

# Quest

*Issue 2 Spring 2003*



Adult Learning  
Australia Inc.



## *Learn @ Work*

- *Learning Communities Catalyst*
- *Training Fire Fighters*



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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ALA also publishes the Australian Journal of Adult Learning, in April, July and November. ALA members receive this publication as part of their membership. Non-members may subscribe for \$70. Single issues are \$25 plus postage.



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# Editorial

This edition of *Quest* is being put to bed during Adult Learners' Week (ALW). I hope you will all have had a great week and that we'll have managed to improve people's understanding of the serious literacy problems adult Australians are facing. The courage of people coping with such problems was very poignantly expressed in the entries for this year's Adult Learners' Week short story competition, co-sponsored by Adult Learning Australia and the Australian Society of Authors.

To further discussion on literacy, we plan to bring out an ALW 2003 publication which will feature some of the short stories and reports from the Great Literacy Debate. This will be a tool for further advocacy on the issue: literacy will be on Adult Learning Australia's agenda well beyond Adult Learners' Week 2003. In terms of the UN Literacy Decade it is 2005 which will focus on adult literacy, giving us time to mount the case for greater international attention on adult learning needs.

The issue of the disengaged learner also remains high on our agenda. While Learn @ Work Day has been successful in drawing to Adult Learning Australia an impressive set of partners who share our conviction about the importance of learning, we still have a long way to go before we reach those who are not exposed to learning at work. With an increasingly casualised and part-time workforce, we need some very imaginative thinking about how to deliver training to these workers. I hope that the forthcoming ALA conference will provide one venue for that thinking to occur. Don't forget to register!

The conference will be accompanied by a particularly important Annual General Meeting at which the results of the election to the new nine-member board will be announced and by the inaugural meeting of the ALA Council. The current executive is drafting regulations to support the new constitution. In so doing, it is conscious of the need to build in flexibility to deal with matters that arise during the transition to a new *modus operandi*, one which I am sure will serve the Association well.

Accompanying this magazine is a pamphlet summarising one of our first pieces of work conducted under the ANTA research grant introduced in 2002/3. The grant enabled us to purchase some questions from ACNielsen about where Australians prefer to learn. We hope you will find the research useful in informing you about potential client groups and in prompting some thinking about how or where to best catch their attention.

In addition, you will soon receive notice of an *Increasing Participation Toolkit* John Cross has developed out of the ALW 2002's focus on the learning needs of older men. The toolkit is designed to stimulate informed planning conversations about marketing and developing programs that engage new audiences.

I would like to end this editorial on the same theme as I started: literacy. In these times of international instability, it is easy to forget that there are an estimated 880 million adult who cannot read or write, two thirds of whom are women. As terror and war disrupt societies, the number of children not attending primary school will also rise. At the moment it is around 113 million. These are unacceptable figures because without literacy people will resort to guns, not words, making the prospects for peace even more remote.

**Francesca Beddie**

ALA EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

## NSW Department of Education and Training

### Lifelong Learning—Proposal to Reshape Public Education in NSW

The Department has developed a proposal to reshape public education in NSW to create a “whole-of-life” education provider that is more responsive to community needs. The first stage of consultation of the proposal closed on Friday 8 August. The Department is now thoroughly considering all feedback of a more detailed proposal—a process expected to take round three weeks. That detailed proposal will then be released for widespread consultation over a six-week period.

For more information visit [www.det.nsw.edu.au](http://www.det.nsw.edu.au) and for ALA's response to the paper see [www.ala.asn.au](http://www.ala.asn.au).

## Training and Skills Commission in SA

The Hon. Jane Lomax-Smith, Minister for Employment, Training and Further Education, announced in July the establishment of a Training and Skills Commission to replace the Vocational Education, Employment and Training Board. The Board will advise the Minister on priorities and funding for vocational education and training, as well as ACE. A new ACE Council has yet to be announced.

Meanwhile the Centre for Lifelong Education, affiliated with Flinders University, ceased to function on 30 June, 2003. The Centre was established in 1999 with Denis Ralph as director. Darryl Dymock, formerly of the University of New England, was assistant director.

Colin Lawton  
U3A Adelaide

## Forthcoming OECD conference

Why should countries care about underemployed groups such as the unskilled, lone parents, women, immigrants and older workers? A harsh question, perhaps, but it is one of the key issues which will be examined by OECD Employment and Labour Ministers at their meeting of 29–30 September, under the title “Towards more and better jobs”. Check out <http://www.oecdobserver.org> for further reports.

## Addressing violence in Aboriginal Communities

In light of the current attention being paid to this serious problem, readers may be interested in the following:

### *Community-based strategies for combating violence*

Memmot, P. University of New South Wales Law Journal, vol.8 no.1 Jul 2002

The author argues that community violence programs for the resolution and prevention of Indigenous family violence, should also aim to treat the stress and harm that the violence causes. Memmot suggests that local government, in partnership with Indigenous communities, should be supportive of these community-driven programs.

## Older workers

As in Australia so in the European Union, retaining the over-55s—or even, in some countries, the over-45s—on the labour market is seen as increasingly crucial for the sustainability of the social security system and, to some extent, to compensate for tight labour markets. *A lifelong strategy for active ageing* edited by Maria Jepson, David Foden, Martin Hutsebaut and published by the European Trade Institute, discusses a comprehensive set of measures: the incentives/disincentives debate, employment and training policies in favour of older workers, the issues of work organisation and reorganisation of working time, the availability of social infrastructures and, last but not least, the question of how to change the attitudes of employers, workers and trade unions with a view to keeping older workers in employment.

Website: [www.etuc.org/etui](http://www.etuc.org/etui)

## Griffith Review

For those interested in better informed debate on topical issues, take a look at a new quarterly publication, *Griffith Review*, which aims to build a bridge between journalism, academic and literary writing in Australia.

[www.gu.edu/griffithreview](http://www.gu.edu/griffithreview)



# Special General Meeting



*Members of Adult Learning Australia attend the Special General Meeting in Brisbane*

## On Friday 25 July 2003 twenty-one members of Adult Learning Australia attended the Special General Meeting held at Riverglenn, Indooroopilly, in Queensland.

This meeting was held to give members the opportunity to vote—and to count postal votes—on whether the new constitution was to be accepted by members. There was an overwhelming endorsement of the resolution to adopt a new constitution, 120 votes for and seven against.

The current Executive believe that the changes, as set out in the new constitution, are in the best interests of the Association and look forward to putting in place the mechanisms to activate the constitution. These changes will come into effect after the Annual General Meeting to be held during the ALA Conference in Sydney in November 2003, when the new nine-member Board is also announced.

Following is a brief summary of how the proportional representation system will operate in the coming election for the new ALA Board. A more detailed article, including how votes are counted, is available on [www.ala.asn.au](http://www.ala.asn.au).

### Voting:

Voters mark preferences for candidates in the order of their choice by using the numbers 1, 2, 3, 4 and so on. As there are nine (9) candidates to be elected a minimum of nine (9) preferences should be marked. Voters who wish to express preferences for more than nine (9) candidates may do so by putting sequential numbers in as many squares as they wish until they run out of squares/candidates.

### Getting Elected:

To get elected a candidate has to achieve a quota of votes calculated by using the number of formal votes cast and the number of vacancies filled.

$$\text{QUOTA} = \frac{\text{TOTAL NUMBER OF VALID VOTES}}{(\text{NUMBER OF VACANCIES} + 1)} + 1$$

In other words, we are dividing the total number of valid votes by one more than the number of positions and then adding one (1) to the result. The quota for a nine (9) position election will be  $(1/10 + 1)$  or roughly 10.01%. This means that once nine (9) candidates have each achieved a quota  $(9 \times 10.01\% = 90.09\%)$ , it is impossible for anyone else to achieve a quota.

### Margaret Bates

ALA MEMBERSHIP AND PUBLICATIONS OFFICER



# *Learn @ Work—*

Learn @ Work Day on 5 September is a new element in the ALW national campaign. It is designed to encourage employers and employees to recognise the value of learning at work. In particular it is seeking to put the spotlight on less formal modes of workplace learning which are of central importance in developing job skills but are often overlooked. The following article reports on recent NCVER research into workplace learning.

## **Innovation and ideal workplace learning**

Enterprises have to be innovative to survive. Effective workplace learning provides an enterprise with the capacity to innovate and so be competitive.

Accordingly, the workplace is fast becoming a major place of training and learning in the vocational education and training (VET) sector.

The National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER) has reviewed recent research into workplace learning and synthesised important findings in *What makes for good workplace learning: At a glance*.

Workplace learning systematically improves the skills and performance of its workers. Ideally, this training develops an employee's technical and generic skills, enabling them to improve existing processes, products and services.

It is important that all skills are continuously developed and upgraded.

There are five elements that foster the 'ideal' workplace learning environment. These elements are:

- an organisational culture that supports and values training and learning
- a strategic planning cycle that includes training and learning
- an individual and customised approach to training
- a commitment to provide training according to appropriate circumstances—training and learning occurs in many forms and contexts
- an understanding that training occurs through networks, partnerships, and supply chains, and harnessing these relationships to facilitate training.



The internal environment of the enterprise is a key factor influencing the effectiveness of learning. Creating and maintaining a 'learning culture' is crucial to developing the capacity to innovate. In particular, research finds that open communication is an important feature of a learning culture.

Much will be gained by aligning strategic planning and training for organisations seeking to improve performance. Ideal workplace learning is underpinned by an approach that includes the organisations' training requirements, corporate objectives and strategic plans.

Workplace training should be customised for individual employees. In particular it should address technical knowledge used on the job and generic skills. A growing number of organisations state the value of generic skills to developing innovative capacity and making their businesses more competitive. Innovative approaches require flexibility in the way work is undertaken. Skills, such as problem-solving, communicating, working effectively with information technology, working in teams and adapting to change are particularly significant.

Customised learning can also increase the skill levels of managers. The Karpin report on leadership and management skills in 1995 noted the importance of creating managers who value innovation and diversity. Now the Frontline Management Initiative assists managers in improving their people skills and enabling them to develop a culture of workplace innovation.

All forms of learning and training have value and should be used according to the appropriate circumstances. There are

numerous training arrangements—internal or external to the organisation, formal and informal. In the workplace, training and learning usually occurs on the job, often under normal operational conditions. On-site training conducted away from work processes is also undertaken. Workplace learning should also encourage self-learning on the job.

Ideal workplace learning has networks and supply chains, linking the workplace to outside enterprises, professional societies, government, community or formal VET providers. Networks and partnerships are crucial in the innovation process. Suppliers and customers, for example, may provide useful information to improve processes, products and services. E-learning is valuable in developing these networks.

To access a copy of *What makes for good workplace learning: At a glance*, please go to <http://www.ncver.edu.au/research/core/cp0207.pdf>. Copies of this publication can be downloaded, free of charge.

Further information about workplace learning or generic skills is available from NCVER's website (<http://www.ncver.edu.au/pubs.htm>) or to access information from national and international sources, go to the VOCED website (<http://www.voced.edu.au>).

## Professional pathways for trainers and leaders in organisational learning and development

The University of New England offers widely recognised professional awards with articulation and Recognition of Prior Learning.

- Bachelor of Administrative Leadership (coursework or Honours)
- Bachelor of Education (Adult Education and Training)
- Bachelor of Training and Development
- Graduate Certificate in Adult Education and Training
- Graduate Diploma in Adult Education and Training
- Master of Administrative Leadership (coursework or Honours)
- Master of Education (Adult Education and Training) (coursework or Honours)
- Master of Professional Studies (coursework or Honours)
- Master of Training and Development (coursework or Honours)

**Applications close 30 November 2003.**

For further information contact:  
Faculty of Education, Health and Professional Studies  
University of New England  
ARMIDALE NSW 2351  
**Phone:** 02 6773 3854/3855  
**Email:** [fehps@metz.une.edu.au](mailto:fehps@metz.une.edu.au)  
<http://fehps.une.edu.au>

UNE - rated the maximum ★★★★★ for Educational Experience in the Good Universities Guide 2004.

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# ***International—***

*The Agenda for the Future*

The CONFINTEA V Mid-Term Review Conference took place from 6 to 11 September 2003 in Bangkok, Thailand. The conference looked at developments in adult learning since 1997 when the Hamburg Declaration on Adult Learning was made. CONFINTEA V also issued an *Agenda for the Future* at the conference in Hamburg.

The Agenda focuses on the vital role that adult learning has to play in enabling women and men of all ages to face the most urgent challenges of the 21st century with knowledge, courage and creativity.

It acknowledges that the development of adult learning requires partnership between government departments, intergovernmental and non-governmental organisations, employers and trade unions, universities and research centres, the media, civil and community-level associations, facilitators of adult learning and the adult learners themselves.

Below is a summary of the themes adopted at CONFINTEA. They provide a good framework for considering our own goals in terms of a national association committed to advancing a learning society.



## **Theme 1: Adult learning and democracy: the challenges of the twenty-first century**

*To reinforce democracy, it is essential to strengthen learning environments, to increase the participation of citizens, and to create contexts where the productivity of people will be enhanced and where a culture of equity and peace can take root.*

## **Theme 2: Improving the conditions and quality of adult learning**

*While there is a growing demand for adult education and an explosion of information, the disparities between those who have access and those who do not are also growing. There is therefore a need to counter this polarity, which reinforces existing inequalities, by creating adult learning structures and lifelong learning environments that can help to correct the prevalent trend?*

## **Theme 3: Ensuring the universal right to literacy and basic education**

*Today, there are nearly 1,000 million people who have not acquired literacy skills and there are millions who have been unable to sustain them, even within the most prosperous countries. Everywhere in the world, literacy should be a gateway to fuller participation in social, cultural, political and economic life. Literacy must be relevant to people's socio-economic and cultural contexts.*

## **Theme 4: Adult learning, gender equality and equity, and the empowerment of women**

*Equal opportunity in all aspects of education is essential to enable women of all ages to make their full contribution to society and to the resolution of the multiple problems confronting humanity.*

## **Theme 5: Adult learning and the changing world of work**

*The changing world of work is a multifaceted issue of enormous concern and relevance to adult learning. There is increasing concern about the precariousness of employment and the rise of unemployment. In developing countries, the concern is not simply one of employment but also of ensuring secure livelihoods for all. The improvement needed in terms of production and distribution in industry, agriculture and services requires increased competences, the development of new skills and the capacity to adapt productively to the continuously changing demands of employment throughout working life.*

## **Theme 6: Adult learning in relation to environment, health and population**

*Environment, health, population, nutrition and food security are intricately linked to one another in sustaining development. These issues are part of the wider quest for sustainable development, which cannot be attained without a strong emphasis in education on family issues, the reproductive life cycle and population issues such as ageing, migration, urbanisation, and intergenerational and family relations.*

## **Theme 7: Adult learning, culture, media and new information technologies**

*Adult learning provides an essential opportunity for adult learners to participate in all cultural institutions, mass media and new technologies in order to establish effective interactive communication and to build understanding and co-operation between peoples and cultures.*

## **Theme 8: Adult learning for all: the rights and aspiration of different groups**

*The right to education is a universal right of all people. While there is agreement that adult learning must be accessible to all, the reality is that many groups are still excluded, such as the aged, migrants, gypsies and other non-territorial and/or nomadic peoples, refugees, disabled people and prison inmates.*

## **Theme 9: The economics of adult learning**

*The costs of adult learning must be seen in relationship to the benefits that derive from reinforcing the competence of adults. The education of adults contributes to their self-reliance and personal autonomy, to the exercise of basic rights and to increased productivity and labour efficiency. Adult education, being a human development and productive investment, should be protected from the constraints of structural adjustment.*

## **Theme 10: Enhancing international co-operation and solidarity**

*The Universal Declaration of Human Rights must be the principal source of guidance in the promotion of international co-operation and solidarity, and the culture of peace.*

For further detail, visit  
**[www.unesco.org/education/uie/confintea/](http://www.unesco.org/education/uie/confintea/)**

**Francesca Beddie**

ALA EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

# Adult Learners' Week

*The Learning Communities Catalyst: [www.lcc.edu.au](http://www.lcc.edu.au)*

## Adult Learners' Week got off to a very stimulating start with a major forum on learning communities at the National Museum of Australia.

The occasion started with the launch by the new CEO of the Australian National Training Authority (ANTA), Janina Gawler, of the Learning Communities Catalyst website. Janina was assisted by Nathan Deakes, a Commonwealth Games Gold Medallist, who spoke passionately about the importance of learning in his life. Roslyn Brown who welcomed participants to Ngunnawal land told the audience of the rewards her return to learning at the age of 37 was bringing.

Over 70 people came to the launch and stayed on for a forum to discuss whether learning communities make a difference. Dr David McNulty, the Corporate Director to Walsall Council in the United Kingdom, delivered the keynote address in which he talked about his success in bringing the disengaged back into learning. All of his strategies involve taking learning to the learner. Of course, it helps to have the backing of a government agency, the Learning and Skills Council, but he made it clear it was equally important to know the community in which you are working.

Dr Jim Cavaye gave an Australian perspective on learning communities. He made the important point that a sustainable learning community may be sparked by a formal initiative but must be much more than that and must involve partnerships with others in the community. He endorsed David's message about the need to have success stories upon which to build the case for funding support. That is an important feature of the Learning Communities Catalyst.

The ensuing panel discussion was a race against the clock but also a vital part of the forum. We heard the views of both sides of politics and some examples from Evelina Porter of Hunter TAFE about how a learning community is developing in the Upper Hunter, with the support of Allied Coal. She mentioned two projects, one designed to help farmers connect with each other, at the same time as developing ICT skills, the other using video conferencing and on-line learning to ensure that HSC students in the



*Mr Anthony Albanese, Shadow Minister for Employment and Training with Ms Janina Gawler, CEO of ANTA at the Learning Communities Catalyst website launch.*

area were able to study subjects previously not taught in the district.

Mr Anthony Albanese, Shadow Minister for Employment and Training, stressed that learning must be seen as a social resource not a commodity. To gain political support learning communities needed to demonstrate the clear link between employment and learning. The ALP was considering lifelong learning in its policy development.

Senator John Tierney, Chair of the Senate's Employment, Workplace Relations and Education Legislation Committee, wondered whether it was time for Parliament to again look at adult and community education, given its last report, *Beyond Cinderella* (1997) was brought down before the exponential rise in popular use of the Internet as a learning tool. That said, he reminded the audience that the hunger for learning outside normal institutions was not a new phenomenon. It reached back to the 19th century School of Arts movement. He acknowledged the importance of involving at-risk groups in learning but was pessimistic about the prospects for adult and community education receiving a significant funding boost.

The forum was deftly chaired by Professor Chris Duke. In summing up, he noted the need to find joined-up approaches given the complexity of the contemporary learning environment. These should involve all levels of government as well as the community and private players. He asked where the money would come to reduce levels of exclusion from learning and commented on the misfit of short political cycles with long-term issues such as education. Concluding on a more positive note Chris suggested that there could be win-win solutions which addressed both economic and social imperatives and eventually created a benevolent spiral of learning.

The forum was recorded by the National Museum and we hope to be able to publish all the presentations on the website in due course. In the meantime, please start using the site:

**[www.lcc.edu.au](http://www.lcc.edu.au)**

The Learning Communities Catalyst is hosted by EdNA Online. The Australian Local Government Association and Australian Learning Communities Network formed the core of a reference group for the site, funded from a research grant from the Australian National Training Authority. Lorraine Downey and Michael Ashcroft designed the look of the site.

**Francesca Beddie**

ALA EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



*Dr David McNulty, the Corporate Director to Walsall Council, delivering the keynote address at the Learning Communities Catalyst website launch.*





# Adult Learning Australia

*ALA/ANTA Innovation Research Grant 2004*

## ALA is delighted to announce the \$5,000 Innovation Research Grant for 2004.

This grant enables a member to undertake a research project designed to uncover innovative practice in adult learning and to provide a resource tool for other practitioners in the field. The scholarship will provide seed money for ALA members to undertake original research.

Applicants are invited to submit a proposal for a project which investigates how such learning takes place in the community, and produces findings of use to others wishing to encourage greater collaborative learning between generations.

These findings can be presented in the form of a paper to be delivered at the ALA annual conference in 2004 or as a tool kit for practitioners.  
(Eg in the form of a learning circle kit or a video/CD.)

Other innovative ideas of presentation will be considered.

Proposals should be no more than three pages in length (excluding the covering application form) and must be submitted to John Cross at the ALA National Office by 12 December 2003.

Application with full conditions of the scholarship are available  
from the ALA National Office

OR

[www.ala.asn.au](http://www.ala.asn.au)

There will be a session at the ALA annual Conference 2003  
about action research for practitioners. Come along,  
it could assist you in finalising your application.

**Closing date 12 December 2003**



John Cross  
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Canberra City ACT 2601  
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# In Quest of Learning

Nathan Deakes



**Nathan Deakes gave an inspiring talk at the launch of the Learning Communities Catalyst at the National Museum of Australia. As an enthusiastic advocate for learning as well**

**as a first class athlete, we asked Nathan to tell us a bit more about his learning experiences. His answers underline how invaluable it is to have good first experiences of learning.**

Nathan is a dual Commonwealth Games Gold Medallist 2002; Goodwill Games Gold Medallist 2001; dual Olympic Finalist 2000. He was born and raised in Geelong, Victoria and moved to the Australian Institute of Sport (Canberra) in November 1997. He was the 1999 recipient of the AIS Vocation Award for exceptional performance in athletics and academic studies. In Manchester, he achieved a great feat in Commonwealth Games history by winning both the 20km and 50km walks on consecutive days. He had to endure heat, rain, cramp and five drug tests to win double gold. More recently he has had to undergo surgery which has taken him away from the track but has done nothing to dampen his enthusiasm for life.

*1. What is the single most important lesson your parents ever taught you?*

It is always important to try your best. If you can walk off the sporting field, out of the classroom or from whatever endeavour you are attempting, if you can hold your head high and say that you've done your best, then that is all that can be asked.

*2. What were your best and worst experiences from school? Were you a good student? – Why/why not?*

My best experience at school was Year 12. While it is the most important year at school, it was also the year I enjoyed the most. My school friends were and are still

such a great group of people who made the year constantly fun.

I honestly cannot remember a time that I could consider being a bad experience at school.

I feel I was a good student at school, as I was well rounded. I always tried my best to be the best I could academically.

*3. What did you always want to be?—Did you achieve this? Why/why not?*

I have always wanted to be an Olympic Champion.

Ask me again in 12 months!

*4. What was your first job and what did you learn from it?*

My first job was a paper delivery boy, delivering the local weekly paper.

I learned about responsibility, punctuality and dependence. Three traits I believe that are essential learning tools during teenage years that need to be carried on into the adult world.

*5. Complete this sentence: 'The most valuable thing I've learned this year is...'*

...to be patient.

*6. What new skills do you hope to acquire and how? What unfulfilled ambition have you yet to conquer?*

As I am currently studying towards a finance degree at university, I hope to acquire the skills that will one day entrench me into the business world. As a person who has always set high but realistic goals, I would love to be a successful merchant banker.

The unfulfilled ambition I have yet to conquer is to be able to speak a second language fluently. I can speak enough German and Spanish to get around comfortably, but neither fluently.

*7. What is one talent people might be surprised to know you have?*

A talent that many may not know that I possess is my ability to whip up a risotto from heaven!

*8. What piece of information would you most like to pass on to the next generation?*

'Live today as if you are going to die tomorrow. Learn today as though you are going to live forever.'



# Guest Spot

## Training the Fire Fighters



*Members and students of the Stoney Creek Rural Fire Brigade after a training burn (June 2003)*

I have been an active fire-fighter for the past five years in the Stoney Creek Rural Fire Brigade located just east of Queanbeyan. The life experience and training experience I have received has been invaluable and has taught me teamwork, leadership, and many other skills. Working with a team of people who come from many diverse backgrounds, including tradespeople, office workers, retirees and younger people, and being able to respond to a challenging emergency and get our job done is extremely rewarding.

As training officer of the Stoney Creek Rural Fire Brigade for the past two years, running the basic training course for residents was generally the biggest organisational event in the calendar. Successfully completing the course is a necessary requirement for becoming a probationary volunteer fire-fighter, but is also extremely useful for local residents in understanding fire behaviour.

In our area there are a large proportion of people who have recently moved out from the city and who have not grown up with the threat of bushfire around them (including myself five years ago). Hence the course that we run aims to equip participants with the basic safety requirements and skills the active fire-fighter needs. Combining theory sessions and practical scenarios for the participants greatly assists in the learning process. In the theory sessions, they learn about the key elements of fire, how to protect themselves as well as the various equipment and methods that can be used to control a fire. The practical sessions get the participants to apply the knowledge learnt in the classroom on various practical activities followed by a controlled hazard reduction in the afternoon. This is generally the highlight of the day, where they can see the principles learnt applied to a controlled fire.

One of the best things about the course is the increase in fire awareness in the area. One fire that we attended in our area had the next-door neighbour over with a knapsack spray helping to extinguish the fire. While I did not recognise him, he had attended the basic training course





*Stoney Creek Rural Fire Brigade motor vehicle fire training (May 2003)*

several years previously and knew what to do when the situation arose. Residents, who are more fire aware, are generally better prepared in the event of fire threatening the area.

Volunteering in the Rural Fire Service has taught me a lot about the benefits of training. Having students that were twice or even three times my own age with a wealth of life experience was daunting at first, but has been one of the most rewarding undertakings. I have also learnt a lot about the environment in which we live and have developed strong ties with people in the community through the brigade. I thoroughly recommend considering volunteering as you meet new friends, learn new skills and you never know when they may come in handy.

#### **Lewis Conn**

Lewis is currently a Deputy Captain in the Stoney Creek Fire Brigade and is studying honours in Actuarial Studies at the Australian National University.

The NSW Rural Fire Service is the world's largest fire service with approximately 69,000 volunteer firefighter members providing emergency services to over 90% of NSW.

For more information please visit [www.rfs.nsw.gov.au](http://www.rfs.nsw.gov.au) or contact your nearest fire control centre.

# Learning Circles

## Why Take a Tour?

**Adult Learning Australia was asked recently to facilitate a workshop for volunteer guides at the Australian National Botanic Gardens in Canberra.**



Mary Hannan and John Cross delivered the program using a learning circle approach to encourage and stimulate discussion about different ways a guide could approach their work and explore the different ways in which adults learn.

Under the heading 'Why Take a Tour?' the 22 participants divided into three learning circle groups discussing first their own experience as a visitor at



a botanical garden, zoo, historic site or museum and what made this experience good or bad! The guides were reminded that the development of learning programs, including in museums and other atypical learning places like public gardens, must be grounded in the needs and interests of the learner.

In a second exercise the guides teased out issues around different learning preferences and in the last session, used a learning circle on plastic bags to develop some facilitation and peer learning skills.



The majority of the participants agreed that the learning circle approach was a non-threatening but stimulating way of discussing issues around their own needs as volunteers and to exchange information, especially with newly recruited guides. A new guide said the session 'had given him a wonderful opportunity to listen and

learn how these more experienced guides had developed some 'tricks of the trade' to overcome particular problems which may occur during a guided walk.'

The participants decided to recommend to the National Botanic Gardens that a learning circle program be introduced as a monthly program for guides to share stories about their guiding experience, provide support to new guides and to discuss how they could make their walks more exciting and stimulating for visitors.

**Mary Hannan**

ALA PROJECTS MANAGER

Centre for *Leadership*  
for Women

## The Australian virtual Centre for Leadership for Women

(CLW). [www.leadershipforwomen.com.au](http://www.leadershipforwomen.com.au) empowers women to be leaders.

If you want to learn from the experiences of leaders; undertake self-evaluation; express personal and professional concerns in relation to your leadership development and become informed about current leading issues and leadership resources, then why not join CLW.

With a national membership, it boasts interviews with leaders, has 10 other areas about leadership development including the sections, Leadership in Action, Leadership Theory, Professional Development Programs and a Leading Issues Journal. Annual CLW Membership fee is twenty dollars (\$20 AUD).

Choosing Leadership necessitates empowering yourself. CLW can help in developing a leadership mindset and inspire you to lead if you choose to.

**Diann Rodgers-Healey**

Centre for Leadership for Women (CLW)

[www.leadershipforwomen.com.au](http://www.leadershipforwomen.com.au)

# Learning Communities

## Individual Learning Audit Process

In the last edition of Quest, we reported on the Lithgow learning community and told you about a feasibility study Adult Learning Australia was undertaking in the town. Here is a report on that study which explored the potential for the development and implementation of an instrument to help mature age unemployed job seekers better understand and articulate their learning needs and learning styles.

Learning audit tools that facilitate informed and fully considered learning choices already exist. However, many of these tools are formal, prescriptive and time-consuming questionnaires. Adult Learning Australia engaged long-time ALA member and researcher, Barrie Brennan, to develop a more friendly learning audit process that could be used by Job Network members with their mature aged clients.

In an environment in which mature aged job seekers are to be encouraged, even compelled, to undertake more training as part of their overall job seeking strategy, it is important that this learning activity be a positive and productive experience for those who undertake it. Poorly chosen learning activities or environments can, potentially, have significant negative impact on an individual's self-esteem and on their ability to acquire new skills or knowledge effectively and efficiently.

Making the right choice about learning involves more than simply taking into account the subject matter or the learning activity. To ensure that the money invested on the mature job seeker learning activity is money well spent, both the job seeker and the service agencies who support them need to have a sophisticated understanding of learning styles, the factors that led to the success or failure of previous learning activities, and the full range of learning environments available.

Barrie's Individual Learning Audit Process (ILAP) takes the form of a structured conversation which uses discussion of

hobby and community activities to uncover learning experiences, preferences and attitudes. The ILAP was piloted as part of a feasibility study conducted by Barrie and ALA's Research Manager, John Cross, in Lithgow, NSW, earlier in the year.

The feasibility study showed that there is considerable potential for an audit process and that the ILAP provides a solid base upon which to develop the process further. The study confirmed the need for a campaign aimed at employers to promote the considerable benefits of an age-diverse workforce. The need for increased recognition among the Job Network program of the potential and validity of less formal, non-accredited learning activity as a strategy for helping mature age job seekers back into employment was also highlighted. So too was the enormous potential for a cheap and efficient skills' recognition process to enable mature age job seekers to formalise skills gained informally. Finally, the study confirmed the vital need for individual learning providers to engage in an ongoing dialogue with local Job Network members about needs and opportunities.

The full ILAP feasibility study is available from the Adult Learning Australia website.

### John Cross

ALA RESEARCH MANAGER

### Kyabram Community and Learning Centre

Kyabram Community and Learning Centre has been officially recognised as the 'Best of the Best' of small training providers in Victoria, when it continued to set the standard in being awarded the States highest award for training as a small provider at the 2003 Victorian Training Awards presentation dinner. There had been a lengthy interview and audit process of not only the Centre's training standards but also their internal systems and processes and their external engagement within their community.

The award was presented to Ms Sue Solly, CEO of the Kyabram Community and Learning Centre, by Ms Lynne Kosky, Victorian Minister for Education and Training.

### Mal McCullough

[learning@kyabram.net.au](mailto:learning@kyabram.net.au)



# Short Story

Shortlisting the entries

*I have always imagined that Paradise will be a kind of library.*

**Jorge Luis Borges**

The paradise of books is not so attractive to those who cannot read. Yet, when they learn to do so, it is even more alluring to them than to any established bookworm. That is the message conveyed by nearly every one of the 160 entries in this year's Adult Learning Australia-Australian Society of Authors short story competition.

Most of the stories also describe how people cope with not being able to read and write. They are extraordinarily adept at hiding the problem, resorting to white lies ('I've left my glasses at home and can't read a thing without them') and clever tricks which get others to do the writing. One thing comes through strongly—with courage and determination these problems can be overcome. But not without first defeating the fear of being found out and humiliated. That is where, as the stories revealed, adult and community education, as well as TAFE and Migrant English services can help.

Every one of the entrants to this competition deserves a prize and will be receiving from Adult Learning Australia a certificate of appreciation. The two winning entries are *Ants go Marching* by Joanne Lennan and *Stick and Stones and Dogs and Bones* by Kathryn Barker.

ALA wishes also to thank the two judges—one from Adult Learning Australia, the other from the Australian Society of Authors—who devoted their time and skill to the difficult task of selecting the winners.

A number of the contributors were older women, who were pulled out of school early, in the days when it was not considered necessary for girls to have an education. Their daughters and granddaughters have had much better chances of staying on and finishing both school and further education.

But for many their literacy problems stem from dyslexia or from bad school experiences or itinerant childhoods or from the trauma of fleeing their home country and ending up in an English-speaking society. Their problems will not pass with the generations. They need to be addressed by removing the barriers and instilling a joy of learning.

**Francesca Beddie**

ALA EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

## ALW Short Story Competition

The following poem, by Caroline Barr, was an entry in the above competition. The winners will have their stories published at a later date.

### The poem in my head

*The words keep on coming,  
crowding my mind  
I put them in order  
and they eventually rhyme.*

*I feel kind of proud  
'caus with words I'm not great.  
I've constructed a poem  
and it outlines my fate.*

*It puts into perspective  
the chain of events  
from my sad sort of childhood  
to this high barbed wire fence.*

*My eyes they grow heavy,  
the cell's cold and I'm tired,  
but I must try to fight it  
'caus I'm feeling inspired.*

*I'm scared I'll forget  
if I fall off to sleep,  
all the words of my poem  
that have come from so deep.*

*I can't write them down  
as most others might,  
'caus I'm what's called illiterate—  
I can't read or write.*

*But I've heard there's this group  
who help blokes like me  
They don't charge a cent  
It's completely free.*

*So when I get out  
I'll track that mob down.  
I'll make up a new rhyme  
that won't sink and drown*

*There's no shame in not  
knowing the a, b and c  
So I'll learn, and that know-how  
will set my words free.*



I constructed this poem after arriving home from work at the prison. It had hit me between the eyes, while held up at traffic lights, that some of the guys I'd just been teaching could not put their thoughts down on paper, or print them on a computer.

I was shocked to find when I first started work at the prison as a volunteer literacy tutor, that some men could not even write their names. The significance of that came home to me, at that moment in the car.

As a writer I get inspired at the oddest times. I rush to the computer and get into it while the thoughts are flowing. Imagine having a creative moment but no way, unless one has a taping device, to capture it for posterity.

Some of the men were able to record their thoughts, wrote some very moving poetry and prose. Imagine all the lost beauty, locked away in the mind.

Imagine too, not being able to write to wives, mothers, friends, lawyers, the parole board.

I went on to coordinate a series of classes to empower inmates to cope with the changes on the 'outside', (and hopefully help them to stay out). Some of the men, who were within a few weeks of leaving prison, did not respond to the letters written to invite their voluntary participation; not because they didn't want to, but because they couldn't

read the letters.

When they were approached verbally, many were happy to participate.

Through my work as an adult literacy tutor, I have encountered people in many circumstances, but the common thread, is the frustration caused by their inability to read and write effectively.

We take our literacy for granted. Many are unaware of just how widespread illiteracy and poor literacy skills, is.

I am haunted by the poem, locked away while waiting for the key to release it.

**Caroline Barr**



# On the ground



## Lock up your Boss

In raising funds for the Kids Help Line on “Lock up your Boss” day the Central Australian Remote Health Development Services (CARHDS) in Alice Springs imprisoned their Chief Executive Officer, Dorothy Lucardie. A good result was achieved from this smaller organisation with \$152.40 bail being raised for the Kids Help Line—and CARDHS did get their boss back.

CARHDS 08 8953 5500



## Eco-friendly Communities Promoting Sustainable Living and Working

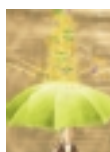
The NSW Local Community Services Association (LCSA), in partnership with the Environmental Protection Authority (EPA), have been working on an Eco-friendly Communities project. From eco-friendly lighting to community gardens, this project is helping to educate communities about living sustainably, both at home and in their communities in general.

Initially workshops were held at Wagga Wagga, Lismore, Bellambi, Coffs Harbour, Parkes, Springwood, Sutherland and Bardwell Park. Participants received an ‘Eco-friendly Communities’ kit, which provides practical information and resources, and sets out possible projects that communities can do with their Neighbourhood Centres.

With the aid of their ‘kits’, Centre workers, volunteers and the general community are embarking on particular environmental projects that address local concerns. Each project is different but typically includes eco-friendly centres, eco-friendly people and eco-friendly communities. With the support of the EPA, some funding is also made available for these communities to pursue their local projects further. The cooperative nature of the project is also resulting in communities being supported by Environmental Officers from their respective local governments and other organisations.

Contact LCSA

Ph 02 9211 3644.



## The Kurbingui Message Stick

After consultation with the local Indigenous community, Kurbingui Youth Development Association partnered with Queensland’s Department of Employment and Training, Community Employment, Brisbane North Region, is developing a Community Jobs Plan to break the social isolation within the Indigenous community in the Brisbane North Region.

The Kurbingui Message Stick (later renamed the Kurbingui Star) is a community Indigenous newsletter covering a wide range of suburbs including Zillmere, Nundah, Virginia, Chermside, Strathpine, Boondall, Sandgate, Bracken Ridge, Keperra and Mitchelton. The goal is to produce this newsletter on a monthly basis and will include Indigenous specific information on local events, employment, education and training opportunities, health information, bereavements, engagements, weddings and stories on local Indigenous sites and individuals. The project has given the local Indigenous organisations in the community an identity, which will contribute to reduced social isolation and increased co-operation.

This project is also part of the Queensland Government’s *Breaking the Unemployment Cycle* initiative.

Contact: Dina Bonke, Assistant Regional Director, Brisbane North Region.

Ph 07 3247 4937



## 100 Faces of the Inner West

A group of students from the inner west of Sydney have just had an exhibition of their photographic work at NSW State Parliament.

The group called themselves ‘Hot Shots’ and were on a six month program, funded by the Commonwealth Government ‘Work for the Dole’ funding, learning about photography at Sydney Community College. The exhibition is of 100 subjects featuring a close up, a full-length portrait and a potted biography of each person. Herald reviewer Lenny Ann Low wrote, ‘It’s an exhibition about individualism and anonymity. Perusing each work is like stopping to meet a stranger in the street’.

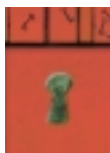
Frank Storey

Sydney Community College

Ph 02 8752 7544



# ALA New Members



## Adults Learning

Yarraville Community Centre focuses on Over 50's and technology with great success. One particular class, which has been studying at the centre for over a year, has taken the brave step of enrolling in Certificate 1 Information Technology. The group sees the class as more than just a two-hour session each week; they have constant networking, emailing and interaction with each other out of class. Currently, the class is half way through the first unit and no stress has been witnessed, considering many are over 70 years of age and some will turn 80 next year. They are certainly an inspiration to any one who feels they are too old "to be taught new tricks". Other introductory Over 50's classes are being studied by a Masters student from Melbourne University, she is looking at what motivates and gives confidence to the Over 50's, look out for these findings in 2004!

Rose Marshall

Yarraville Community Centre

Email [rose@ycc.net.au](mailto:rose@ycc.net.au)



## University of the Third Age

U3A Network-Victoria Inc. has organised several very successful events this year. The first was the Oz Proms Concert at the Melbourne Town Hall in March. This was an excellent opportunity to showcase the talents of older people.

The second was a State Conference in June on the theme "Keeping Connected—the Social Dimension". The keynote speaker was Jackie van Vugt from VicHealth. The follow-up workshop on statistics is being held during Adult Learners' Week. During the year the Network also obtained funding and instigated three regional conferences, which were held at U3As Knox, Sale and Hume.

The U3A movement is rapidly expanding in Victoria with fourteen new groups, either newly established, or in the pipeline. U3A Network is actively involved in facilitating and supporting the establishment of new Universities of the Third Age.

Judy Hall

Convenor, Publicity & Promotions

U3A Network—Victoria

Email [u3anet@vicnet.net.au](mailto:u3anet@vicnet.net.au)

## ALA New Members

Alison Boundy QLD 4051

Mark Davis VIC 3130

Steve Flaherty NSW 2444

Thomas Garrick WA 6765

Eleanor Faye Goos Canada

Cheryl Gudmundson Canada

Jenny Heritage VIC 3015

Valerie Ingham NSW 2780

Trish Jamieson NSW 2097

Sandy Lyle VIC 3862

Jo May NSW 2308

Ray Mortlock NSW 2770

Geri Pancini NT 0845

Diana Quinn SA 5072

Katharine Randell SA 5355

Janine Taylor VIC 3636

Judith Treganowan NSW 2880

## Organisations

Box Hill Institute Centre for Vocational Access & Education

BOX HILL VIC 3128

Community and Development and Training  
CAMPBELLTOWN NSW 2560

RMIT Learning Networks

MELBOURNE VIC 3001

University of Sydney Centre for Continuing Education

GLEBE NSW 2037

# Looking Back

Adult Education: Rival for Poker Machines

Phil Robson, ALA's business manager, loves history and old objects. He came across this article in a bound volume of *The Canberra Times*. It was first published on 1 September 1966. If you come across historical items that help to put what we are all striving to achieve in adult learning into perspective please send them to the National Office of Adult Learning Australia.

## Adult Education: Rival for poker machines

**Adult education courses should be offered in social clubs, in competition—or in connivance—with the poker machines, a Sydney adult educationist suggested yesterday.**

Speaking at the sixth annual conference of the Australian Association of Adult Education, Dr D W Crowley, director of the Department of Adult Education at Sydney University, stressed the need to bring a wider educational experience to all sections of the community.

This could best be done by collaborating with other organisations, such as church groups and social clubs, who had a ready-made "clientele" for adult education courses, if the subject matter could be presented in an enticing way.

## Vocational approach

Another approach might be on vocational lines, such as a chemistry course for soap-factory workers, metallurgy for foundry workers and, on the "recreational" line, marine biology for members of a skin diving club.

Dr Crowley said the adult educationist's biggest task in future would probably be to help widen the horizons of people who completed a secondary education but stopped there.



"At times one gets the impression that if we can't promote our activities so that these people will respond, we shall be faced with a slick but sentimental, manipulated, conformist, materialistic generation of adults and that is a frightening prospect", he said.

"One has the feeling that the kind of formal drilling in vocational or academic subjects they will have undergone in the schools will have given them no mental and emotional armour against the ethos of commercial television".

Adult educationists were not convinced that the efforts being made in other parts of the educational system to include liberal studies had been adequate to the need.

(This article was printed in The Canberra Times, Thursday 1st September, 1966)

# Advertising rates for Quest and the Australian Journal of Adult Learning

All adverts are full colour. All artwork must be supplied on disk as either a **TIF**–300dpi at actual size, **EPS**–CMYK vector at actual size with all text either as outlines or with all fonts supplied, as a **PDF**-distilled for 'Press' with ALL fonts embedded (please call Whizzbang Art on 02 6124 5470 for more information), or as a **QuarkXPress** file with ALL fonts AND attached graphics.

## Printed Advertisements – Australian Journal of Adult Learning

The journal is an A5 book issued three times per year. Internal pages are printed in black only.

\$250	1/2 page
\$412	full page

## Printed Advertisements—Quest

The newsletter is a quarterly A4 publication printed in colour.

\$160	1/8 page
\$345	1/4 page
\$500	1/2 page
\$745	3/4 page
\$990	full page

Inserts up to 8 grams	\$185
8 to 20 grams	\$247
More than 20 grams	\$305

Rates for regular advertisers can be negotiated.

## Deadlines for 2003

The Australian Journal of Adult Learning is published in April, July and November. Please contact the office for advertising deadlines.

## Deadlines for inclusion in Quest

	Printed ads	Inserts
Autumn	1 February	22 February
Winter	3 May	24 May
Spring	2 August	23 August
Summer	1 November	22 November

- **e** [info@ala.asn.au](mailto:info@ala.asn.au)
- **w** <http://www.ala.asn.au>
- **p** +61 2 6274 9502
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# Subscribe now!

*All ALA members receive the quarterly newsletter, the Australian Journal of Adult Learning, e-services; access to a national network of adult educators; and representation by their peak body.*

## MEMBERSHIP CHARGES

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Less than \$25 000	\$49.50
\$25 001 – \$45 000	\$77.000
\$45 001 – \$65 000	\$99.000
more than \$65 001	\$115.500

Organisational membership (Includes GST)

Annual Turnover	
Below \$70 000	\$77.000
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More than \$100 001	\$214.500

TOTAL enclosed: \$

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Bankcard ☐ Mastercard ☐ Visa ☐

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Cardholder's name ..... Expiry date ...../.....

Signature..... Today's Date .....

Tick to receive a receipt ☐



# Calendar

INTERNATIONAL DECADE OF LITERACY 2003–2012

## 1–3 October 2003

### The Managing Diversity Conference

The overall theme is 'the diversity challenge; good management; excellent organisations; harmonious communities'. The conference aims to position 'diversity management' as an effective tool for creating innovative, 21st century organisations that generate equitable outcomes for both the internal and external communities they serve.

Visit [www.ManagingDiversityConference.com](http://www.ManagingDiversityConference.com) for further information.

## 20–24 October 2003

### 17th Australian Education Conference

Securing the Future for International Education: Managing Growth and Diversity. This conference will be held in Melbourne. For further information visit [www.idp.com/17aiec/](http://www.idp.com/17aiec/)

## 22–24 October 2003

### NET\*Working 2003

Innovate, Integrate, Initiate

This conference about flexible learning includes an exciting program of international and Australian keynote speakers. To be held at Peppers Fairmont, Leura, in the Blue Mountains, NSW. For further information contact [networking@flexiblelearning.net.au](mailto:networking@flexiblelearning.net.au) or phone 02 9248 0800

## 5 November 2003

Excellence: Making the Connections, Online Learning & Teaching Conference 2003.

The theme for this year focuses on the aspects of technology-enhanced teaching in higher education that combine the quality of the student experience and the resultant environment for facilitating learning in a deep and rich manner. This event is open to all universities in Australia and will include papers and panel sessions.

For further information visit <http://olt.qut.edu.au/olt2003/>

## 9–11 November 2003

### Unlocking doors. Rebuilding lives through Education

The 6th Biannual International Forum on Education in Corrections Settings – Australia (IFECSA) Conference aims to stimulate and support the development of best education practices in correctional settings to assist in the rehabilitation of adult prisoners and offenders, and young people in detention. The venue is the Crowne Plaza on Queensland Gold Coast.

For more information visit [www.kangan.edu.au/ifecs](http://www.kangan.edu.au/ifecs) or [www.dcs.qld.gov.au](http://www.dcs.qld.gov.au)

## 13–14 November 2003

### 2003 Symposium—Readers, Writers, Publishers.

The Australian Academy of the Humanities invites you to its 2003 Symposium to be held in Melbourne in November. It will bring together some of Australia's leading writers, publishers and thinkers. Speakers and attendees will discuss and debate radical and traditional approaches, views, solutions and strategies to the business, and pleasure, of reading, writing and publishing.

For more information visit [www.humanities.org.au/conferences/symposium2003.htm](http://www.humanities.org.au/conferences/symposium2003.htm)

## 19–22 November 2003

### AAACE Conference

The American Association for Adult and Continuing Education (AAACE) 2003 Conference will be held in Detroit, Michigan, USA. For more information on this conference visit [www.aaace.org](http://www.aaace.org) or [www.maace.org/aaace.htm](http://www.maace.org/aaace.htm)

## 20–23 November 2003

### Learning AND the World We Want

Intersecting Conversations of Education, Culture and Community. For all concerned with the role of learning in calling forth and creating a sustainable global community and a peaceful world.

For further information see [www.WorldWeWant.ca](http://www.WorldWeWant.ca)

## 27–30 November 2003

### Communities of Learning: Communities of Practice

The terms used to describe the phenomenon of groups of individuals learning together include learning communities and communities of practice. These terms are being more and more used across the field of adult learning. This conference will examine these issues.

The 43rd Annual National Conference of Adult Learning Australia will be held at the Broadway Campus, University of Technology, Sydney (UTS).

For further information see <http://www.ala.asn.au>

## 30 November—3 December 2003

### Family & Community Strengths. Building a Truly Civil Society.

This conference is to be held at the University of Newcastle, NSW. The main themes are: promoting strengths-based leadership/management; linking schools, family and community; working from a strengths perspective in a problem-focused environment; exploring resilience; and practical applications (mobilising people and community resources).

For further information email [familystrengths@pco.com.au](mailto:familystrengths@pco.com.au) or see <http://www.pco.com.au/familystrengths/>

## 3–5 December 2003

### Online Educa Berlin 2003

The 9th International Conference on Technology Supported Learning & Training. Meeting the networking needs of the international e-learning industry, this is a key event for strategists and practitioners from all over the world. Further information on [www.online-educa.com](http://www.online-educa.com) or email [info@online-educa.com](mailto:info@online-educa.com)

## 13–16 June 2004

### 3rd International Lifelong Learning Conference.

The theme of this conference is "Lifelong Learning: Whose Responsibility and What is Your Contribution".

To be held at Rydges Capricorn Resort, Yeppoon, Queensland. For more information visit [www.library.cqu.edu.au/conference/2004](http://www.library.cqu.edu.au/conference/2004)