

Quest

→ Balancing life, work, past and future

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included in this edition



Adult Learning
Australia Inc.

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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 education, advises and lobbies government; promotes policy development; represents Australia on international education bodies, co-ordinates Adult Learners' Week; and more.

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Quest is the newsletter of ALA, published quarterly and distributed to members. Copies are held by libraries and educational institutions throughout Australia. Non-members may subscribe for \$64. Single issues are \$16 plus postage.

ISSN 1448-4390

Editor: Ron Anderson
Sub-editor: Diana Coxhead
Artwork: GREY WORLDWIDE

Copy: Contributions of news, stories, reviews, pictures and so on are welcome. They will be received at any time but deadlines are the last Fridays of January, April, July and October.

Advertising: ALA accepts advertising from appropriate vendors in quarter page, half-page and full-page formats, as well as inserts.

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

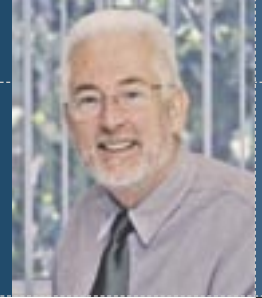


Australian Government
Department of Education,
Science and Training

ALA gratefully acknowledges the assistance of the Department of Education, Science and Training. In addition, we thank many volunteers who submit material to Quest.

PP255003/06295

Editorial



Welcome to the Spring Edition. Yes, that means Christmas is just around the corner. I'm not sure if it is a function of age, but each year seems to disappear just a little more quickly these days.

ALA has just completed the management and coordination of another extremely successful Adult Learners' Week (ALW). While we await the final audit figures on the level of awareness by the Australian population, as measured by ACNielsen, we know we exceeded 900 listed events, a 35% increase over last year.

Beside the number of events ALW also has a strong qualitative aspect to it as well. Building social capital comes from creating interest, rapport and trust. Through ALW this year, ALA had the opportunity to do this in abundance. To help us we were very fortunate to have two very knowledgeable and experienced adult education practitioners from NIACE in the UK.

Both Alan Tuckett OBE, Director of NIACE, and Dr Peter Lavender, Director of Research with NIACE, provided volumes of stimulating intellectual input about adult learning, along with a lot of charm and generosity toward all those with whom they engaged. A comprehensive report will be available in the Summer Edition of QUEST and I look to reporting back to you then, with many good news stories.

You may have also noticed a new look to Quest. We thought it was time to breathe new life into the newsletter and have gone with a more modern style and layout. This edition also comes with many good stories and articles.

Last year, ALA engaged Kris Newton as a Visiting Research Fellow to undertake a project to identify how the ACE sector might better meet the identified learning/training/professional development needs of small business.

This project set out to identify recommendations, and guidelines, to assist ACE providers to better develop learning services to address small business needs that fit within small business limitations. A summary report has been prepared here by Kris.

In recent years there has been a growing body of government policy work on the implications of Australia's ageing demographic. As an ALA Visiting Research Fellow, Dr John McIntyre recently completed a briefing paper for ALA reviewing this work and what it means for the community sector and lifelong learning policy. A summary of Dr McIntyre's paper is printed here.

Hume City Council has a strong determination to address issues of social and economic disadvantage by implementing strategies to strengthen the Hume community. Lifelong learning is one of the nine key themes to achieve the community's vision for Hume City in 2030. This involves the development of Hume City as a learning community through the development of the Hume Global Learning Village.

The article by Dr Leone Wheeler summarises a more detailed report, funded by an ANTA/ALA Innovation Grant, which

documents the development of the Hume Global Learning Village and outlines the initial work to build an evaluation strategy which will map the progress of Learning Together – 2004/2005 – a strategy plan for the development of Hume City as a learning community with key actions.

The Bundaberg Regional Learning Community recently organised a launch of their project in August. Guest speaker was Mary Hannan Assistant Executive Director (Innovative Projects) who is managing eight national projects on behalf of ALA for the Australian Flexible Learning Framework. A full report is presented here.

Cheryl Lewis-Fitzgerald another ALA-ANTA Innovation Research Grant 2005 winner, reports on the development of a tool she has developed to assist people who work in the area of non-formal learning. A summary of the thinking underpinning the development of this manual is briefly reported on. A launch of the manual is planned at our 45th Annual Conference here in Canberra in November.

The paper by Eric Wright seeks to broaden both Adult Education's self-awareness and governments' perceptions of it.

Eric argues that over the past ten years the language of the educational landscape has, broadly speaking, made increasing use of the language of the market economy. This has been paralleled by development in government thinking away from notions of public service to public sector management. The two have operated hand in hand. Eric explores his thesis in this edition. His paper is supported by a graphical model.

We also report on a Learning City-Learning Region Audit and Study that focuses on Western Australia's Great Southern as a richly diverse region with numerous human, natural, infrastructural, economic and learning assets on which to build and grow the region into the future. This study seeks to answer a number of questions in order to understand what regional assets exist and what the opportunities are to link these assets together to continue to grow a thriving, prosperous and pleasant community – *Growing the Great Southern*.

Finally Nicholas Abbey presents a reflective paper on *Developing 21st Century Teaching and Learning*. Nicholas argues that we stand on the threshold of a pedagogical and technological revolution, with profound and far-reaching consequences for education and training and the economy and society. In the years ahead, this revolution is likely to coalesce around emerging pedagogies such as *structured dialogue*.

In his article, Nicholas explores how structured dialogue can build robust learning environments and improve learning outcomes. He also examines a four-dimensional model and stage-by-stage process for leading and managing such strategic change.

Read, learn and enjoy!

Briefs



Australian Information Industry Association's (AIIA) industry-wide recycling scheme

The Australian Information Industry Association (AIIA) has recently launched a report outlining its recycling plans for a voluntary industry-wide take-back and recycling scheme to help achieve its goal of zero-waste landfill.

The report is the result of a major project by AIIA to identify ways to reduce the volume of PCs, printers and peripherals which end up in landfill. AIIA and its members have invested over \$250,000 in cash and resources – on top of their existing environmental programs and commitments – in the project. The proposal was developed in conjunction with environmental consultants, Planet Ark and recommends a small fee on all new equipment sold in Australia to cover its future recycling. For further information visit www.aiia.com.au.

Student interests drive course change and attrition

University students who change courses or withdraw from study without gaining a qualification are more likely to be driven by personal interests and career objectives than academic difficulties or financial pressures, according to new research by the Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER).

The study, *Course change and attrition from higher education* found the majority of commencing university students (74 per cent)

persisted with their initial course while 12 per cent had changed courses and 14 per cent had stopped their studies before completing a qualification.

The ACER's chief executive Professor Geoff Masters, said findings from the study indicate that course change and attrition can be a positive outcome for some students. He said, "It should not be assumed necessarily that course non-completion is synonymous with failure or wastage of talent." For further information visit www.acer.edu.au/.

First 12 Australian Technical Colleges – announced

The Howard Government has recently announced the first 12 Australian Technical Colleges to be established in Australia aimed at providing academic and vocational education for students in Years 11 and 12. The first colleges to be established will be in: Illawarra, Port Macquarie, Bairnsdale/Sale, Bendigo, Eastern Melbourne, Geelong, Gladstone, Gold Coast, Townsville, Adelaide (two colleges) and Darwin.

The Government will commence negotiations with successful applicants immediately to establish a further 12 technical colleges in 2006 and 2007. The colleges for the remaining regions will be announced later this year.



*The present arrangements
for training and learning
services for small business
do not sufficiently give a
stimulus to enterprise
and innovation*

Are two worlds colliding? – The provision of training and learning services for small business

This National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER) study of training and learning services for small business gives a snapshot of the current system, its products and strategies, and the results of recent initiatives in the promotion of training and learning for small business in Australia.

Conclusions from the report include: The present arrangements for training and learning services for small business do not sufficiently give a stimulus to enterprise and innovation in small business. The overall thrust of small business training is towards practical here-and-now, just-in-time knowledge and skill. This orientation will perpetuate a small business culture of short-term perspectives.

This contrasts with the emphasis given in United States programs to encouraging entrepreneurship. There is a similar emphasis on fostering enterprise and entrepreneurship in Britain. To read the report visit www.ncver.edu.au/research/proj/nr1003.pdf.

Learning Communities Catalyst

The Learning Communities Catalyst is a space for practitioners to access and share information to help build and support Learning Communities. The website is a collaborative effort between Adult Learning Australia, the Australian Learning Communities Network, the Australian Local Government Association and EdNA Online. For further information visit www.lcc.edu.au.

Alliance for Lifelong Learning (AllLearn)

AllLearn offers quality, non-credit distance learning programs to students of all ages, developed by faculty from Oxford, Stanford and Yale universities. Programs offer online access to an instructor and utilise traditional elements, such as books and expert teachers, as well as electronic media such as audio CDs, CDROMs, videotapes, streaming media, message boards and live chats. For further information visit www.alllearn.org/.

*This Learning City –
Learning Region Audit and
Study focuses on Western
Australia’s Great Southern as
a richly diverse region*



Growing the Great Southern

If the Great Southern region of Western Australia is to realise its potential as a Learning Region it is crucial that lifelong learning, as a principle and goal, is understood by the region’s leaders and planners, and reflected in their practice – throughout the decision-making process and in the spaces and places, plans and policies they produce.

This Learning City – Learning Region Audit and Study focuses on Western Australia’s Great Southern as a richly diverse region with numerous human, natural, infrastructural, economic and learning assets on which to build and grow the region into the future. The study seeks to answer a number of questions in order to understand what regional assets exist and what the opportunities are to link these assets together to continue to grow a thriving, prosperous and pleasant community – *Growing the Great Southern*. The questions are:

- What assets do we have?
- Where are they located?
- Who has the knowledge, skills or experience?
- How do we access it?
- How do we most effectively build a Learning Region?
- How do we sustain a Learning City – Learning Region?

Throughout, the study looks for examples of networks and partnerships, whether informal and formal, which exist within the Great Southern as a basis for developing the Learning City – Learning Region concept.

In the Learning City – Learning Region report, the results of an outline learning audit of the Great Southern region are presented. The audit seeks to build a picture of the assets that the region possesses, where they are located, who has the knowledge, skills and experience and how it can be accessed and an outline of the key elements of such strategies has been presented based on the experience of communities elsewhere together with common themes arising from the audit.

The definition of a learning region is difficult to present in one sentence as it is a multi-faceted concept. A definition that has been developed by a number of stakeholders from the region is as follows: *‘A learning region develops a culture in which people learn, research and share knowledge to sustain the economic health, quality of life and environment in the region.’* This has been broadened in this report by considering the range of attributes that a learning region should possess as a basis for understanding the steps that need to be undertaken to develop the concept in the Great Southern.

The audit itself was undertaken through 55 taped interviews of representatives from organisations in the education & training, community (social/cultural), environmental and economic & local government sectors in the region. These have resulted in a rich compilation of learning assets, existing networks and partnerships as well as input into the development of the concept across the region. Common themes from the interviews are:

- There is widespread support for the development of the region as a learning community.
- Barriers exist to this development, including financial (funding), distance, connectivity and culture.
- There is a need to break down barriers to cooperation between organisations and to develop networks and partnerships.

- The importance of telecommunications for the success of the development of the learning community should be fully recognised.
- A regional electronic assets registry and Knowledge Information System should be developed as a foundation tool for the development of the learning community.

The Great Southern already has a major asset in the regional community and business web portal the Albany GateWay www.albanygateway.com.au, where regional people regularly access and maintain communities of interest and practice online. This coupled with the advent of initiatives towards aggregation of demand for Broadband services, will constructively do something for regional communities and businesses. A proactive stance by local and state governments in encouraging the roll out of the new connectivity technologies is integral to the next wave of improving online accessibility in our local communities and part of the needs for connecting and developing learning communities.

>> information



- There was general recognition of the role that the UWA campus has to play and a desire to see it expanded.

To develop and implement a learning community concept in the Great Southern will require the introduction of strategies and partnerships. Based on experience from other communities, a number of outline recommendations are made in the report:

- The region should commit to the learning community approach for *Growing the Great Southern*.
- A Steering Group needs to be established with representation from key stakeholders and clear leadership. The group should develop a common vision and strategies and implement priority actions through task forces.
- Financial and other support should be sought from State Government agencies.
- A bottom-up approach through a community consultation exercise is required.

PDF or WORD copies of the report and taped interviews are available from Dr. Gillian Sellar gill@omninet.net.au or Great Southern Area Consultative Committee gsacc@albanyworking.org.au and are accessible online at: www.albanygateway.com.au/Member/1_2_1_Education_Software_and_IT_partnerships

Evaluating Hume Global Learning Village

– A Report on Progress to Date

By Dr Leone Wheeler

Hume City Council has a strong determination to address issues of social and economic disadvantage by implementing strategies to strengthen the Hume community. Lifelong learning is one of the nine key themes to achieve the community's vision for Hume City in 2030. This involves the development of Hume City as a learning community through the development of the Hume Global Learning Village.

This article summarises a detailed report funded by ANTA/ALA Innovation grant which documents the development of the Hume Global Learning Village and outlines initial work to put in place to build an evaluation strategy which will map the progress of Learning Together – 2004/2005 – a strategy plan for the development of Hume City as a learning community with key actions.

Many key stakeholders were involved in developing the village concept. People such as senior council officers, Councillors, the Social Justice and Safe City Task Force chaired by Frank McGuire. These people understand this concept to mean networks of hard infrastructure such as buildings and meeting places, organisations, businesses, enterprises as well as people – individuals, families and communities. Vanessa Little, General Manager, Learning Community Department, Hume City, is charged with turning the village concept into something the average citizen on the street can relate to and enjoy.

In developing the scope of Hume as a learning community it is considered that it covers the broad spectrum of lifelong and lifewide learning and encompasses the formal, non-formal and informal learning. To quote the European Commission, "lifelong learning is about learning across the lifespan, from cradle to grave, from the early years through adult life – including the Third Age – encompassing a common core of knowledge and skills which goes beyond basic numeracy and literacy".

The Hume Global Learning Village Learning Strategy is a long-term multi-dimensional initiative. In thinking about the Strategy it was important to ensure the framework be flexible and have the capacity to cater for many different sorts of projects and respond to changes over time.

The Strategy's Research and Evaluation Program is taking an action research approach to evaluation by establishing a framework that set in place principles for evaluation and a broad process that could be applied consistently to the Strategy as a whole and each of the many unique projects and activities being implemented.

Ian Phillips held a workshop at the beginning of the process to consider the role, purpose and challenges of evaluation and how these were relevant to the vision of the Strategy, and to establish some parameters about what was to be evaluated.

The evaluation framework developed at the workshop is shown diagrammatically on the next page.

During the workshop the project managers went through a collective process of thinking about their projects and developing performance indicators. This process was centred on describing a *vision of success* for a small sample of projects. Data is currently being captured as an ongoing process.

The evaluation process is ongoing and the report captures the evaluation to date and some of the key learnings which are listed below:

- The importance of leadership from the local government to drive the development of the learning community.
- The common vision for the development of Hume City as a learning community.
- The passionate leadership and team at Hume City Council Learning Community Department who coordinate and broker the activities developed in the Learning Together Strategy.
- The development of the learning community which relies on connections, networks and partnerships.
- Sustainability which is linked to resourcing and this is why it is important to have local government involved.
- Lifelong learning underpins the development of a learning community.
- Participation and celebration are key elements.

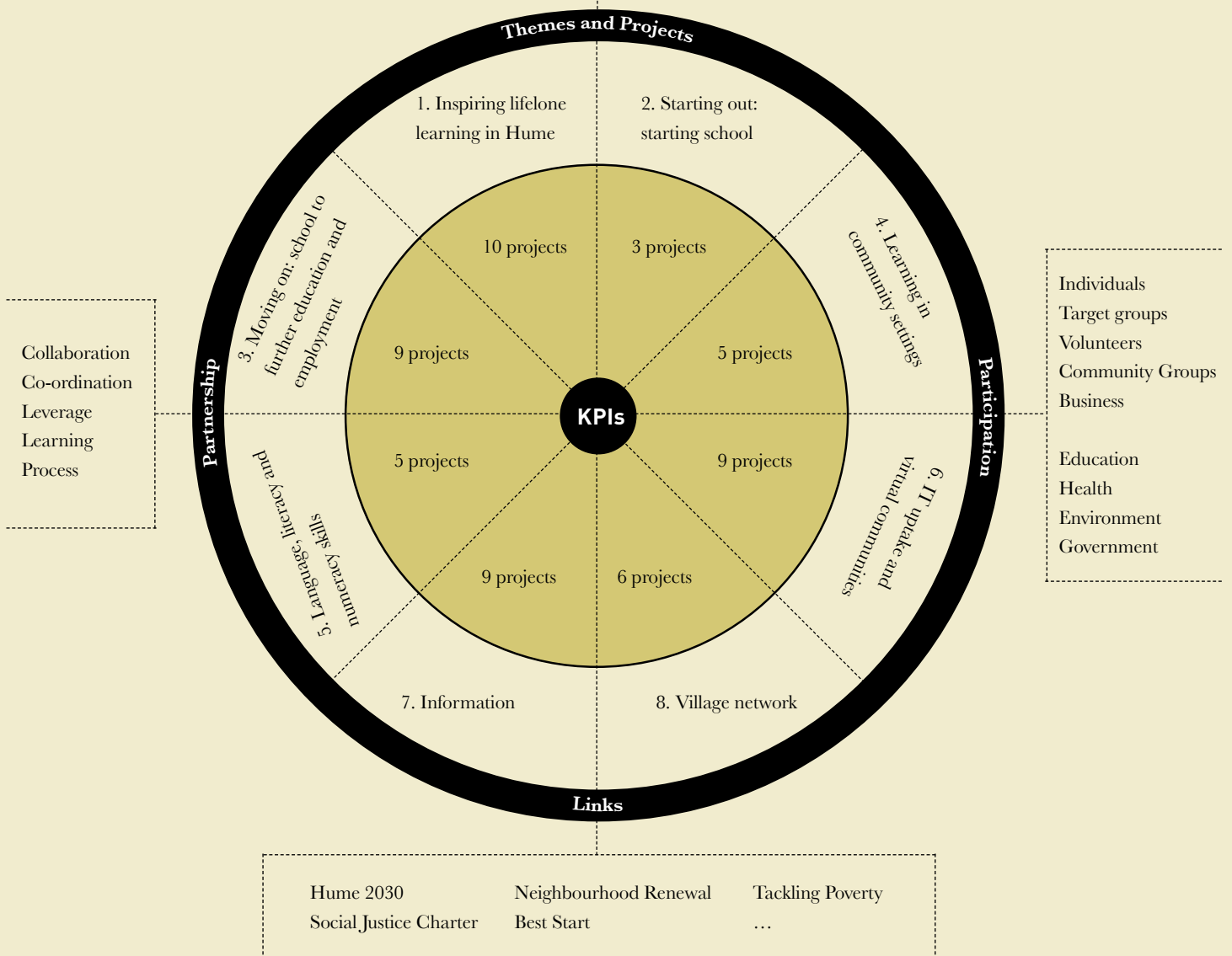
Kearns (2005) summarises these points using three concepts required for the development of a learning community *vision, partnership and leadership*. The report concludes with some practical operational and strategic elements in the development of a learning community that others can consider. This report will be available later in the year by accessing the ALA web site (www.ala.asn.au).

Kearns P 2005, *Achieving Australia as an Inclusive Learning Society – A Report on Future Directions for Lifelong Learning in Australia*, Adult Learning Australia

Hume Global Learning Village Learning Strategy – Evaluation Framework

Vision

Hume being a learning community where people embrace learning as a way of life, for all their life, thereby creating a community that values learning as a key to strengthening individual and community wellbeing.





An e-Learning Creative Community Partnership

By Glenda McPherson

The Leongatha Education Precinct (LEP) in South Gippsland Victoria recently received funding from the Australian Flexible Learning Framework for a national project managed by ALA. It is one of eight projects granted e-Learning Creative Community Partnership funding.

The LEP consists of the Gippsland ACFE Regional Council, Education Centre Gippsland, McMillan campus of Melbourne University, Leongatha Secondary School, South Gippsland Specialist School, GippsTAFE, South Gippsland LLEN, Shire of South Gippsland and Victorian Department of Education and Training. The LEP will use the e-Learning Creative Community Partnership project to enhance accessibility and flexibility of Vocational Education and Training (VET) programs offered by educational partners within the LEP. The aim is engaging disadvantaged learner groups within the South Gippsland community to remain in or return for formal education and training.

The LEP project brought together selected teachers from the educational partners – 15 teachers in all. Being enthusiastic about e-learning was the main criterion rather than particular skills. They ranged from very IT familiar to quite low IT skills, and only three had previously taught online. The project focus was to implement rather than develop – that is to say the how, why, when and who was just as important as the what. After 20 hours of intensive professional development the teachers were ready to implement.

The project represents a wide range of learners – some with disabilities, secondary and VET in school students, young learners undertaking CGEA and VCAL (Victorian Certificate of Applied Learning, a VCE alternative at years 11 & 12), older

people, and TAFE learners. It was therefore important to pick the right technology and style of activity for the learner. For example, a pirate ship developed for year eight English students had great graphics, audio, interactive websites, discussion forms, quizzes and voice boards. It was so vibrant and interactive that students are voluntarily logging in from home to continue class work. The project primarily used the TAFE Virtual Campus (WebCT) and feedback to date shows that teacher value the time saving functionality of the learner management system.

A website and activities developed by an ACE community provider for their young CGEA learners who regularly deal with CentreLink is helping them find the right part of the CentreLink website depending on what their needs were. The associated activities were developed by the young learners themselves and illustrate some typical encounters and common outcomes when dealing with CentreLink.

Discussion and voice boards were popular for senior Secondary, VCAL and TAFE learners. The addition of personal or class voice boards gave learners a new medium in which to discuss their work and collaborate with others. The interactivity of media rich activities was used extensively for Specialist School students and *Captivate* added a new dimension for VET learners at TAFE. A teacher used *Photostory* to create a wonderful digital story for TAFE learners studying Disability Services.

This is just some of what was developed. Now to implement! Currently over 220 students and learners are undertaking their activities and the remaining 100 students are expected to do so within the next few weeks. Feedback from teachers and learners has been extremely positive to date and we look forward to undertaking rigorous evaluation toward the end of the project. All teachers are keen to ensure that this is the first of many online teaching experiences for themselves and their learners.

e-Learning – Bundaberg Project

The Bundaberg Regional Learning Community organised a launch for their project on 18th August. Guest speaker was Mary Hannan who is managing the eight national projects for the Australian Flexible Learning Framework and Adult Learning Australia.

People from a range of community organisations relative to both the promotion of the Bundaberg Learning Community and the projects target group were invited. Representatives from the TAFE, University, Neighbourhood Centre, School Support Workers, Local Councils, State Development and the Education Department among others were asked to attend. Members of both State and Federal governments were asked, although, since parliament was sitting at this time they were unable to attend.

The gathering was addressed first by Anne McWhirter, Committee Member and Community development worker who outlined the formation of the Bundaberg regional Learning community in 2004 and their delight in winning the first submission they had lodged allowing the community to explore possibilities that were not available before. Mary spoke about the structure of the framework funding and explained where creative e-Learning fitted. She outlined the other project's aims and how special this funding was to demonstrate that communities working together could address and overcome the barriers faced by learners. Mary also commented on the learning that was taking place by herself as well as Project community Leaders and their community supporters as the pilot project unfolded. The launch took place in one of Bundaberg's

fine old buildings that had originally housed, among other things, the town library. Mary spoke of the role that council libraries could play in providing computer hardware for learners to access material to help in their learning.

Community leader Sandra Hansen then outlined the specifics of the Bundaberg project which will recruit young parents who have exited education early and identify their learning needs, available learning environments and link them appropriately. Through promotions on radio, in newspapers and face-to-face contact, this project will forge stronger links between community groups interested in fostering learning in the community. Access to the final summary of findings will be made available to everyone interested in the community and the Bundaberg Region Learning Community will facilitate this information's dissemination through a Bundaberg website.

This project is an opportunity for Bundaberg residents to stay up with the latest technology and use these resources in a flexible and convenient way to enhance their learning. This may be formal structured learning or subjects that are of interest to learners that are pertinent now and provide what learning is needed without having to necessarily complete a full structured program.

The event was a great opportunity to network with other members of the community who seemed very excited by the possibilities of e-Learning.

Mary Hannan and Sandra Hansen (seated), e-Learning Bundaberg





Adult Learning Australia In Quest of Learning

Dr Peter Lavender is one of the directors of NIACE (England and Wales) where he has responsibility for research, development and information. He is a member of the board of the Basic Skills Agency, the UNESCO education committee for the UK and a tutor for the Open University. His NIACE interests include basic skills, learning and health and learning in the workplace. He was a guest of ALA during Adult Learners' Week and spoke at a number of events and meetings.

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

My father died when I was very young so my mother's influence was stronger. My mother loved telling stories. I learned what matters most is other people. It's not a bad lesson. Looking back, I think people are what I will remember, and it's in their stories that most of life's lessons lie.

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

My best experiences of school were those rare moments when I achieved something, winning a prize or gaining respect from other people. Unfortunately this didn't really happen until towards the end of my days there. For most of the time I was an appalling student, not very clever and endlessly late, with scruffy work and monotonous detentions. In earlier years I found learning anything very difficult and was often bullied. Being disorganised I was frequently caught breaking rules of one sort or another.

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

I never had any dreams of flying or driving trains. As I grew older I knew I wanted to be the kind of teacher I rarely ever met, and I did achieve this. I look back on my teaching – both with children and adults – with enormous pleasure.

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

During the holidays from school and teacher training college I got a job as first a gardener's lad endlessly weeding, then a car park attendant and finally rose to the dizzy heights of being a guide at Blenheim Palace. This involved talking to individuals and groups of tourists visiting the Churchills' family home in Oxfordshire, England. I learned that it was possible to inspire other people with your enthusiasm for history, for quirky stories or beautiful objects. I also learned how displaying knowledge can easily become smugness and conceit.

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

When travelling among strangers it is best to be yourself, be open, ask questions, look carefully at what is around you, and enjoy the stories that people share with you.

The rewards are very rich.

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

I would like to be able to write better, to be able to amuse and intrigue the reader. In travelling around Australia this winter I would like to have had the skills to record the chance conversations with strangers and the extraordinary things I have seen. Perhaps an unfulfilled ambition would be to acquire the skills to write something that gave pleasure to others. That would feel very good.

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

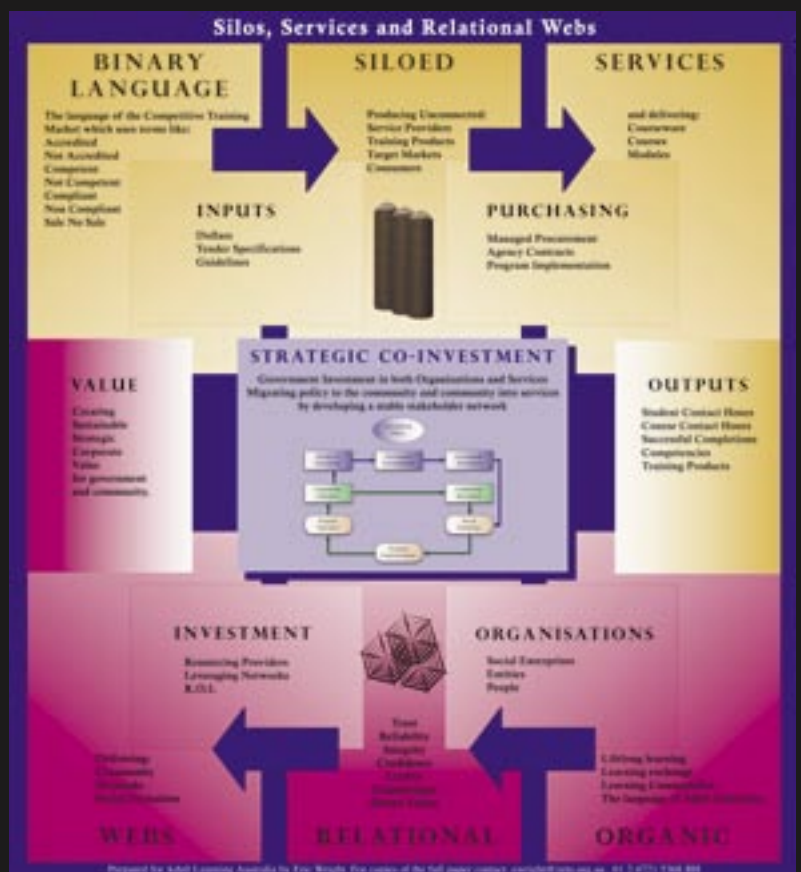
I have never considered that I have any talents. I do have a fascination for insects, particularly butterflies and moths, and it would be good to spend more time getting to understand the myriad varieties, their lifecycles and their place in the world. Here in Australia you are blessed with very beautiful lepidoptera, which I have watched with enormous pleasure in rainforests and city gardens.

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

That it's worth fighting hard for what you believe in, to preserve what is wonderful or beautiful, or what is fair and enriching. That people are to be trusted by and large and that when trusted and supported they can achieve great things. That what is important is often a very small thing, and most of what really matters comes down to how we live with others.

Thank you for participating!

The Quality Movement brought into focus the importance of both product and process. In a similar vein placed side by side the two world views produce very different, but complementary, opportunities for intervention and investment.



Silos, Services and Relational Webs

THIS PAPER WAS PRESENTED AS PART OF A POSTER EXHIBIT AT THE RECENT UNESCO CONFERENCE

This paper seeks to broaden both Adult Education’s self awareness and governments’ perceptions of it. Over the past ten years the language of the educational landscape has, broadly speaking, made increasing use of the language of the market economy. This has been paralleled by development in government thinking away from notions of public service to public sector management. The two have operated hand in hand.

The character of this language has, however, operated to obscure central defining aspects of adult education and in the process has limited the leverage government might expect from investment in adult education organisations.

The language of the market economy in education operates at both the macro and the micro levels. At the macro level we have indeed the *training market*, wherein *providers* produce *training products* that they deliver to markets. At the micro level training is concerned with *competencies*, *assessments* and *courseware*. What these have in common is what might be called a binary nature. They ARE or ARE NOT with easily identifiable boundaries. For the market economy adult education is concerned with the

production of educational commodities and it is mechanistic in its conception of how the world works.

In government the drive to accountability has seen a similar trend to binary forms. Government is concerned with the *delivery of services* by *providers* with increased sensitivity to *targeting* funds. As government has moved to *purchasing* models for service delivery the providers have increasingly become black boxes that can or can’t deliver the product.

The language of adult education however has been drawn traditionally from the concept of community, not the market economy. At the micro level the very term *Lifelong Learning* is open ended and not easily bounded. Further examination of the language of adult education reveals terms like *learning communities*, *community development* and the notion of a *learning exchange*. At a linguistic level it is characterised by the use of verbs where the market world view can be characterised by the predominance of nouns.

In comparison to the mechanistic language of the market economy the language of adult education is more organic in its model of how the world works. This can be seen as a contributing factor in the marginalisation of adult education in recent years, yet it remains a unique characteristic that larger institutions cannot initiate. Central to the organic world view is the notion of relationship. Adult education's most powerful self definitions situate it in communities by relational webs engaging communities in educational enterprise through those relationships.

The Quality Movement brought into focus the importance of both product and process. In a similar vein placed side by side the two world views produce very different, but complementary, opportunities for intervention and investment. The mechanistic market view produces silos of products delivered to markets but without relationship to each other beyond discussions of articulation of qualifications through pathways.

The organic model focuses on relationships and the process by which education and training events are arrived at.

The implications of this for both adult education and government are far reaching. For adult education the language

Additionally government would be looking strategically at the communities it wishes to migrate services to and looking for alignment between its objectives and those of the adult education organisations in those communities.

For adult and community education it represents an extension beyond capacity statements that are confined to educational products and quality of delivery. That beyond is capacity statements that encompass organisational character, organisational values and importantly articulates the web of relationships that strategically position it in the communities it provides for. The question for adult and community education providers is what return on investment do they offer government and what reach into the can they provide where government of itself cannot.

>>> biography

Eric Wright qualified with Honours in Social Work from Sydney University in 1980. After a number of years in social work focusing on interdisciplinary teamwork in the criminal justice system he completed post graduate qualifications in Adult and Continuing Education and founded one of the first Evening Colleges to make the transition to Community College. He has 15 years experience in establishing adult education as a learning exchange where communities educate themselves.

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ERIC WRIGHT

used can be brought forward in a more meaningful way through a self definition that emphasises relationship. Relational mapping of adult education organisations becomes a way to express in more concrete terms the organic character of its educational process. For government, leveraging existing networks provides a highly effective and efficient tool to stimulate social and educational outcomes. However it requires broadening of the thinking beyond products and services and asks it to look inside the black box for the networks to leverage. In a fuller focus on process and product the silos and services can begin to be connected through relational webs.

For government, that fuller focus means approaching funding of adult and community education through the eyes of an investor not simply those of a procurement manager. Interest in the social enterprises that comprise the sector is not focused on products and compliance but rather on the nature of the organisations themselves, how they do what they do and where they see themselves in the broader community.

Adult Learning and the Ageing Population

In recent years there has been a growing body of government policy work on the implications of Australia's ageing demographic. As an ALA Visiting Research Fellow, Dr John McIntyre has recently completed a briefing paper for ALA reviewing this work and what it means for the community sector and lifelong learning policy. The paper will shortly be available on the ALA website.

On the eve of the 2004 Federal election, the Minister for Education launched his consultation paper, *Adult Learning in Australia* (DEST 2003).

Perhaps to the surprise of many, this new policy interest in adult learning focused almost entirely on the learning of older workers, particularly in rural and regional Australia.

The paper was a significant one. Aside from its social implications, Australia's ageing demographic will have many implications for health and social security costs and the tax system. This was highlighted when the Treasurer made ageing an economic issue with the Inter-Generational Report early in 2003.

Adult Learning in Australia was part of this policy direction. It highlighted the concept of *mature age transitions* and projected the *learning community model* as one way of promoting greater participation in learning in rural and regional Australia. It raised the problem of older workers' access to learning in the workplace and the key role that employers can play in promoting adult learning.

The paper was important for what it signalled about how government is likely to approach the lifelong learning issue - through the prism of ageing policy.

The Government has recently outlined its priorities for dealing with the ageing population in *Australia's Demographic Challenges* which states that the goal is to increase older people's participation in the workforce - to address the productivity deficit that will result as the ageing baby boomer population retires. They suggest three strategies to offset this change - better education and health; reduced incentives to retire and improved workplace flexibility. Some wags have suggested that this means the new retirement policy is *work till you drop*.

A recent OECD report suggests that Australia needs to do more to support participation in learning by older, unskilled workers, as part of its planning for an ageing population. This is not really news - the Ministerial Declaration on ACE highlighted the *knowledge gap* that has been created as the better educated have reaped the benefits of the knowledge economy and the need to reach those who have not participated in learning since school.

If groups such as older, less skilled workers are to remain productive in later life, how are they to acquire new vocational and life skills and through what kinds of adult learning?

There is a significant potential for community-based adult learning to contribute to the policy priorities (and real social issues) raised by an ageing Australia. This does not mean that government is likely to find more resources for an expansion of adult learning opportunities in general. Though an ageing demographic will create a higher level of demand from increased numbers of retired people, this activity will be *left to the market*.

Government is more likely to fund targeted programs to assist those that have been excluded from participation in learning in the past. Community providers will be asked to take a larger role in social policy in this way - as many now do, in line with the clear goals to this effect in the Ministerial Declaration on ACE.

Initiatives in community-based adult learning are important and community agencies can provide more flexible and responsive opportunities than formal institutions. Many ACE providers have a long history of working with older clientele, particularly women returning to work, and are expert in developing those attributes such as confidence, enabling skills and motivation to learn that is necessary to increased social and economic participation.

This is particularly true of those ACE providers who have developed a multi-service capability (at least in Victoria and NSW), resourced by a mix of Federal and State program funding. In this way governments may fund programs that are targeted to older at risk groups, such as community-learning initiatives to increase participation of identified groups such as older men in rural areas.

However, the political dominance of Federal government is changing the complexion of Federal-State relations, especially around the funding of VET and higher education. How adult learning (and the community sector) fares will depend on whether the Federal government takes further initiatives on broader adult learning in the directions proposed in *Adult Learning in Australia*.

A coherent national policy on adult learning is needed as a framework for new initiatives to address major problems in the fragmentation and regional imbalance of learning opportunities, and the lack of advisory services for older learners. A national program would need to provide incentives for formal institutions to collaborate with community agencies and local government and employers to meet the challenges of an ageing Australia.



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Key websites:

- Australian Policy On-line, research and publications from over 120 Australian research centres, <http://www.apo.org.au>.
- Ageing research on-line, sponsored by the Federal Department of Health and Ageing www.aro.gov.au.
- COTA National Seniors Partnership, formerly Council on the Ageing (Australia), <http://www.cota.org.au>.
- DEST—Adult Learning. www.dest.gov.au/sectors/training_skills/policy_issues_reviews/reviews/previous_reviews/adult_education_in_australia/default.htm
- National Institute for Adult Continuing Education (NIACE), www.niace.org.uk/.
- Ministerial Declaration on ACE, www.mceetya.edu.au/public/ace_declaration.htm
- Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) www.oecd.org/maintopic/.
- Treasury papers on the ageing population, <http://demographics.treasury.gov.au>. and *Intergenerational report*, www.budget.gov.au/2002-03/bp5/html/index.html.



University of Ballarat – Fast Track Course – Case Study on Rebecca Alexander

Often executives working in managerial positions, or those aspiring to a management role, reach a point in their careers when they realise they need to upgrade their qualifications.

Perhaps they've reached a level within their company or organisation and find they are not being promoted any further due to the lack of formal, tertiary education. Or they may be running a successful and growing trade or service-related business and are now finding that in order to further develop their business they need more management skills and knowledge.

However, often the main obstacle in attaining a formal qualification is time – there simply isn't time in a busy manager's schedule to undertake a lengthy degree course that involves years of study and a considerable, ongoing time commitment.

Rebecca Alexander, manager of customer communications in the sales and marketing department at Origin Energy, found a practical and highly effective solution with the University of Ballarat – TAFE Division's Advanced Diploma of Business Management program delivered in Fast>>Track mode, which is already opening doors at her place of work.

The course offers a flexible and fast way to achieve a formal, tertiary qualification in management that can be completed in just six months instead of years.

"My decision to take on this course over other available courses was twofold. I needed to consolidate my management experience and learn some new models and ways of dealing with situations and tasks. Some form of tertiary qualification was important for me to be able to continue to develop as a manager within Origin Energy," Ms Alexander said.

"But I also had a strong personal desire to maintain a balance in my work and home life.

"I considered my options, including undertaking an MBA, and decided that I wasn't prepared to commit the vast amounts of time to an MBA that it would require. The Fast>>Track course provided a credible option that could be undertaken in a condensed period of time.

"The course involved a full day of study every fortnight, with manageable study hours, which meant I could maintain some work/life balance," she said.

"The fact that the course was only for six months was very attractive – I felt that I could achieve something in that period of time, and also get back into study again. I thoroughly enjoyed it a lot more than I thought I would."

Apart from some internal management courses and short courses on various topics, Ms Alexander had not undertaken any formal training since matriculation.

"I wanted to network with people who were at a similar level in terms of management experience and learn from people rather than from text books. The regular, full contact days were appealing and I got a lot more out of the face-to-face contact than the books," she said.

"I liked the real sharing of experiences. We would study an area, such as marketing, and would discuss everyone's interpretation of the issues and then have an assessment. I was able to put my experiences forward along with others in the course that may have had an issue with it. This gave everyone different viewpoints as to how issues could be managed, while the course provided great models that underpinned my existing knowledge base.

"The network of people that I had the opportunity to work with was definitely the outstanding factor of this course – people from all walks of life and in all different types of roles experiencing similar opportunities and challenges. The highlight for me was the opportunity to share experiences and support one another through the course."

Ms Alexander manages a communications team of five at Origin Energy that has the primary focus of ensuring internal messages to more than 700 staff are consistent, timely and managed with the external messages delivered to the company's two million customers.

Ms Alexander says the course has already helped her in her current role, raising her profile within Origin Energy. She has already been offered two internal opportunities as a result of her increased level of performance since completing the course.

The 2005 course year is now underway. Courses will be held in most capital cities and in many major regional areas throughout Australia.

The Fast>>Track Program is also about to be launched internationally in 2005.

For information about the University of Ballarat, visit <http://www.ballarat.edu.au/>.

Non-Formal Learning



The following is a story about one student's experience of the benefits of non-formal learning.

Lisa O'Farrell, North Melbourne Language & Literacy

Di – Monday morning whereveruni/UP class

Di is a Chinese woman who is aged 47. Di arrived in Australia in 1986 with her husband and two sons.

Di completed 12 years of schooling in Hong Kong and was employed as an accountant before immigrating to Australia. Upon arrival, Di stayed home caring for her sons and performing household duties. Di has always lived in government housing in North Melbourne having recently moved from the high-rise flats in Alfred Street to a bigger unit in Arden Street. She receives benefits and is a concession cardholder.

Di's priorities are to educate her sons and provide for them in every way. Both of the boys attend private Catholic schools, funded by scholarships. The weekly costs of education, soccer, and living expenses are all tightly budgeted. Both of the boys have access to laptop computers provided by the school. Di is interested in them but has no access to a home computer. None of her friends have computers and she has no knowledge of where she could access computers within the local community. Di is very self-conscious and fears that her lack of computer knowledge and understanding will cause the machine to break or become damaged. She is embarrassed that she knows *nothing* about computers.

Di had previously asked about the availability of computer classes but could not be catered for as the only program running was the Certificate II in IT course which required a higher level

of both English and computer knowledge than Di possessed. As soon as beginner classes were announced, she quickly expressed an interest to her English class teacher who forwarded her name to me. Di currently attends the centre for nine hours participating in an English as a Second Language Class.

Di has begun her computer classes by studying Microsoft Word at a very basic level. This is important as her English class uses this program for one hour each week and previously she had felt very uneasy and reluctant to join in. As her English improves, she is expected to write and read using this program, so she needed to know how to use it. Di also completed some very basic lessons using Internet Explorer – she wanted to use this because of her interest in the online Chinese newspapers and websites, and also to locate facts for her English class.

Di is really enjoying using Microsoft Word. The information booklets let her progress at her own pace and the illustrated instructions help overcome her limited English. She loved producing copies of flyers and newsletters that displayed fonts, pictures, borders and other basic features. She felt satisfied at producing these posters. Finding the Chinese news website was also a rewarding moment for Di.

Di feels that she needs more lessons about the internet as well as increasing her knowledge of Microsoft Word. Moving around the computer, locating files and folders is also something Di feels she will forget unless she has extra time next term. There are also some English software programs that Di would like to try if the opportunity arises.

Support from the whereveruni/Unlimited Potential (UP) program will ensure Di continues to experience and learn more about technology. Without this program Di is afraid that her newly acquired skills will be forgotten if she can't continue to attend this class for two hours per week.



The ACE sector and small business – needs and opportunities

ALA has engaged Ms Kris Newton as a Visiting Research Fellow to undertake research to identify **how the ACE sector can better meet the identified learning/training/professional development needs of small business.**

The research hopes to identify recommendations, or guidelines, to assist ACE providers to develop learning services that address small business needs, and that fit within small business limitations.

For the purpose of this research, the small business or small enterprise has been defined as employing five people or less, and includes workplaces such as home-based businesses, micro-businesses, consultants, freelance, contractors, etc., as well as more traditional small businesses.

The first phase of the research, a national web-based survey, has now been completed and the data analysed. The survey was intended to test the currency and relevance of previous research (particularly the Small Business Professional Development Programme (SBDP) – a longitudinal national project, involving over 2,200 small businesses, which aimed to “find ways to help small business to take more control of its own training needs and solutions”). Feedback was also sought on other contemporary issues for small business; for example, those identified by Peter Kearns’ *Are Two Worlds Colliding? – the provision of training and learning services for small business*, or *DEST’s Skilling Australia – New Directions for Vocational Education & Training*.

Over 1,000 organisations nationally were invited to give their views of the importance to small business of the identified issues. Organisations targeted included:

- small enterprises
- small business intermediary and facilitating organisations, such as
 - Business Enterprise Centres
 - industry-specific representative organisations
 - government small business advisory organisations and networks, and
 - chambers of commerce/business
- local governments and regional development forums/organisations
- VET/ACE providers
- and so on.

The results of the survey confirm that, while there may have been some progress in *mainstreaming* provision of learning services to small enterprises and workplaces, many issues remain. Respondents overwhelmingly supported the critical nature of both developing an ongoing relationship with small business, and flexibility of response to their learning needs.

While the survey results demonstrate that there are still significant barriers to participation by small workplaces in the formal training/learning system (for example, the language and structure of the formal (VET) training system; a lack of understanding of the business environment in which small business operates), it does also indicate clear opportunities for learning providers.

Learning/training providers who can create significant opportunities for on-going and loyal clients are likely to be those who make the effort to:

- build a long-term relationship with small enterprises;
- learn to speak their language;
- get to know their clients’ circumstances and understand their needs;
- offer the *just-in-time, just-for-me*, **flexible** learning services required by small workplaces;
- demonstrate a clear connection between learning outcomes and the enterprise’s bottom line; and
- assist small business clients, in the longer-term, to take advantage of linkages with the formal training system.

The final report of the research (due by the end of July 2005) will make recommendations on *guidelines* for good practice for ACE providers in their dealings with the small business clients/potential clients; specifically:

- How ACE providers can utilise their flexibility, commitment to lifelong/adult learning, and ability to motivate learners to better assist small enterprises identify and meet their learning/training needs.

Kris is also calling on **learning providers to assist with illustrative case-studies of best practice exemplars to accompany these guidelines** (eg experience of good collaborative practice from Learn@Work Day, or opportunities for long-term relationships created by meeting an immediate need). Case-studies which illustrate why a particular intervention was not as successful as hoped (for example, a critical element was overlooked) can be just as illuminating as those which were resounding successes. Case-study examples should outline briefly (500–600 words):

- the background (i.e. the identified problem/need)
- the proposed learning intervention, and
- the reasons for the success (or otherwise) of the intervention.

Case-study examples can be emailed direct to Kris:

kris@cervelle.com.au.



Recipe for business success

People with a disability a solution for skill shortage crisis

Australia's rapidly growing hospitality industry is facing a critical skills shortage as experts estimate the creation of 65,000 new jobs within the next five years*.

Bucking the trend facing traditional hospitality businesses – which are already hard-pressed for quality staff – Geelong-based café and gourmet catering service **dal** (previously Dial-A-Lunch) is enjoying solid growth through a business model based on employing and training skilled people with disabilities.

Frustrated with the lack of employment opportunities for her daughter, who suffered brain damage caused by measles, Executive Director Marie Kuchenmeister founded **dal** in Geelong in 1991 as a government-funded Training and Employment Service.

“When you look at **dal's** simple beginnings it is hard to believe we now have two busy cafes and a very successful and professional catering business,” Ms Kuchenmeister said.

dal employs and provides a variety of training and employment programs for people with special needs. Employees develop industry skills on-the-job and receive further training at The Gordon Institute of TAFE, including preparation, cooking and presentation of food, delivering to venue and table waiting.

Keen to further increase their expertise, many of **dal's** staff have achieved Certificates II and III in Hospitality Studies and one staff member has already completed her apprenticeship as a chef.

Australian Disability Training Advisory Council (ADTAC) co-Chair and small business owner Leonie Clyne commends **dal's** innovation and urges other hospitality businesses to reap the benefits of employing skilled people with disabilities.

“Hiring people with disabilities takes advantage of a workforce of over 750,000 potential employees. Statistics show employers who hire people with disabilities can also expect to enjoy higher employee loyalty combined with lower levels of absenteeism and lower recruitment costs**.” Ms Clyne said.

Ms Kuchenmeister cites first-hand experience and glowing customer feedback which indicates hiring people with disabilities is a wise decision, for staff, for the business and for the local community.

“There are so many problems with skill shortages in this industry, I can't believe more employees aren't tapping into this *hidden workforce*. I know I will always have enough skilled staff to maintain **dal's** customer satisfaction as the business continues to grow,” Ms Kuchenmeister said.

For further information on employing people with a disability visit www.jobable.gov.au as an information resource.

*DEWR Job Outlook, June 2004. **DEWR Employee Benefits Flyer, Oct 2004

Carers Learning Circle Action Kit

Maximising health and independence is a key issue for most people with disabilities. And in order to access health and independence, many people with a disability need the assistance of a carer. This Action Kit provides tools to inspire, inform and support carers in their crucial roles. It will help you in your role as a carer, your friends and your family.

Contents of the Action Kit

The Action Kit includes:

- The Guide for Facilitators- provides useful information for people who are going to facilitate the Action Kit with a group of carers. It will help facilitators to feel comfortable and confident in their role.

- Four Modules, each covering a different topic
- Additional support material
- Summary sheets and/or leaflets for each module

For copies of the Carers Learning Circle Action Kit, developed in partnership with ALA, please contact:

Neil Carver-Smith,
Stara Training Services

PO Box 90

Palmyra WA 6957

Ph 08 9339 0039

ala@stara.iinet.net.au

A small charge will be made to cover postage and handling. Details on request.

This Action Kit provides tools to inspire, inform and support carers



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All I really need to know I learned in Kindergarten

Peter Lavender, during his recent visit to Australia came across the following advice, written by Robert Fulghum which if followed might make the world a better place.

All I really need to know about how to live and what to do and how to be I learned in kindergarten. Wisdom was not at the top of the graduate school mountain, but there in the sand pile at school.

These are the things I learned:

- Share everything.
- Play fair.
- Don't hit people.
- Put things back where you found them.
- Clean up your own mess.
- Don't take things that aren't yours.
- Say you're sorry when you hurt somebody.
- Wash your hands before you eat.
- Flush.
- Warm cookies and cold milk are good for you.
- Live a balanced life - learn some and think some and draw and paint and sing and dance and play and work every day some.
- Take a nap every afternoon.
- When you go out in the world, watch out for traffic, hold hands and stick together.
- Be aware of wonder. Remember the little seed in the Styrofoam cup: the roots go down and the plant goes up and nobody really knows how or why, but we are all like that.
- Goldfish and hamsters and white mice and even the little seed in the Styrofoam cup - they all die. So do we.
- And then remember the Dick-and-Jane books and the first word you learned - the biggest word of all - LOOK.

Everything you need to know is in there somewhere. The Golden Rule and love and basic sanitation. Ecology and politics and equality and sane living.

Take any one of those items and extrapolate it into sophisticated adult terms and apply it to your family life or your work or government or your world and it holds true and clear and firm. Think what a better world it would be if we all - the whole world - had cookies and milk at about 3 o'clock in the afternoon and then lay down with our blankies for a nap. Or if all governments had as a basic policy to always put things back where they found them and to clean up their own mess.

And it is still true, no matter how old you are, when you go out in the world, it is best to hold hands and stick together.

Talk with Me: ALA-ANTA Innovation Research Grant 2005



Also watching these people become more confident, empowered to learn and do other things, while watching their skills improve is a great reward.

Cheryl Lewis-Fitzgerald

In putting my application together for the ALA-ANTA Innovation Research grant 2005, I was interested in developing a tool to assist people who work in the area of non-formal learning. A summary of my application reads as follows:

There are many forms of non-formal learning (wherever uni, learning circles and forms of workplace training to name a few), and to be a facilitator or trainer in this field requires particular skills, knowledge and resources. This manual, based on the research into non-formal learning by Cheryl Lewis-Fitzgerald, will be a practical tool for facilitators and trainers working in this field, in particular, with non-traditional learners. As well as planning, delivering and reviewing autonomous (self-directed) non-formal learning, the manual will also include how to conduct assessment and Recognition of Current Competencies (RCC)/ Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) so participants can gain accreditation for the skills they acquire in this environment. The manual will also offer support and resources for the facilitator/trainer.

What I have realised more and more in developing this manual is that the most important thing a trainer/facilitator can do, when working with adult learners is to talk with them – not talk to them or at them, but **with** them.

In the literature review, and from the data, dialogue is seen as a characteristic of non-formal learning, but from the data and observation from my research I would have to claim it as the major characteristic of the non-formal learning environment. As stated by Levine (1995), unanticipated learning occurs as a



function of interaction and conversation between the trainer/facilitator and the learners.

It is important to realise that it is not just dialogue that takes place in the environment, but that it is understood, and embraced by the learners. Part of the dialogue is also the decoding, that is the learner not only hears what is being said, but can identify with it due to their previous knowledge and perceptions. They begin to see how they themselves act in the world.

For a connection to be made by the learner to their learning, there needs to be dialogue, so that they can explore their options and critically think about their situations. As Knowles (1970) discusses in his principles of adult learning the information must be meaningful to the learner, and they must see it as having relevance to their lives – in other words, take ownership of not only the learning, but also the language. Feedback is also vital for the learner to ensure effectiveness of the learning, and allow for questioning (Knowles, 1970).

Developing a rapport with the participants breaks down many of the barriers to learning, and provides them with encouragement and support. It develops an environment that they feel safe in, a sense of belonging, and allows them to develop trust with the trainer/facilitator and their own learning.

A Personal Note

Having been a trainer in non-formal programs, I have worked with a number of different learners. As the rapport has built between the learner and myself, they have come to know and trust me. As a result, they have felt a need to tell me their stories.

I have heard:

- What it is like to be an addict, and the pain and suffering it has caused people and their families.
- How women escape their violent husbands, and have had to start a new life for themselves.
- How people tried to commit suicide.
- How people avoided being murdered.
- What a negative experience school has been for people – being hit for not doing their homework or making a mistake.

It can be scary; it opens up your eyes to more of what is happening in your world. However, I have also heard how these people moved on from that situation.

I have heard or seen:

- Families reconnected.
- People believe in themselves again.
- People get jobs.
- People resume their studies.
- People go on to further study.

Also watching these people become more confident, empowered to learn and do other things, while watching their skills improve is a great reward. This has been the most satisfying and worthwhile teaching/facilitating role I have taken on, and I love this work. Scary as it is on the odd occasion, the positives far out way the negatives. I have been grateful to the organisations I work with for their support and the learners for all they have taught me.

Also, thanks to you for allowing me to share my learning and thoughts with you.

It is hoped that this manual, entitled *A Coffee a Chat and a Gentle Transformation* will be available for sale soon. If you are interested in purchasing a copy, or would like further information, please contact Cheryl Lewis-Fitzgerald at RMIT Learning Networks, telephone (03) 9925 9631 or email cheryl.lewis-fitzgerald@rmit.edu.au.

ALA and Cheryl are hoping to launch the manual at the LEARNERS @ WORK: New directions and connections: ACE AS A CATALYST, the 45th Annual National Conference of Adult Learning Australia in November 2005.



Developing 21st Century Teaching and Learning



Nicholas Abbey

Nicholas Abbey is a consultant and researcher with extensive leadership, policy making, and research experience in the government and community sectors. He recently worked on a University of Melbourne research project, identifying key issues in teaching and learning and their impact on the future of educational reform. Nicholas is a member of the Council of the Victorian Institute of Teaching and chairs the P-12 Education Reference Group in Victoria. He is also President of the Macleod P-12 College Council and President of the Kingsbury Primary School Council.

We stand on the threshold of a pedagogical and technological revolution, with profound and far-reaching consequences for education and training and the economy and society. In the years ahead, this revolution is likely to coalesce around emerging pedagogies such as *structured dialogue*.

In this article, I explore how structured dialogue can build robust learning environments and improve learning outcomes. I also examine a four-dimensional model and stage-by-stage process for leading and managing such strategic change.

The article is also a comment on a conundrum: although knowledge-building, problem-solving dialogue is a powerful tool in strategic change and improving performance in all organisations, many organisations and schools are yet to fully tap the power of dialogue.

These key issues are discussed in the following sections:

1. What is dialogue and why is it important?
2. Why is dialogue so infrequent and difficult?
3. Face-to-face and computer-mediated dialogue.
4. The pedagogy, technology, and performance shift.
5. Alexander's dialogic teaching: benefits and challenges.
6. Four dimensions of 21st century teaching and learning.
7. A five-stage process for leading and managing change.

1. What is dialogue and why is it important?

Although the concept of dialogue has long been a fashionable word, there is no consensus on a precise definition. Nonetheless, a richer understanding of how people learn more effectively and achieve strategic change through dialogue is emerging.

Dialogue is not simply talk or the sharing of ideas. It is a structured, extended process leading to new insights and deep knowledge and understanding and, ultimately, better practice. There is a strategic orientation implicit in dialogue aimed at advancing beyond participants' initial stages of knowledge and belief. As Bereiter and Scardamalia note:

“In every kind of knowledge-based, progressive organization, new knowledge and new directions are forged through dialogue... The dialogue in Knowledge Age organizations is not principally concerned with narrative, exposition, argument, and persuasion (the stand-bys of traditional rhetoric) but with solving problems and developing new ideas” (2005).

Bereiter and Scardamalia define *dialogic literacy* as the ability to engage productively in discourse whose purpose is to generate new knowledge and understanding, in contrast to functional literacy: the ability to comprehend and use communication media to serve the purposes of everyday life. Dialogic literacy is thus “the fundamental literacy” for a knowledge society and “educational policy needs to be shaped so as to make it a prime objective” (2005).

In a similar vein, Alexander suggests dialogic teaching is more systematically searching, reciprocal, extended, and propelled by deep knowledge and understanding, consistent with the Vygotskian tradition, Bruner's concept of scaffolding, and many educators' experiences in developing classroom dialogue over the last few decades.

Beyond the old idea that reading and writing are the only real work (Alexander, 2005), there is thus increasing recognition of the unique contribution of structured talk to effective learning such as students being skilled up for extended dialogue that goes far more deeply (than may be customary) into a subject area, issue, or problem.

As well, Isaacs at the MIT Center for Organizational Learning contends that dialogue provides “a potentially critical foundational process for creating new “infrastructures for learning” within modern organizations” (1994). He identifies four themes suggestive of the powerful, potentially radical possibilities for leaders, managers, and change agents:

1. Dialogue seems to be emerging as a cornerstone for “organizational learning”.
2. Dialogue appears to be a powerful way of harnessing the inherent self-organising collective intelligence of groups of people and of both broadening and deepening the collective inquiry process.
3. Dialogue shows possibilities for being an important breakthrough in the way people might govern themselves, whether in public or private domains.

4. Dialogue shows promise as an innovative alternative approach to producing coordinated action among collectives.

2. Why is dialogue so infrequent and difficult?

“Organizations require a minimal degree of consensus but not so much as to stifle the discussion that is the lifeblood of innovation”, note Evans and Genady (1999), who observe that the constant challenge of contrasting ideas is what sustains and renews organisations. However, despite the correlation between dialogue and strategic change and performance improvement, dialogue would seem to be practised infrequently and often more by chance than by design. As Anderson observes,

“... the idea that dialogue might occur in a meeting, although not absurd, is at variance with the very idea of most meetings... Meetings normally function to inhibit the outbreak of dialogue”.

What makes dialogue so infrequent and difficult? There are no definitive answers to this problem. Research needs to inquire into the *systems-level* and *person-centred* factors that enable and constrain emerging pedagogies such as structured dialogue. Yet to be fully understood is how and why dialogue is often so compromised in organisations (business firms, government departments, health agencies, etc.) and educational settings.

Despite the mounting evidence that classroom dialogue increases student achievement, school research conducted by Nystrand (1999) and others also indicates that dialogic discourse is rare – taking up only about 15% of instruction in the more than 100 middle and high school classes in their study. Their most striking finding is the **virtual absence of structured talk among so-called lower track students**, obviously pertinent to past failures to reduce the educational achievement gap based on socio-economic status.

Observing classroom practice in five countries, Alexander was also struck by the marked differences in students' confidence and competencies with (and opportunities for) structured talk and deep learning. In some of the countries,

“...talk which in an effective and sustained way engages students cognitively and scaffolds their understanding is much less common than it should be” (2005).

For dialogue to become more frequent and effective in generating positive outcomes in schools and other organisations, it requires both pedagogical and technological change.

3. Face-to-face and computer-mediated dialogue

Dialogue typically refers to face-to-face interaction using spoken language. However, dialogue is not limited to speech. The uses of dialogue can be considered as face-to-face communication and computer-mediated communication. Research is looking at how dialogue is an integral part of computer-mediated communication, creating what some refer to as a **new form of oracy** that is not speech and not writing but a hybrid fusion.

Some of the most interesting research also examines how computer-mediated dialogue and internet use can enable learners to move freely between hyper-linked theoretical and empirical levels of knowledge. Pedagogical knowledge and skills combined with technological tools and understandings can assist learners to develop the best mix of empirical/factual and theoretical/conceptual learning.

This can overcome the old separation between theoretical learning and the learning of skills and factual information, blurring the boundary between knowledge and skills and having positive implications for dissolving the old academic/vocational divide.

As group discussion and dialogue often take place on a computer screen rather than in verbal exchanges, another possibility arises. As Wells (2000) points out, dialogue in the oral mode obviously has a serious disadvantage as a medium for collaborative knowledge building: it leaves no record of what has been jointly developed and understood.

For dialogical classrooms and organisations to emerge, the pedagogical shift to deeper theoretical and conceptual learning needs new technological tools. Indeed, the vision for 21st century education may well be that all learners will become **pedagogically and technologically literate**, i.e., knowing how best to access and develop deeper knowledge and understanding, as the basis for more effective lifelong and life-wide learning for all.

4. The pedagogy, technology, and performance shift

As I have argued elsewhere (Abbey, 2004), countries such as Australia are on the cusp of a combined pedagogical and technological revolution with profound and far-reaching consequences for education and training and the economy and society. This revolution is comparable to the last great pedagogical transition that took shape in the 1500s when printing made an unprecedented era of educational change possible (McClintock, 1992).

My own research also suggests that the alignment between new pedagogies and new technologies **is the single most important factor for optimal performance in any organisation as well as the key challenge for those seeking to develop 21st century teaching and learning.**

In the case of schools, it is clear that the possibility of significant and sustained improvement is doubtful without systematically dovetailing the two.

However, many organisations and schools are yet to develop the appropriate new pedagogies for realising the potential of technology. The following equations capture the problem of the relationship between emerging pedagogies, new technological tools in ICT and new technology areas such as nanotechnology, and the prospects for significant and sustained performance improvement (PTP):

- Old pedagogy + old technology = low performance improvement.
- Old pedagogy + new technology = mild performance improvement.
- New pedagogy + old technology = mild performance improvement.
- New pedagogy + new technology = high performance improvement.

Strategies that have succeeded in aligning new pedagogies and new technologies for performance improvement are not the norm in most organisational settings, with some new technologies simply being used to enliven old pedagogies. Learning technology can simply transfer old pedagogies to an electronic medium, even if old pedagogies such as student-centred learning dating back to the Renaissance are given a contemporary spin.

Although advances are taking place in both pedagogy and technology, to some extent, however, they are still taking place separately. Notwithstanding the countless examples of good practice in schools and other organisations contrary to this observation, as Bereiter in *Education and Mind in the Knowledge Age* (2002) cautions:

“Something is going on in elementary schools across North America that might strike the detached observer as insane. Millions of dollars are being poured into high-tech equipment that is used mainly to produce the kinds of ‘projects’ that in an earlier day were produced using scissors, old magazines, and library paste”.

Pedagogy and technology have developed with a considerable degree of independence from each other. These two bodies of knowledge have been generated by distinct professions with independent traditions, notwithstanding the fact that many educators and classroom teachers are at the forefront of synergistically integrating the two.

The relationship between pedagogical and technological change is, however, becoming more intimate. **The emerging pedagogy/technology of structured dialogue is both a cause and a consequence of this new intimacy.** Future advances in dialogue – with implications for performance and problem-solving in all organisations – will combine new pedagogies and technologies in subtle and ingenious ways.

But pedagogical change is overshadowed by an over-emphasis on technological change. There is still too little interdisciplinary research which has examined the potential of new technologies to support a genuinely new pedagogy. Contemporary pedagogical issues, which can be either glossed over or ignored in a discourse dominated by technology and assessment issues (Scardamalia, 2001) include, above all, the primary challenge of how best to develop deeper knowledge and understanding. As Scardamalia observes,

“... although curriculum standards give a nod to it, when it comes to specifying in detail what is to be taught and tested, understanding is typically replaced by factual knowledge” (2001: 173).

5. Alexander’s dialogic teaching: benefits and challenges

To develop pedagogy which makes productive use of emergent technologies, both inside and outside the classroom, it is clearly important to generate advances in pedagogy *per se*. In turn, this can be a step towards better utilising computer-mediated dialogue. In this respect, two publications of importance for 21st century teaching and learning are Robin Alexander’s *Culture and Pedagogy: International Comparisons in Primary Education* (2001) and *Towards Dialogic Teaching: Rethinking Classroom Talk* (2005).

Concerned by the marked differences in students’ competencies with structured talk across five countries, Alexander identifies a key challenge: how best to transform classroom conversation into a more structured dialogue whose function is cognitive as well as social. Unpacking the principles and practicalities of structured talk, he uses the term *dialogic teaching* for teachers and students building on their own and each others’ knowledge and ideas and chaining them into coherent lines of thinking and inquiry.

Alexander calls for adjustment in the ratio of written to oral tasks and activities and for teachers to be supported to make more use of oral assessment, so that they can better assess understanding from what students say as well as from what they write. Indeed, considering the strong correlation between oracy and literacy and numeracy, the balance of reading, writing, and structured talk across the curriculum is of such significance that, as Alexander suggests, it is in need of urgent review in many countries! Alexander (2005) also discusses interim findings from two dialogic teaching development projects in the UK, which provide positive evidence of the following changes:

- **Teachers are constructing their questions more carefully.** Questions starting with *What? Who? and How many?* are giving way to *Why? and How?* Teachers, then, are balancing factual recall or test questions with those which probe thinking. *Now who can tell me...?* questions, and competitive hands-up bidding to answer them, are being used more discriminatingly.

- **Student contributions are more diverse.** Instead of just factual recall, there are more contributions of an expository, explanatory, justificatory or speculative kind. There is also reduced pressure on students to provide instant responses, with student-teacher exchanges becoming longer and more collaborative.
- **Students are answering more loudly, clearly, and confidently, and at greater length, and speculating, thinking aloud, and helping each other.** Teachers and students are beginning to build on questions and answers, adopting a questioning strategy of extension (staying with one student or theme) rather than rotation (questioning round the class).
- **There is greater involvement of so-called less able students,** who are finding that the changed dynamics of classroom talk provide them with alternative opportunities to show competence and progress, and of quieter, more compliant children *in the middle* who are often inhibited by unfocused questioning, the competitiveness of bidding, and the dominance of some of their peers. The reading and writing of all is thus benefiting from the emphasis on talk, confirming that “the traditional English idea of literacy without oracy makes little sense”.

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Alexander also acknowledges the problems “in attempting to encourage what, in British classrooms, is in effect a transformation of the culture of talk and the attendant assumptions about the relationship of teacher and taught”. The achievement of truly deeper learning through complex scaffolding is obviously more demanding of teacher knowledge and skill than imparting information or testing recall through rote or recitation. To summarise Alexander’s other recent findings, difficulties include:

- In the pilots, there is a significant gap between teachers who are achieving real change and those whose practice has shifted relatively little. Alexander notes that the proportion of teachers in the two projects whose work consistently is dialogical remains as yet fairly small.
- Although students are being given more time for thinking through their responses to questions, and are more frequently encouraged to provide extended answers, it is rather less common for answers to be responded to in a way that helps the student and/or the class to learn from what has been said. It remains the case that after such extended responses the feedback is often minimal and judgemental (*excellent, not quite what I was looking for* or the not-so-ambiguous *Ye-es...*) rather than sufficiently informative and scaffolding to promote deep learning.
- As yet in the two pilots, insufficient attention is being given to the repertoire of *learning talk*, and the systematic building of students’ capacities.

6. Four dimensions of 21st century teaching and learning

Developing dialogic teaching clearly requires sustained input, support, and professional learning. What follows is a framework for assisting educational leaders to embrace emerging pedagogies/technologies such as dialogical teaching. In Victoria, some schools are experimenting with this **four-dimensional model**, using it as a basis for developing their own 21st century teaching and learning – and professional learning – frameworks.

The usefulness of this model is that it enables us to place structured dialogue – or any other strategy for change – within a broad context that is meaningful at the system-wide, school-wide, and classroom levels. This is significant as the interface between macro and micro levels in educational research and change is not always explored systematically.

These four fundamental strategies and areas of professional learning that, arguably, hold the most promise for achieving dramatic and sustained performance improvement and reducing the achievement gap are:

1. **Deep learning**, including **deep knowledge** and **deep generic skills**, using the power of transferable concepts, deep learning at the interfaces in emerging areas such as nanotechnology, and new assessment

practices consistent with this. Equipped with deep conceptual tools and the capacity to think and learn beyond the old insulated subject areas and the academic-vocational and arts-science divides, a **new generation of broad spectrum specialists is emerging**.

2. **Relationship-building**, i.e., how best to optimise individual development within the context of quality communication, collaboration, and community building. Elements include knowing how best to develop deep knowledge in small groups, building P-12, K-16, and other unified learning communities, and the efficient and effective use of the interactive capability made possible by ICT.
3. **Strategic leadership**, i.e., new models of dispersed leadership, developing overarching governance structures, new approaches to student leadership and governance, and best practice in classroom management. It includes Garratt’s four governance tasks – policy formulation, strategic thinking, supervision of management, and accountability – as interactive elements of a learning system.
4. **Futures thinking**, i.e., futures studies, strategic foresight research, prevention and early intervention for improved learning and health outcomes, easy-to-navigate internet pathways for deep learning, improved pathways planning and transition support for students and teachers, and moving from separate tracks (with different expectations for different groups) to seamless educational delivery.

Comprising a coherent framework for 21st century teaching and learning, each of these four dimensions can be placed along a continuum – from low to high, poorly developed to well-developed, etc. All four of the dimensions are critical. None is sufficient by itself and each profoundly influences the others. Twenty-first century leaders/learners are likely to increasingly cultivate these four dimensions within themselves and in groups/teams.

7. A five-stage process for leading and managing change

In working with schools and other organisations, a **five-stage process** is emerging that serves as a means for leading and managing change across these four areas. This process avoids *projectitis*, i.e., the tendency toward *add-on* projects and initiatives without creating a framework for leading and managing change. Each stage informs the next and provides feedback into the previous one.

Relevant to all learning organisations (not only schools), the five stages are:

1. Initiating a future-focused, knowledge-building dialogue by asking: “what can be done to significantly improve outcomes and performance?”

2. Examining how best to tap the power of the pedagogical and technological revolution and facilitate the pedagogy, technology, and performance shift.
3. Mapping against the four fundamental dimensions all current and proposed change initiatives within a school or any other organisation and identifying and supporting the **most strategic initiatives** (such as structured classroom dialogue) with the potential to deliver powerful results across all four dimensions.
4. Continuing to create a more coherent strategic framework, grounded in a good theory or model of change, and aligning organisational structure to strategic goals.
5. Enabling the synergy between practice, policy, research, and theory to further expand in density and deepen in significance.

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3–4 November 2005

New Ways of Working in VET Forum 2

Reframing the Future will be facilitating the *New Ways of Working in VET Forum 2* at the Hilton Adelaide. The focus will be on developing the capability of the VET professional and providers to respond to an industry-led, demand driven VET system that meets the needs of enterprises, individuals and communities.

For further information visit http://reframingthefuture.net/Publications_2005/program_flyer_2005.pdf or email: elizabeth.blackmore@tafesa.edu.au.

7–10 November 2005

National General Assembly of Local Government

This year's National General Assembly, *Good to Great: pursuing progress through partnerships*, will focus on local government relationships – with the community, with federal and state government, and with other councils both here in Australia and overseas. For further information visit www.nga.alga.asn.au.

10–11 November 2005

4th Annual Australian and New Zealand Adolescent Health Conference 2005

The Centre for Adolescent Health presents the 4th Annual Australian and New Zealand Adolescent Health Conference: *Challenge, Debate, Inspire, Survive, Adolescent Health 2005*. Key themes will include mental health, substance use and working more effectively with young people, with the aim of building shared visions and commitment towards adolescent health.

For further information visit www.rch.org.au/cah/index.cfm?doc_id=8183 or email: cah.conference@rch.org.au.

23–25 November 2005

AAIR 2005 Conference

This international conference will address the theme, *Institutional Research, Innovation and Change in Universities of the 21st Century* and will include the following sub-themes: *Enhancing efficiency and effectiveness in the University of the 21st Century* as well as, *Future models of University organisation, learning and teaching*. The conference will be held at Victoria University's, Queen St Campus, Melbourne.

For further information visit www.aair.org.au/Pages/Forum2005.htm or email: rsharma@swin.edu.au.

25–26 November 2005

Adult Learning Australia (ALA) – 45th Annual Conference

ALA's 45th annual conference will be held on 25-26 November at Rydges, Capital Hill Canberra. The theme of the conference will be *LEARNERS @ WORK: New Directions and Connections: ACE as a catalyst*. See insert for more details or visit www.ala.asn.au/.

28–30 November 2005

Best Practice in e-Learning – Online Conference

This conference presents opportunities for participants to share their best practice knowledge in e-Learning both in education and employee/professional development. In contrast to a traditional face-to-face conference, the latest e-Learning technologies and practices used in this conference will make this event accessible to more people around the world.

For further information visit <http://elearn.ucalgary.ca/conference> or email: Rod.Corbett@ucalgary.ca.

2–3 December 2005

2nd Asia-Pacific Educational Integrity Conference. Educational Integrity: Values in Teaching, Learning & Research

Following on from the 2003 inaugural Asia-Pacific Educational Integrity Conference in Adelaide, this conference will be tackling issues on academic integrity, values and ethics in teaching, learning and research. Questions and issues to be addressed by the presenters include: education for citizenship; professional development and educational integrity in teaching; learning and research values in assessment and teaching practice; teaching and learning technologies in supporting educational integrity and more. The conference will be located at the University of Newcastle, New South Wales.

For further information visit www.newcastle.edu.au/conferences/apeic or email: apeiceonf@newcastle.edu.au.

2–4 December 2005

The Annual International Conference on Cognition, Language and Special Education

Language is alive and well, a living sign of development in the human species. Teachers often seek insight into how better to champion language as both a vehicle for the extension of one's mind and a window on how mind and extension exist and operate. This conference seeks to speak to the *action* of human development as teachers and researchers participate in its promotion. Topic areas include: core skills children should have after years of schooling, wide-capacity testing of literacy and numeracy, barriers to advancing research on learning and work. For further information visit www.griffith.edu.au/conference/cls05 or email: r.roebuck@griffith.edu.au.

5 December 2005

SASTA-MASA Conference

The third SASTA-MASA Conference is to be held in December at the Australian Science and Maths School, Flinders University, Adelaide. This conference is designed to cater for those teachers who teach in both the Science and Maths Faculties, but individual workshops will be relevant to those who teach in only one field.

For further information visit www.sasta.asn.au/prof_dev.htm#Joint_conferences or email: office@sasta.asn.au.