New Zealand for their hospitality.

As a result of informal discussions I had at the conference Judi Altinkaya and Joan Ashworth (member of the ALW National Co-ordinating Committee) have visited the ALA National Office and we look forward to further cooperation with our New Zealand colleagues. ■

*Phil Robson, Business Manager,  
ALA National Office*

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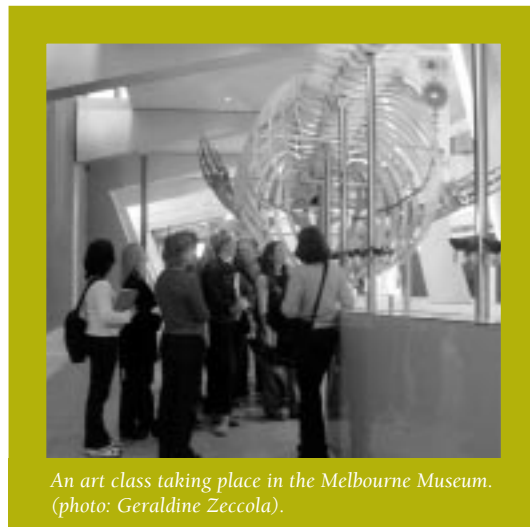
# Uncovering Adult Learning in Museums

Anyone who has spent any time in a museum will know of its huge potential as both a site for learning and as a catalyst for offsite learning. However, in my work as the National Coordinator of Adult Learners' Week, I still encounter people who feel that museums don't fall within the definition of 'adult learning'. We need to change this attitude.

According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics, some 27.5 million visits were made to Australian museums, galleries and historic properties in the year to June 2000. (This includes repeat visits and overseas visitors.) But how many of these adult visitors go to the museum to learn?

Lynda Kelly, from the Australian Museum and joint host with the University of Sydney of the Uncover conference, presented evidence suggesting that the two overriding expectations of adult museum visitors, each as important as the other, are to learn and to enjoy themselves. Lynda's research suggests that around 71% of visitors to museums rate the expectation that they will 'learn' high or very high.

It follows then that at least 1.7 million Australian adults aged 25 and above are turning up to museums and galleries each year hoping to receive some form of educational experience. To put these figures in perspective, about 1.3 million adults each year attend a community-



*An art class taking place in the Melbourne Museum.  
(photo: Geraldine Zeccola).*

based adult education course and around 1.3 million people attend a TAFE vocational education course each year. (Sources: NCVET, The Scope of ACE, 2000 and NCVET Statistics 2000 at a Glance). To suggest, then, that museums are not major players in Australia's learning community, equal at least to the TAFE or ACE sector, is to misunderstand the learning activities of the Australian public

So, are adult visitors to museums getting quality learning experiences? This is a difficult thing to evaluate. Unlike many other forms of learning, the learning that takes place in a museum setting can be self-directed in quite a radical way. The visitor can decide what they want to look at, in what order and for how long. They can independently develop their own understanding of what they see. Certainly,

text panels, gallery design and exhibit selection, do play an enormous role in shaping – and limiting – the learning experience. And many museums provide more structured learning experiences through public program activities such as lectures and guided tours. Yet, still the

*I still encounter people who feel that museums don't fall within the definition of 'adult learning'. We need to change this attitude.*

visitor can miss all the didactic moments that have been so carefully crafted for them.

The statistics about how much (or little) time people actually spend in front of exhibits is sobering as are investigations into what people remember from their visit. Adrienne Kabos, a Masters of Design student at the University of Technology, reported that the average museum visitor will spend only between 10 to 25 seconds at each exhibit they stop at – not enough time, for example, to fully read and absorb a lengthy text panel. Adrienne also reported that the things people remember from exhibitions are not always the things that curators and designers hope they will remember. A striking visual image tucked in an out-of-the-way part of an exhibition can sometimes have a more lasting impact than objects placed in the key locations.

Jan Packer, who is studying for a PhD in Education at the Queensland University of Technology, reported on her research into visitors' perceptions of the educational experiences in a range of leisure venues. In her study, visitors to the aquarium were most convinced that they had learnt something, while visitors to the gallery were the least satisfied. I imagine

that the mono-cultural way in which most exhibits are presented in art museums (and other museums too) is the cause of a lot of the negativity people may feel towards the museum learning experience. If they find the 'wrong' things interesting, – or just don't 'get' the way the objects have been interpreted - they are made to feel inferior, and when you are feeling bad you are less inclined to explore, absorb and interact.

Regular museum goers (and this includes museums workers) can easily forget how strange the museum space feels for people who do not regularly visit. Maree Stenglin, a PhD student in Semiotics, Museology and Linguistics at the University of Sydney, presented a fascinating paper examining the concept of 'comfort' in the museum setting. Working from the premise that people learn more effectively when they feel 'comfortable', she looked at how a closed or open (bound or unbound) space can, if too extreme, be unsettling for many people. The huge lofty entrance spaces of major museums can be especially discomfiting for many people, especially people more accustomed to domestically-scaled spaces. If people don't feel comfortable at the entrance, there is every chance that they will feel uncomfortable during their entire, possibly shortened, visit.

Maree also talked about how the particular way of binding a space signals to the visitor certain expectations and certain ways of behaviour within that space. A small dark space suggests that people must be quiet and passive, while open spaces imply the possibility of noisy, hands-on activities. If the exhibition designer mixes up these two signifiers – as



they often do for the sake of theatre - the way that the visitor experiences a space, how they interact with the objects and their peers may not be the most constructive way of using the visit as a learning experience.

In an era of an increasing reliance on corporate sponsorship, museums have become obsessed by the volume of visitors through their doors. However, to ensure that these visitors return, museums have to start thinking in terms of quality, not just quantity. The research discussed at Uncover reveals that the Australian public expect quality learning experiences from their museums. But until museums understand more about adult learning and move away from the notion of purely didactic and controlled learning, these expectations will not be met

A shift in how museums conceive themselves, from viewing the museum as the producer of knowledge to the museum as a catalyst for thinking, would help serve the learning needs of the Australian public better. The papers and discussions of Uncover suggest that this is starting to happen.

John Cross would like to thank Lynda Kelly, Head, Australian Museum Audience Development Research Centre, for help in preparing this article. The papers from the conference will be published shortly and can be ordered by visiting:  
<http://www.amonline.net.au/uncover/proceedings.htm>.

Feedback about this article or any other issues relating to Learning in Museums can be made at LIMN Adult Learning Australia's online forum:  
<http://www.ala.asn.au/limn>. During Adult

Learners' Week 2002 Adult Learning Australia is co-hosting with the National Portrait Gallery "Going Beyond the Tour", an activity designed to introduce national museums institutions to the learning circle methodology. ■

*John Cross*



**PATHWAYS**  
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Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions,  
**Mr Simon Darcy**, Senior Lecturer, University of  
Technology and **Mr William Jolley**, Secretary General,  
DAISY Consortium. All four speakers bring to the  
Conference a wealth of knowledge and experience.

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The conference is proudly supported by the  
Tertiary Education Disability Council of Australia (TEDCA) and  
Australian National Training Authority (ANTA)

## Making Connections – ACE's place in the Community

**O**n 14 and 15 June Perth hosted an Adult and Community Education (ACE) Conference which brought people together from all over Australia and contributed to raising the profile of ACE in lifelong learning, while also identifying professional development as a priority for the sector.

ALA (WA) President, Ellen-May Eaton enthusiastically MC'd the first day's proceedings which began with Ben Taylor, a local Noongar elder, welcoming all to this part of the country. The Hon John Kobelke, Minister for Training delivered the opening address.

This led on to an inspiring and lively speech by Nick Francis, Executive Director of the Brotherhood of St Laurence. Nick's underlying message was the need to get a whole of government approach to an area which does in fact cover all areas of government, even if it is still so hard to get two people within the same department together!

Concurrent workshops covered a really broad range of topics,

and there was much animated discussion at the morning tea breaks and lunches (delicious food too!). We reconvened for a "Hot Topics" Panel presentation. ALA President, Ned Dennis, talked about current national issues, and took the opportunity to announce the fact that ACE providers from the wheatbelt town of Koorda had jointly won the ALA Program of the Year Award. Deborah Kirwan, Council on the Ageing President spoke in her humorous, yet pithy way, about seniors' place in ACE. Peter Kenyon, local university researcher, spoke on the economic impact of ACE and in particular the need for clarity of definition and more recording of data. Cath O'Leary from the Fitzroy Crossing, spoke on issues surrounding remote adult education, in particular the difficulty of meeting accountability requirements.

Remember how each day of the Sydney Olympics rounded off with Roy and HG? Well, this Conference had its own home-spun version – "The Source" with Soy and HP – a humorous reflection of the day's business!

Day 2: This time Trish Kennedy,



*Ned Dennis, President ALA.*

Learning Centre Link's President was our capable MC – she introduced us to Phil Candy, a research fellow with DEST, who gave us a whistle-stop presentation about building online communities. We then split into a number of concurrent workshops, and, after lunch Annie MacBeth offered us her vision of the future trends likely to impact on adult learning.

Time for the final Soy and HP, who voted "the dunny" as the official emblem of the Conference in deference to the Conference Committee chairperson, Cath Dunn, from the WA Department of Training! ■

*Wendy Shearwood, Ellen-May Eaton, Neil Carver-Smith*

THE AUSTRALIAN LEARNING COMMUNITIES NETWORK MET IN JUNE IN WODONGA. MEMBERS OF THE NETWORK CAME FROM FAR AND WIDE. RACHEL FRY AND LEONE WHEELER REPORT.

## Community Development as Lifelong Learning

The meeting started off with a very enjoyable meal courtesy of the Wodonga Institute of TAFE members. This was an excellent opportunity to catch up and share the experiences, challenges and successes we all face on a daily basis. Most importantly however, this was our first opportunity to meet our international guest speaker, Dr Ron Faris, a leading Canadian expert on learning communities in British Columbia.

Dr Faris's visit to Australia was sponsored by RMIT Learning Networks, RMIT Foundation International Fellowships and TAFE frontiers. From 19 June in Canberra, where he met the Federal Minister for Education, Science and Training, Dr Nelson, Dr Faris commenced a heavily packed schedule of meetings and presentations including visit to some of the regional Learning Towns in Victoria. His trip ended with a keynote address at the Community Networking Conference at Monash in Melbourne.

Dr Faris has spent many years working, researching and publishing on lifelong learning strategies, global training reform and interactive learning technologies. He has extensive experience in working with disadvantaged and aboriginal communities in Canada. For the past three years he has been helping a number of smaller communities to develop three-year pilot projects funded under the Canadian Office of Learning Technologies' Community Learning Network initiative.

The morning of Friday 22 June was down to business. Dr Faris facilitated a workshop offering us the benefit of his expertise in local economic development and learning communities, much of which is based on the models of the OECD/UK learning community and the US community service-learning initiatives.

For Dr Faris, the organising principle for community development is lifelong learning. His conceptual framework is

based on over 30 years of research from which he has concluded that when governments and universities are engaging with community they must take a multi-disciplinary approach which involves representatives and expertise from the following disciplines and ministries:

- ▶ Human Development
- ▶ Social Development
- ▶ Environmental Stewardship, and
- ▶ Economic Development

Moreover, engagement with the community must revolve around developmental purposes which have been identified by that community.

Dr Faris has identified the following as the most common community purposes:

- ▶ Citizenship education
- ▶ Health promotion
- ▶ Economic development
- ▶ Environmental sustainability
- ▶ Rural/urban development, and
- ▶ Social development

# LEARNING COMMUNITIES

This is a preventative model, based on lifelong learning. It must be seen as a long-term investment strategy and as such one which very often does not demonstrate its benefits for 10 or 20 years.

Learning technologies are used for networking within and among communities and should not be an imposed solution but must be chosen to suit the purposes of the development purposes identified by the community. This may or may not be accredited training using an online learning platform.

Faris also refers to the importance of communities and academics engaging in participatory action research. From the research he has seen in the UK, he concludes that there are three crucial strands of development for successful learning communities. These are learning how to

- ▶ Build partnerships of all five community sectors
- ▶ Foster participation of all community members, and
- ▶ Assess performance and progress

These three strands can be used as guiding principles for an ongoing evaluation process, both by the partnership practitioners and independent external evaluators to learning community projects.

Faris identifies that it is important to form partnerships with at least two of the following five community sectors, although the more sectors involved in learning-based community development the more likely a sustainable model will be developed:

- ▶ Civic
- ▶ Public (health, social services, libraries, museums etc)
- ▶ Economic (private or cooperative)
- ▶ Education (from kindergarten to universities)
- ▶ Voluntary/community

As an evaluation framework the Faris model provides guidance for assessment of specific projects or for a whole learning community approach. It uses both quantitative and qualitative data and analysis. It also enables specific evaluation of the learning objectives and learning targets established for a specific project or whole initiative.

Faris was able to provide us with the inspiration to carry on with our work in the development of the Learning Communities movement regardless of the sometimes overwhelming nature of the challenge we face. Some of the other useful thoughts left with us by the end of the meeting were:

- ▶ Let the experts take responsibility for measuring in their field
- ▶ Keep track of the hours spent by our volunteers

- ▶ If we are moving towards being an innovative society then we need to take some risks
- ▶ We are facilitators of collaborative thought and action

The meeting finished with an overview from Shanti Wong of her study tour through Europe (see Winter Newsletter), and a briefing of the deputation to Federal Education Minister, Brendan Nelson, who was interested in exploring further how the Government might support learning communities. Overall a very successful meeting of the Australian Learning Towns Network – perhaps one more step towards the acceptance of a Learning Society.

## AUSTRALIAN LEARNING TOWNS NETWORK

At the upcoming Australian Learning Communities Conference (27–29 September 2002) there will be a session on adopting a framework for the Australian Learning Towns Network at 5.15 pm on Saturday 28 September. Any queries about the Network can be forwarded to Jim Saleeba Ph: 02 6055 9218 Email: jim\_saleeba@cow.mav.asn.au ■

*Report compiled by Rachel Fry, Executive Officer, Ballarat: A Learning City and*

*Leone Wheeler, Manager, RMIT Learning Networks, Community & Regional Partnerships, RMIT University*

**VANUATU EMBRACES LEARNING CIRCLES**

Twenty two Ni-Vanuatu civil society representatives met on Wednesday 10 July in Port Vila to examine the final version of the Learning Circles Kit on Education for Citizen Participation in Good Governance produced by the Asia South Pacific Bureau of Adult Education (ASPBAE). The kit is available in both English and Bislama.

The seminar was facilitated by John Liu, Carol Aru Curriculum Coordinator, and Bernie Lovegrove, ASPBAE Program Officer. After a summary of the history of the project, participants broke into small groups to discuss the first module and to complete an evaluation.

The small groups were so involved in discussion they did not want to stop. All agreed that the material and the learning circle methodology was worth promoting in their communities.

Funding support for the Kit has come from the Centre for Democratic Institutions, (CDI); Commonwealth Foundation Citizenship and Governance Project; and Oxfam New Zealand. Discussions are underway to adapt the materials for use in other Melanesian countries such as Solomon Islands and Papua New Guinea. ■

*Bernie Lovegrove,  
ASPBAE Program Officer*

**FROM STUDY TO ACTION**

A group of women in Mudgee haven't looked back since establishing a learning circle twelve months ago when they agreed to be a trial group for the Bodies Matter program – The Pap Test Kit. They have continued to meet and to explore new topics, including euthanasia, gambling, reconciliation and discovering democracy. As well as learning, they are now taking action to address issues of concern to them. They've been in

discussions with the local council about things as diverse as turning felled trees into sculptures and the introduction of 'bug cards' as an incentive for the council to improve its responsiveness to fixing faults reported by rate payers.

If you would like to know what learning circle material is available go to

[www.learningcircles.org.au](http://www.learningcircles.org.au)  
or call 02 6251 9889.

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**Applications close 30 November 2002.**

For further information contact:  
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**Email:** fehps@metz.une.edu.au  
**http://fehps.une.edu.au**



## HANDS ON FOR NESB WOMEN

In 2001 the Local Community Services Association (LCSA), the peak body for Neighbourhood and Community Centres in NSW, ran a *Hands On* pilot to increase the access to information technology (IT) for older women from non-English speaking backgrounds (NESB) in Western Sydney.

*Hands On* was based on a community development model which took a participatory and flexible approach to learning. It used existing networks but these were extended by the participants and participating organisations.

Over 120 NESB women now have computer skills as well as new support networks and knowledge about accessing other services in their communities. Some of the women will be facilitating further learning in their communities and even getting paid work. The women have also helped participating organisations better understand the needs of older, NESB women. ■

*Donna Rooney, LCSA, email [info@lcsa.org.au](mailto:info@lcsa.org.au)*

Campus. These have been very well attended.

The forums have two parts. The first focuses on providing clear, accurate information about the legal and social circumstances of the asylum seekers. These sessions are given by academics, lawyers and social service people who are involved with asylum seekers, including those at the Woomera Detention Centre, or with people who are now attempting to make the transition into community life in South Australia.

The second half of the forum provides a space for the refugees themselves to speak about their circumstances in their home countries, in detention or while on temporary visas. These sessions are full of the rawness of immediate experience. People in the audience are sometimes horrified by these stories but are also edified by these people's bravery and optimism.

This is Adult Education at a grass roots level providing much of what people lack in the TV coverage. In classic Adult Educational style, it 'shows' rather than 'tells', the strange and shameful story of fearful Australia and its desperate asylum seekers. ■

*Kevin Liston, email [Kevin.Liston@australianrefugees.org.au](mailto:Kevin.Liston@australianrefugees.org.au)*

## REVISION AND CULTURAL DAY

What do kicking and twirling Capoeira dancers, Japanese rice balls and "Waltzing Matilda" played on Indonesian bamboo have in common? They're all part of the unique experience of learning languages at the University of Adelaide.

The university's Centre for Professional and Continuing Education (PCE) holds an annual Revision and Cultural Day for language students, teachers, friends and family, giving them a chance to see, hear, smell, touch and taste the many cultural aspects of languages and their countries of origin.

This year's event drew a crowd of 300 people, many of them donning national dress, cooking, singing and taking part in other celebrations of the cultures they're studying. All languages currently taught by PCE were represented — Mandarin (Chinese), French, German, Indonesian, Italian, Japanese, Greek, Portuguese, Russian, Spanish, Thai, Vietnamese, Arabic and Hindi.

The Centre offers full-year and short courses open to everyone, from beginners to advanced learners. For more information phone (08) 8303 4777 or visit the website:

[www.adelaide.edu.au/pce](http://www.adelaide.edu.au/pce)

THIS TEXT CONTINUES

# WELCOME, NEW MEMBERS

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Debbie Best NSW  
Sarah Dye WA  
Beth Hansen NT  
Monica Lamelas NSW  
John Martin VIC  
Joanne Stringer VIC

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# JOIN ALA TODAY

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## ORGANISATIONAL MEMBERSHIP FEES

Annual Turnover	Annual Fee (includes GST)
Below \$70 000	\$77
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## CALENDAR

### 2 – 8 September 2002 Adult Learners' Week

Adult Learners' Week is an Australia-wide celebration of all forms of adult learning (formal, informal, vocational and recreational).

Visit

<http://www.adultlearnersweek.org/list.html>  
to see what is happening around  
Australia call 1300 303 212.

### 6 – 8 September 2002 Further Education Expo

Free seminars will be offered by exhibitors covering topics such as online distance learning, choosing an MBA program, and financing your further/higher education.

Contact Denise Cooney  
p 03 9813 8200  
f 03 9813 8211  
web <http://www.exhibitionsplus.com.au>

### 25 – 27 September 2002 Tasmanian Association of Community Houses Annual Conference

Staff, committee and volunteers from community and neighbourhood houses will gather for a wonderful learning and networking opportunity.

Contact Glynis Flower p 03 6244 1615

### 23 – 24 September 2002 Healthy, Wealthy and Wise: Pack Your Swags

The Queensland Independent Education Union Conference to be held in Longreach, Queensland. Education employees, academics, parents and tertiary students are invited to pack their swags and head to QIEU's conference. Workshops will challenge educators and parents to acknowledge and respond to a range of education issues including the future for rural and remote education, the learning needs of indigenous students and the ways communities can work together.

Contact Frances Frangenheim  
Communications Officer  
p 07 3839 7020  
f 07 3839 7021  
e [francesf@qieu.asn.au](mailto:francesf@qieu.asn.au)

### 27 – 29 September 2002 Lifetime of Discovery: National Learning Cities Conference 2002

The 2002 Learning Cities Conference will be held in Ballarat, Victoria and hosted by Ballarat: A Learning City.

The theme for the conference is Lifetime of Discovery: Investigate! Participate! Celebrate!

Contact Rachel Castles  
p 03 5333 3700  
f 03 5332 8087  
web  
<http://www.ballaratlearningcity.com.au>

### 27 – 30 October 2002 Maturity Matters: 6th Global Conference on Ageing

This conference will be held at the Burswood International Convention Centre in Perth.

Contact Congress West Pty Ltd  
p 08 9322 6662  
e [IFA@congresswest.com.au](mailto:IFA@congresswest.com.au)

### 1 – 2 November 2002 Bridging the Divides: Exclusion/Inclusion

The Australian Council for Adult Literacy – 25th National Conference to be held at the Manly Pacific Park Royal Sydney. Media commentary and community debate is highlighting social divides which have the potential to establish a wedge of discontent amongst Australians. The ACAL Conference aims to provide an opportunity to articulate these divides, examine the issues, and illustrate ways of bridging these perceived divides to bring about social inclusion.

For further information contact Nick Brooke Conference Coordinator  
p 02 9411 4666  
f 02 9411 4243  
e [nick@hotelnetwork.com.au](mailto:nick@hotelnetwork.com.au)

### 28 – 29 November 2002 A Fair and Inclusive Australia

The 2002 Annual ACOSS Congress will be held at the Grand Chancellor Hotel, Hobart.

For more information see  
[www.hotelnetwork.com.au](http://www.hotelnetwork.com.au)

### 1 – 4 December 2002 Inclusive Education Through Universal Access – the Pathways 6 Conference

To be held at the Sydney Convention and Exhibition Centre, Darling Harbour.

Contact International Conferences and Events Australia  
p 02 9544 9134  
f 02 9522 4447  
e [pathways@iceaustralia.com](mailto:pathways@iceaustralia.com)

### 1 – 5 December 2002 International Education Research Conference

Problematic Futures: Educational Research in an Era of...Uncertainty

The Australian Association for Research in Education (AARE) Annual Conference will be held at the University of Queensland in Brisbane. The conference theme of uncertainty and problematic futures is meant to provoke thought and invite response.

Contact the AARE Office and Conference Secretariat  
p 03 5964 9296  
f 03 5964 9586  
e [aare@aare.edu.au](mailto:aare@aare.edu.au)

### 11 – 13 December 2002 Education and Social Action 2002

This international conference to be held at the Centre for Popular Education, University of Technology in Sydney will include the following themes: Community Capacity Building and Cultural Development; Facilitating Change for Healthy Environments; School – Community Relationship Building; Celebrations for Change and Development; Health Education and Community Development; Popular Education and Advocacy: Refugees and Asylum Seekers.

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