

# Quest

→ Balancing life, work and wellbeing

Issue 02 / Winter 2006

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ACE for skilling  
Australia

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ACE Conference  
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**Winter in Canberra**



Adult Learning  
Australia Inc.

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*Point Hut Pond, Gordon, Canberra. Photo: Diana Coxhead*

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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- Public Relations Officer: Diana Coxhead
- National Project Manager, E-learning Creative Community Partnerships: Mary Hannan
- Project Facilitator, E-learning Creative Community Partnerships: Josie Rose

#### FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

Adult Learning Australia  
GPO Box 260  
CANBERRA CITY ACT 2601  
Ph: 02 6274 9500, Fax: 02 6274 9513, e: [info@ala.asn.au](mailto:info@ala.asn.au)  
<http://www.ala.asn.au>

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# Editorial



**Welcome to the Winter Edition of Quest. This time of year there is nothing better than wrapping your hands around a steaming mug of hot chocolate or warming your soul with some hearty soups and casseroles to keep those winter bugs at bay.**

Fortunately I haven't succumbed to any dreaded lurgies yet. I'm not sure if I put that down to good management, or good luck. In any case I'm enjoying my good health and the clear, winter days we have in Canberra at this time of the year.

Our articles in this edition of *Quest* range from a meta-analysis report recently released on the capacity of the ACE sector to address the chronic skills shortage in Australia through to the 140th birthday of the Mechanics' Institute in Tamworth.

Co-authors of the ACE report, Dr Sarojni Choy and Dr Sandra Haukka from the Queensland University of Technology and Liz Keyes from Learning Network Queensland, suggest that the ACE sector is well placed to address the critical skills shortage in Australia's workforce.

Their report suggests one reason for this is ACE's ability to re-engage learners in training and through the opportunities the sector offers for further education and/or employment outcomes.

Financial literacy is also coming into the forefront of government policy and an article written by Treasury advisers, Gillie Kirk and Kathy Tolano outlines action being taken by the Financial Literacy Foundation in raising awareness of the benefits of improved literacy and informing Australians about ways to better manage their money.

In addition to this, Adult Learning Australia, (ALA) also has plans to launch its own financial literacy program for use by adult learning providers. We look forward to keeping you informed on the progress of this exciting project.

Deirdre Baker, Vice-President ALA and Peter Murphy, Business and Communications Manager also both share stories about their experiences at the recent ACE Aotearoa Conference in Dunedin, in New Zealand's South Island.

As well as this, Adult Learners' Week is just around the corner, 1-8 September so take a look at what your organisation is achieving in the lead up to the week at [www.adultlearnersweek.org](http://www.adultlearnersweek.org). Faces of ALW has also recently been updated so read some of the inspiring stories for 2006.

Another article includes a story about women in rural Australia. Despite the real barriers many face in these regions, a group of motivated and enthusiastic women are meeting these challenges through training in livestock management.

Tony Ryan in his *Take Time* program also has a segment with a farming family in Geranium in South Australia's Murray Mallee. Listen to the audio at [www.taketimeradio.com/archives/archives\\_sep2005.htm](http://www.taketimeradio.com/archives/archives_sep2005.htm).

One other inspiring story comes from a student who returned to study after twenty years out of the workforce. Pathways through the Canberra Institute of Technology have seen Barbara New embark on a new life in the workforce and her story highlights the rewards of adult learning.

Recipients of the *Sir Douglas Nicholls Fellowship* for Indigenous leaders is also featured along with a summary of this year's *E-learning Creative Community Partnerships* project, which Mary Hannan, at the National Office manages.

You will also find some inserts in this edition. This material contains information about the Australian Flexible Learning Framework and their projects. There is also an insert about the Resource Training Manual for Adult Learning Providers.

Professor Barry Golding is this edition's guest in our *In Quest of Learning* segment and award winning author Michael Newman writes about teaching defiance. There is more of this in his recently released book entitled, *Teaching Defiance*.

A student of the University of Newcastle's Industry Scholarships Scheme is also featured as he gains valuable work experience as an undergraduate chemical engineer with Eraring energy.

Finally Barrie Brennan at the Mechanics' Institute in Tamworth writes an article about the history of the building as well as the recent occasion to celebrate the building's 140th birthday on 24 May.

Read, learn and enjoy what your organisation is doing through your ongoing support and membership.

Until next time

**Ron Anderson**

Chief Executive Officer

# Briefs



## Way Forward

*The importance of Vocational Education and Training (VET) to Australian Women in Poverty* is a report prepared by Women in Adult and Vocational Education (WAVE), for Security4Women. This is an organisation funded by the Office for Women, Department of Family and Community Services.

Some findings from the report reveal low education levels are highly connected with low incomes and gaining an education increases the chances of being removed from intergenerational poverty. However, findings also reveal even if women do receive education and training, their employment outcomes are bleak, with few secure opportunities and a lack of access to highly paid, skilled jobs. Better planning of the link between employment sector gaps and flexible education programs are recommended as well as policies to address the barriers women face in accessing employment, childcare and highly paid jobs. To read more visit [www.security4women.com/The\\_Way\\_Forward\\_Publication.pdf](http://www.security4women.com/The_Way_Forward_Publication.pdf).

## 5% Rise in Uptake of Apprenticeships

Latest figures from the National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER) show that commencements of apprenticeships and traineeships are up for the sixth consecutive quarter. The

figures, estimating activity ending 30 September 2005, also reveal that commencements for people 45-years-old and older increased by 13% from September 2004 to September 2005.

## Literacy Support for Indigenous People: Current Systems and Practices in Queensland

This study identifies the literacy and numeracy support systems available for Indigenous students in vocational education and training (VET) and determines which systems work most successfully for both students and teachers. The report reveals literacy and numeracy skills are highly valued by indigenous students and community members and are the key to further training, education and employment. The study also identifies one-on-one support in the form of in-class tutorial support and peer tutoring as the most effective method of delivering literacy and numeracy to Indigenous VET students. For further information visit [www.ncver.edu.au/publications/1659.html](http://www.ncver.edu.au/publications/1659.html).

## Social and Economic Benefits of Improved Adult Literacy: Towards a Better Understanding

There has been very little research on the economic and social costs of poor adult literacy in Australia and the benefits of investing in adult literacy and numeracy skills have also been under-researched. The focus of this report is about estimating





### EdNA Online Groups

EdNA Groups offers a free space in which not-for-profit and non-commercial organisations involved in the education and training sector, including registered training organisations (RTOs) can use a range of tools to facilitate communication and collaboration. The VET sector is the most proactive in using EdNA Groups – with more than 175 active groups, both private and open to the public. Visit [www.edna.edu.au](http://www.edna.edu.au) for Australia's gateway to resources and services for education and training.

the economic and social benefits across health, finance, family relationships and crime rather than traditional economic areas such as productivity and the labour market.

This study explores the frameworks and methodologies available for determining and measuring the costs and benefits of investing in adult literacy and numeracy skills. For further information visit [www.ncver.edu.au/publications/1634.html](http://www.ncver.edu.au/publications/1634.html).

### E-learning gives learners with disabilities computer confidence

Ninety-four per cent of learners with disabilities are now confident in using computers and technology as the result of taking part in a vocational and technical education e-learning program, an online survey has revealed.

The survey also revealed 49% of respondents believed e-learning helped them to get a better job, promotion or more responsibility at work. Everybody surveyed said e-learning had increased their enjoyment of learning, with 90% of learners agreeing they would recommend e-learning to friends or colleagues.

Those surveyed were taking part in a range of e-learning initiatives focused on learners with disabilities, funded by the national training system's e-learning strategy, the 2005–2006 Australian Flexible Learning Framework.

### Learning to Fit in with the Real World

The demand for distance education is accelerating across the country, with some universities reporting a 50 per cent increase of course enrolments during the past two years.

Higher education leaders attribute the increase partly to more courses becoming available online and the availability of FEE-HELP loans. Market research conducted by Open Universities Australia (OUA) shows that, because of work and other commitments, students are seeking more flexibility in learning.

OUA business development general manager Cratis Hippocrates says, "Gone are the days when distance education was primarily done by people living in remote and regional areas. These days more and more people in metropolitan areas are turning to it."

With more programs available online, many universities have had to restructure their courses. Some, such as Deakin University in Victoria, are offering wholly online courses; others, a mix of online education and on-campus workshops. (The Australian, April 26 2006)



*ACE – re-engaging adult learners in training and initiating pathways for further education and employment.*

# The capacity of ACE for skilling Australia

A newly released Adult Learning Australia (ALA) research report recommends stronger partnerships between adult community education (ACE) and vocational education and training (VET) as one way of addressing Australia's chronic skills shortage.

The report, funded by the Australian Government, Department of Education, Science and Training (DEST) and managed by ALA, explores options for the ACE and VET sectors working together in partnership to help overcome the current skills shortage.

Dr Sarojni Choy and Dr Sandra Haukka from the Queensland University of Technology and Liz Keyes from Learning Network Queensland, co-authored the report entitled *Adult and Community Education – A meta-analysis to explore the capacity of ACE for skilling Australia*. The meta analysis suggests that the ACE sector is well placed to address the critical skills shortage in Australia's workforce due to its ability to re-engage learners in training and through the opportunities ACE offers for further education and/or employment outcomes.

ACE programs have been running in Australia as an informal way of meeting the needs of a diverse range of people at the local level for over a century.

Through this informal learning the sector has been able to build social capital, strengthen communities, and enrich people's lives on many levels.

The report acknowledges that governments across Australia recognise ACE's potential, however policy changes and resources to recognise its impact and increase its role have not been forthcoming.

ACE has helped sustain local communities through a focused adult learning model built around individual learning needs. The sector's willingness to listen to individuals and communities about their needs and to balance these needs with available funding is noted as being critical to helping address the skills shortage.

The report notes that in balancing these needs, ACE has needed to consider the changing priorities of government.

Some of the current priorities considered in the report include:

- The ageing population
- Changes to the labour market
- Skills deficits and shortages
- Working with a culturally diverse labour force
- The increasing usage of information and communication technologies (ICT) in the workplace and communities.

## Improving skilling through ACE

The report states that ACE has the potential to make a bigger contribution to the skilling debate through cooperative partnerships with VET rather than through competition. While the report acknowledges additional funding would be a bonus for the ACE sector, it agrees this is an ongoing issue for training organisations in either sector.

The report outlines two options where ACE can contribute to skilling Australians. Both could be implemented within current frameworks and resources, without the need for additional funding.

The options are (i) training for employment outcomes and (ii) training for improved pathways.

Barriers to achieving either of these options exist because currently there are weak linkages between the two sectors, for example, in crediting learners for VET they completed in the ACE sector.

The report suggests a variety of ways to strengthen partnerships between the ACE and mainstream VET. Greater communication and cooperation, shared resources, as well as using ACE as a regional training broker or coordinator working with the local community or industry are some suggestions the report makes.

To facilitate these partnerships between ACE and VET, the report suggests there is need for an independent broker such as the State Training Authority.

## Skilling Australia

The report acknowledges ACE programs are a good starting point for pre-training as well as being well placed in giving opportunities for learners to continue with further education and/or training. ACE helps to build a solid foundation for learners, particularly in the area of interpersonal and key generic skills.

The report further states that interpersonal and generic skills underpin and support the development of work readiness and work habits, enterprise, entrepreneurship, creativity and innovation, as well as learning, thinking and adaptability skills.

## Summary

The authors' findings reveal how ACE can play an important role in addressing the skills shortage in Australia through strong partnerships with VET providers.

The authors acknowledge the potential for ACE to also undertake new roles to expand opportunities for learners. They suggest this can take place through strategies which assist individuals in effecting change and which provide clear learning pathways for them.

As a result, ACE can help address the shortage of skilled workers in Australian industry.

The full report is available on the ALA website at [www.ala.asn.au](http://www.ala.asn.au).

# Adult Learners' Week (ALW) 1-8 September 2006

## Sign Up Now

### Sign Up Now and get involved in this year's Adult Learners' Week.

Celebrate the joy of learning by attending an ALW event in your state or territory; or organise an event or activity in your community.

ALW now in its 11th year is ALA's major annual event and allows all Australians the opportunity to learn new activities, attend seminars or enjoy activities as diverse as learning to laugh, jewellery making, recreational activities, music lessons and more.

There is much more to Adult Learners' Week and you can be assured that more activities are being planned as ALW 2006 looks set for a bumper week as Australians throughout the nation get involved.

For the latest news, updates and information please visit our website at [www.adultlearnersweek.org](http://www.adultlearnersweek.org), phone 1300 I Learn or sign up for the ALW e-newsletter at

[www.adultlearnersweek.org/sign-up/newsregister](http://www.adultlearnersweek.org/sign-up/newsregister).

# Financial Literacy Education in the Community

## Educating people to be better with their money

*Gillie Kirk, Senior Advisor and  
Kathy Tolano, Policy Adviser,  
Financial Literacy Foundation,  
Department of the Treasury*

### What is financial literacy?

Financial literacy is about being good with personal finances. All of us can benefit from building our financial literacy levels. It helps us to increase our savings, minimise our debts, make sound investment decisions, avoid scams and lead us towards secure retirement.

Recognising the benefits to all Australians of increased financial literacy, and the benefits to Australia's economy, the Australian Government has established the Financial Literacy Foundation.

### Financial literacy foundation

The Foundation is charged with raising community awareness of the benefits of improved financial literacy and assisting all Australians to make more informed financial decisions and better manage their money.

The Foundation is working across a variety of areas to achieve this aim:

- working with schools, the vocational training and education sector, workplaces, and the adult and community education sector to make it easier to deliver quality financial literacy education;
- developing best practice guidelines which identify what underpins successful financial literacy programs and sharing that with program developers;
- developing a database of existing financial literacy programs, identifying gaps and duplication to assist program developers; and

- undertaking a major research project benchmarking levels of financial literacy across the Australian community that will go towards improving program developers' and implementers' knowledge on where programs will provide the greatest benefit.

Of particular interest, the Foundation will shortly launch its first consumer information and public awareness campaign.

This will help stimulate demand for information and knowledge of how better to manage money and will likely see an impact on demand for adult and community education financial literacy related courses.

### Ongoing support

For all educators, trainers, and human resources managers interested in financial literacy, the Foundation has developed the following support services:

- a specialist section on the website that, with the launch of the information campaign, will provide access to quality education materials, case studies, and current financial literacy education information; and
- access to the Educators and Trainers Network, which aims to support and connect educators, trainers and human resources managers interested in financial literacy. Membership of the network is free and carries no obligation.

### Why teach it?

Managing our personal finances has never been so complex. Our ability to make the most of the financial options open to us rests on our financial literacy capability.

Adult and community education is strongly driven by community demand for training and for those interested in self development, financial literacy is likely to be of interest. Adult and community education's strength in providing an informal



*The Hon Peter Dutton MP, Minister for Revenue and Assistant Treasurer complements Sharon Coates, CEO of Innovation and Business Skills Australia on making the Financial Literacy Competency Standards more accessible to trainers and educators across Australia.*



and supportive learning environment also means that it can help students approach the sometimes personally challenging area of managing their money.

**If you want to run a financial literacy programme for adults, finding out where to start can be a puzzle.**

Even if you are not developing nationally accredited training programs, the nationally endorsed financial literacy competency standards are a sound base to build your program on. You can get ideas about content, sequence, context, integration, delivery and assessment from the competency standards.

To help you, the Foundation has developed the Adult Education Guide to make it easier to understand how to use financial literacy competency standards in developing materials aimed at adult learners. This guide will be released on the website ([www.understandingmoney.gov.au](http://www.understandingmoney.gov.au)) in conjunction with the launch of the upcoming financial literacy campaign.

In the interim, members of the Educators and Trainers Network (for how to join see the end of the article) will be provided with a copy.

To access the financial literacy competency standards, go to Innovation and Business Skills Australia ([www.ibsa.org.au](http://www.ibsa.org.au)), or visit the National Training Information Services website ([www.ntis.gov.au](http://www.ntis.gov.au)). IBSA is the nationally endorsed Industry Skills Council responsible for the ongoing development and maintenance of these competency standards. Developers of educational materials for use in nationally accredited training should approach IBSA.

For further assistance on designing adult learning programs, the Foundation has also developed, with input from Adult Learning Australia, *Training Programs for Adult Learners* which is a collation of the key principles of adult learning, with reference to financial literacy. This also is available from the Foundation's website [www.understandingmoney.gov.au](http://www.understandingmoney.gov.au)

In addition, if you would like to join the Educators and Trainers Network, a Network Membership Form can also be downloaded from the website.

## Financial Literacy

Adult Learning Australia, (ALA) will be launching its own financial literacy program for use by adult learning providers as well as being used in ALA promotional kits. Financial literacy will also be part of the Learn @ Work Day event within the Adult Learners' Week campaign.

We look forward to keeping you updated about this exciting project.



Deirdre Baker, Vice President Adult Learning Australia

# *Kia ora Aotearoa ACE Conference 2006*

*Peter Murphy in a killed role.*

**I am saying thank you to the New Zealand (land of the long white cloud) Adult Community Education Conference organisers for an inviting and stimulating 2006 conference in Dunedin, at the base of the South Island of New Zealand.**

My attendance at the conference was jointly sponsored by Adult Learning Australia and ACE Aotearoa. Prior to the conference commencing, I had the opportunity to spend a day with the Adult Learners Week, (ALW) coordinators in Wellington. They were gathered together to share stories of successful events and to plan for the 2006 ALW. Listening to the enthusiasm of these regional coordinators and hearing about their creativity in both event activities and funding arrangements, I reflected both on the wonderful activities we have in Australia and also the degree of funding provided to us by the Department of Education, Science and Training, together with States and Territories' contributions, to assist our celebrations. We are indeed fortunate to have this support. Nevertheless, the New Zealand ALW looks to be engaging and fun.

From Wellington, a quick hop down to Dunedin, the city of university students, Scottish influence and striking hill formations. With 25,000 of the 122,000 population comprised of brains and youth, it is quite a buzzing city.

The conference began with a traditional Maori welcome, the story told by Huata, an elder whose Moari and Scottish ancestry was overwhelmingly spiritual. Kia ora, Huata for speaking intermittently in your native language and in English, so I could follow the opening experience.

Phil Ker, CEO Otago Polytechnic, finished off the evening, following a scrumptious dinner, in a rather challenging way for the locals. I was interested in the ongoing funding debate, but was still on a high from the Maori welcome.

Saturday brought beautiful clear blue skies (no-one would believe that I had to leave my *long johns* in the bottom of my suitcase) together with an early start. My accommodation was a 15 minute walk through the university grounds. These featured old world buildings, willows and streams. With a crisp, clear morning, the sun still rising, it was freshly stimulating. So was Dr Marion Bowl's Day 1, keynote address.

Dr Bowl indicated she was a late comer to academia, having been a community worker. Her *Rite of Passage* was moving from one status to another, and her grass roots work gave her a standpoint to view things more critically. This she proceeded to do, as she drew parallels with the current UK emphasis on skills development for a global economy, and the trends commencing in NZ, which I believe are well on track in Australia.

Marion described a narrowing of learning focus and exclusion of adults from anything that wasn't basic skills for life training, had accredited outcomes and involved escalating fees. She lamented that adult education in the UK was dying of neglect, with providers competing for resources rather than coming together to fight for each other's survival.

Marion gave us six suggestions for the future to counter the UK experience:

- affirm learning for work and for leisure;
- continue to restate the importance of adult education for participation in society;
- formal education markets are not the best ways to reach people;



*Phil Ker, CEO Otago Polytechnic speaking at the ACE Aotearoa Conference.*

*...drew parallels with the current UK emphasis on skills development for a global economy, and the trends commencing in NZ which I believe are well on track in Australia.*

- trust in judgement not measurement to counter reducing quality to numerical outputs;
- don't compete with each other – form ACE networks and;
- be vigilant about the rhetoric and critical in the discourse.

Marion gave me encouragement to continue my vigilance towards the discourse in Australia for adult community learning, and was a highlight for me at the conference. *Kia ora*, Marion.

Having spent decades in the government sector, I was refreshed to hear the Hon. Marion Hobbs, Private Secretary, supporting adult community learning in NZ and referring to ACE as leading education reform.

A new funding model was released in April 2006 with the formation of 37 networks across NZ to ensure adult community learning is fostered in communities. Marion clearly articulated that ACE is a valuable part of NZ life and government wants to support it for its contribution to NZ.

The conference dinner brought further delights, especially with a Scottish spark early in the evening and our own Peter Murphy taking a swinging kilted role.

Celita Echer, Secretary General of the International Council of Adult Education, was my dinner companion. Her work with the ICAE and many other organisations was advocacy driven, which she says are learning experiences in and of themselves.

In her keynote address on the last day, Marion gave details of her involvement in the recent World Social Forum, which gave education a higher profile for the first time, and she emphasised that ACE must work closer with other networks. She referred to educators as cultural translators and shared the slogan of the ICAE: Adults' Right to Learn: Convergence, Diversity, Solidarity.

I couldn't leave the shores of Aotearoa, without several days following the long white cloud into middle earth land, helicopter riding to the top of a glacier, and gliding past the massive waterfalls in Milford Fiord.

A beautifully peaceful land that further kindled my enthusiasm and ongoing advocacy for adult community learning in Australia

*– he rangimarie e kia ora.*





Peter Murphy, ALA Business and Communications Manager

# Building bridges across the ditch

*Main : Botanical Gardens, Wellington – Treehouse Visitor’s Centre – Venue for Workshops.*

**ditch /ditʃ/ 2. any open passage or trench, as a natural channel or waterway. – v.t. (Macquarie Essential Dictionary 1999)**

**Two hours before the opening reception of the ACE Aotearoa (NZ) Conference I was browsing in the bookshop at the Dunedin College of Education. “Can I help you?” I heard the voice behind me ask; and I turned around to reply “Just browsing, thank you”. “Oh, you’re from across the ditch?” was the shop assistant’s apparent rhetorical question.**

I reflect back now on my May 2006 crossing of that natural channel that divides our two countries; and also our own vernacular when talking about neighbours, “the people from

over the fence” – well that is it – our Tasman cousins are in fact our neighbours and I was dropping in for a visit to share some news from “my side of the fence”.

Australia and New Zealand share many similarities both culturally and politically when either is talking about the subject of adult learning. Both of our countries have national peak bodies representing the voice of the adult learner; and coordinate national awareness and “call to action” campaigns such as Adult Learners’ Week (ALW).

As an invited guest speaker at the NZ ALW Regional Coordinators Planning Workshop (Wellington, NZ) I saw an opportunity; and not only to give a presentation on our ALW activities and initiatives but also to highlight the similarities of both of our activities and how they could be harvested into a collateral effort; an exchange of information and ideas to fortify the international push for recognition of adult learning principles and benefits emerging from our region of the Pacific.



After the presentation I was invited to workshop with the delegates. The energy and enthusiasm, and the fashion in which my peers probed and explored, gleaned new ideas and embraced new concepts from the Australian campaign was overwhelming. The breadth of the once open passage was

*Considering the flow of “people traffic” across the ditch and the fact our ALW campaigns are similarly timed, a shared online events calendar would provide information to both countries’ migratory adult learners.*

Likewise, from my involvement with the workshop I had the opportunity to learn new ways of engaging our adult learning communities; particularly of interest is the way that ACE Aotearoa (NZ) integrates cultural communities through learning. Despite Australia’s vast geographic barriers the adoption of new ideas and continuing to develop initiatives to connect our cultural communities through learning would bring us closer, regardless of distance.

The ACE Aotearoa (NZ) Conference in Dunedin provided another venue for ALA to share with delegates its blend of adult learning activities and further explore networks and Trans – Tasman communications. The organisers of the conference kindly set a space aside for ALA to set up an adult learning showcase which included information about ALW, E-learning communities, ALA publications and membership; and an interactive display with internet access to ALA managed websites.



*Peter Murphy and Adult Learners’ Week  
– Aotearoa ACE Conference 2006.*

*Moa bird and Peter Murphy  
– Otago Museum, Dunedin.*

beginning to narrow as we brain stormed with ideas about new directions for the NZ ALW campaign and discussed how linking the like-minded campaigns would be mutually beneficial.

Naturally I thought the ALW Official Online calendar would be instrumental in creating the first step to connect our ALW campaigns. Considering the flow of “people traffic” across the ditch and the fact our ALW campaigns are similarly timed, a shared online events calendar would provide information to both countries’ migratory adult learners. I am pleased to say that our Tasman cousins have taken advantage of this initiative; and New Zealand events are now counted on the ALW Official Online events calendar <http://www.adultlearnersweek.org/calendar.html>

Several NZ ALW Coordinators have also signed up for the ALW E-Newsletter and will receive up to date information about our ALW campaign initiatives and progress.

The conference theme *Rites of passage – the next step is ours* for me had significant relevance in terms of taking that next step to share our own adult learning experiences with others physically outside our geographic boundaries; and the rite of traversing the “ditch”.

The global socio – economic face is ever changing and boundaries are continually being expanded and redesignated; adult learning should also be included in the global marketplace as an asset and exportable commodity to enrich like minded learning communities; and to embrace learning exchanges beyond our borders. The next step is ours.



# Victorian women lead the way in on-farm training

*Sarah Allen for Meat and Livestock Australia*

*From left to right: Fran Robertson, Jenny Lucas, Cathy McGowan, and Anne Stelling who are “condition-scoring” sheep - a manual technique used to check a sheep’s condition or health.*

**A group of women have banded together and broken through the barriers to take part in a comprehensive livestock training program in northern Victoria.**

**A recent report on *Fostering Women’s Participation in On Farm Programs*, found that women in Australia faced real barriers to participation in agricultural industry programs. The report, commissioned by Meat & Livestock Australia, said these barriers included time and cost limitations as well as lack of promotion targeting women and a perceived lack of relevance.**

But a keen group of Wooragee producers has managed to address some of these challenges and are part-way through the three-year long EDGEnetwork LambCheque program. The group, comprised mostly of women, decided to undertake training with EDGEnetwork to develop their livestock management skills and completed their first year of LambCheque last year.

Producer and consultant Catherine McGowan, who co-wrote the report, is partly responsible for initiating the Wooragee LambCheque group.

Ms McGowan, who manages a wool and prime-lamb operation at Indigo Valley, south of Wodonga, said when she decided to improve her livestock management skills to further her farm business she began to look for other local women who might be interested in joining her in the course.

With the help of friend and neighbour Anne Stelling, Ms McGowan advertised in local papers, through women’s and adult learning networks and contacted people directly to get a group going. She then sourced learning scholarships to assist some of the women financially.

Most importantly, Ms McGowan said the women that enrolled in the course had to overcome their own attitudinal barriers to cost and time management. She said generally, women were always willing to invest in their children’s or partner’s learning, but did not give priority to their own education.

“Women need to decide that these courses are worth their time and money and that their farm business and lifestyle will improve as a result – and that’s something that’s not usually promoted to them,” Ms McGowan said.

Ms Stelling said it was the support of her family that convinced her to enrol.

“If I had just made the decision myself I would have concluded that it was going to cost too much – I think it is true that women don’t put the same value on their own education as they do on their partner’s or children’s. But, my family really encouraged me to do it,” Ms Stelling said.

Now in the second-year of the program, Ms McGowan and Ms Stelling both said they had found the course extremely practical and beneficial and were happy with their investment.

“[LambCheque is] systemic, clear, logical and consequential and because it runs over three years I get a chance to apply it on farm as I’m learning. I’m really pleased at making the investment,” Ms McGowan said.

EDGE*network*’s LambCheque (Year 2) – offered by Rural Industries Skill Training in conjunction with the Victorian Department of Primary Industries (DPI) – will build on what the women learnt in 2005, giving them a more in-depth, practical understanding of effective grazing management and pasture utilisation so they can maximise returns within their own business.

The program consists of eight hands-on sessions conducted over the course of a year – most of which will take place on Ms Stelling’s property which has been chosen as the focus farm. The structure of these sessions, which take place one day a month during school hours, allows Ms Stelling and other group members to balance their own education with family commitments.

Ms Stelling runs sheep, cattle and goats on her family farm block and said she wanted to learn to manage her livestock and land responsibly while improving the profitability of the business. She said she was already enjoying the confidence and independence the training had given her.

“If it weren’t for this course I’d be asking other people for advice all the time, never learning the principles for myself. This way, I’ve gained the confidence and the knowledge to make judgements and decisions for myself and I know what questions to ask when I do need advice,” Ms Stelling said.

Guided by local DPI Meat Industry special projects officer Cheryl Graham, the Wooragee group takes part in a diverse range of practical exercises and group discussions each session.

Last month the group visited each paddock on Ms Stelling’s farm to assess feed quality and quantity and also condition-scored ewes and weaner lambs. Members then began to develop a feed budget for the farm and discussed possible grazing and pasture management strategies for the coming months.

The remaining sessions will cover principles of pasture and livestock interaction, pasture assessment, animal health, benchmarking, soil and fertiliser issues and pasture grazing and management options. By the end of the program the women will be able to better understand the nutritional requirements of sheep and have the confidence to assess pasture quality and quantity and develop feed budgets to guide their stock and grazing management decisions throughout the season.

The EDGE*network* is an initiative of Meat & Livestock Australia and the Victorian DPI. More than 10,000 producers across Australia have taken part in EDGE*network* workshops since the program began more than six years ago.

Those interested in more information should contact Dani Frankel at Rural Industries Skill Training (RIST) on (03) 5573 0943.

*From left to right: Olivia Jonstone, Jenny Lucas, Cheryl Graham, Ros Henning, Fran Robertson, Anne Stelling and Ron McIntosh – livestock training*







# New beginnings

Barbara New finds career satisfaction after twenty years out of the workforce

## Making the move from stay-at-home mum to study and full time employment is a challenge.

Barbara New, mother of three and Manager of the Canberra Institute of Technology's (CIT) Information Centre made the transition five years ago when she decided to enrol in CIT's Learning Options for Women program once her youngest child, Emma, had started high school.

"My daughter was growing up and I decided to do something for myself after being at home and supporting children for 20 years. I had learnt some computer skills at home and I was able to use those skills in the course. The course gave me a great start."

After completing the course, combining her life experience with her newly acquired skills and confidence Barbara began her career as an ASO 1 and quickly worked her way up to gain a permanent ASO 4 position as Manager of the CIT Information Centre. Barbara now manages four staff members and is responsible for communicating current and up-to-date course and program information to prospective students and Institute staff at all levels.

"Studying helped me gain confidence and recognise the skills I had developed raising my family. When you have been at home for so long, you think you have no skills compared to people who are out in the workforce. But while I might not have had the qualifications, I had the skills I had developed from running a home."

Through her enthusiasm and tireless efforts at work Barbara made favorable impressions on her supervisors and colleagues.

Not long after Barbara began working she recognised she needed to learn more to reach her career aspirations. "I realised very quickly that if I wanted to progress I needed qualifications so I enrolled in a Certificate III in Business to assist me to undertake more responsibility and to manage staff."

Completing the Certificate III in Business, Barbara had to balance study, work and family commitments. Through her enthusiasm and tireless efforts she obtained her qualification

and made a very favorable impression on her supervisors and colleagues. In May 2005 Barbara graduated alongside her eldest son Adam who graduated with a Certificate III in Printing and Graphic Arts (Print Finishing). "It was fantastic to graduate with Adam it brought together two important achievements. My children have always been my support and the educational qualification has given me more confidence and a new start.

Learning has enabled me to choose my career directions and pathways. The Business course helped me to do my job better and developed my skills. When you study you want to keep going – it increases your desire to gain further qualifications to develop new skills. It increases your self confidence and keeps your mind active. I enjoy flexible learning. I see it as my time out – time for me. Everything you learn academically is reinforced when you are using it in the workplace – what you learn goes in and stays in."

Barbara plans to continue studying business and has enrolled in the Advanced Diploma of Business and Information.

Being an adult learner is rewarding you can draw on your life experience and relate it to your new skills.

The Learning Options for Women program, CIT is classified as the Certificate I in Learning Options. Classes are deliberately kept to a maximum of twelve students so that women feel comfortable and the course content is negotiated to cater to the particular needs of the class. The program is run in an informal manner so that the participants feel that there is no competition and judgement.

## Thanks...

Barbara for sharing your story and to Clare Flannery at CIT for writing the article.



# 2006 Recipients of Sir Douglas Nicholls Fellowship for Indigenous Leadership Announced

The Fellowship is delighted to announce that Daphne Yarram has been awarded a Sir Douglas Nicholls Fellowship for Indigenous Leadership. The Fellowship will enable Daphne to continue her work with Indigenous communities in Gippsland, to further develop her leadership skills and to work towards a better deal for Aboriginal communities in Victoria.

The Sir Douglas Nicholls Fellowship for Indigenous Leadership was established in 2003 as a vehicle for positive change in Victoria's Indigenous community.

Sir Douglas Nicholls (1906–1988) was an early promoter of reconciliation and Australia's first Aboriginal State Governor.

Last year's call for nominations for the Fellowship attracted a number of high quality nominees, each with their own unique vision for improving the social, economic and emotional wellbeing of Indigenous communities in Victoria. The purpose of the Sir Douglas Nicholls Fellowship for Indigenous Leadership is to help as many exceptional people as possible to develop their leadership potential and to turn their vision for their community into reality.

Daphne Yarram, from Sale, will join Paul Briggs as a Fellow for Indigenous Leadership for a five year term. A priority for Daphne will be working with the most vulnerable groups within her community – young people, kids and women – and giving people opportunities to recognise their potential and to see themselves as valuable contributors to the community.

The Fellowship is also proud to announce a new initiative, the Emerging Leaders Program. This 12 month program will work with the next generation of leaders of Victorian Indigenous communities, providing them with mentoring, professional and personal development and the opportunity to improve their leadership skills. The first two Emerging Leaders are Belinda Jakiel of Elwood and Trevor Pearce of Mitcham.

The Nicholls family is delighted that the Fellowship is able to support three more people to carry out work for the Indigenous community in the name of Sir Douglas. Aunty Pam Pedersen offered these wishes: 'On behalf of my family I would like to extend our congratulations to Daphne, Belinda and Trevor in receiving the Sir Douglas Nicholls Fellowship.

'We wish them well in the journey that they have now planned to undertake and work in the fields they have chosen to take.'

The Victorian Minister for Aboriginal Affairs Gavin Jennings also congratulated the recipients: "Just like Sir Douglas Nicholls, the Fellowship recipients will work towards a better deal for Aboriginal communities by promoting the economic, social and spiritual wellbeing of Aboriginal people," Mr Jennings said. "While Daphne, Belinda and Trevor already play significant roles in their communities, the Fellowship funding will allow them to pursue new projects focusing on education, health and cultural programs."



*The three recipients of awards from the Nicholls Fellowship. From left to right they are Trevor Pearce, Belinda Jakiel and Daphne Yarram*

We look forward to watching the progress of the three latest recipients of support from the Sir Douglas Nicholls Fellowship for Indigenous Leadership. For more information, visit [www.nichollsfellowship.net.au](http://www.nichollsfellowship.net.au).

## The Long Walk 2006

In other news, the *Long Walk 2006* was launched on Saturday 6 May.

The Sir Douglas Nicholls Fellowship is supported by the *Long Walk* campaign, which was founded by AFL Indigenous champion, Michael Long, in 2004.

Supporters gathered at Birrarung Marr, located in the heart of Melbourne, then joined Michael Long, this time for a short stroll over the William Barak footbridge to the Melbourne Cricket Ground to celebrate Dreamtime at the *G*.

Walkers were entertained by Renee Geyer, Kutcha Edwards, Christine Anu and Paul Kelly who performed at the MCG before the Essendon-Richmond game. Dreamtime at the *G* brought Michael Long's message about Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians working together to a huge and appreciative audience, and kicked off the preparations for this year's *Long Walk* on Sunday 3 December.

Funds raised from the *Long Walk 2006* will again be donated to the Sir Douglas Nicholls Fellowship for Indigenous Leadership, enabling the Fellowship to support more Indigenous leaders, and emerging leaders, to achieve their potential and help their communities.

You can make a donation to the Fellowship too. Please see our website [www.nichollsfellowship.net.au](http://www.nichollsfellowship.net.au) for more information.

# E-learning Creative Community Partnerships Project

Mary Hannan, ALA National Project Manager



## E-learning Creative Community Partnerships Project

2006 project community project leaders joined with the 2005 community project leaders for the *E-learning Creative Communities* Induction Workshop held in Melbourne 19 – 20 April.

The group was welcomed by Rodney Spark (Victorian Representative FLAG) who set the scene by explaining to them the background and objectives for the 2005 – 2006 Framework.

The six successful project community leaders gave a five minute report on their project and their specific aims and objectives. There will be some exciting outcomes to watch out for in 2006.

During an informal networking and information sharing activity the 2005 community project leaders talked about some of the things they would have liked to have known at the beginning of the project last year and shared their journey with the 2006 community leaders. It was a great reflective session allowing many questions and answers flowing between both groups.

Thursday provided an excellent professional development activity. Delia Bradshaw facilitated a session which looked at Community, Technology and Pedagogy and after lunch Clint Smith showed some tricks around designing e-learning.

The community based initiatives have received a total of \$AUD226,000 to increase the use of, and demand for, e-learning in communities.

## The successful projects for 2006 are:

- **E-learning for isolated learners**, BRACE, Education Training and Employment, Victoria
- **The Edge Project – engaging the digital generation enterprise** – Southern Metropolitan Regional Council of Adult Education, Victoria
- **Flex-elearning Online, Intown and Outbush in the Centre** – Gap Youth Centre/Institute for Aboriginal Development, Northern Territory
- **North East Victoria E-learning Precinct Harnessing Rural Skills** – Wodonga Institute of TAFE, Victoria
- **Murraylands e-reach** – Murraylands Youth Sector Network, South Australia
- **E-learning for small business** – The North Queensland Small Business Development Centre, Queensland.

More information and visual content will be soon placed on the flexiblelearning website.

*For more information contact Mary Hannan [m.hannan@ala.asn.au](mailto:m.hannan@ala.asn.au).*





*There will be some exciting outcomes to watch out for in 2006.*





*Kadina Shed on the Yorke Peninsula in South Australia during the field research for the national Men's Shed project for NCVET in early 2006. Barry Golding with Mark Wall and Kerry Adams.*

# Adult Learning Australia In Quest of Learning

Barry Golding is Associate Professor in the School of Education at the University of Ballarat. He has degrees in four different areas – science (geology), arts, environmental science (Masters) and education (PhD). He has extensive education and research experience in school, TAFE, ACE and university sectors spanning 25 years.

His research has always been associated in some way with equity in education, and increasingly gravitated towards issues associated with how adults connect to learning, in all its diverse, informal and community based forms, particularly in smaller and remoter Australian towns, and most recently for men (including men's sheds) in Australia.





Barry is on the Executive of the Australian Vocational Education and Training Research Association and an Adult Learning Australia Visiting Research Fellow.

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

There is a bigger world beyond the town in which you have been raised that we think you should explore.

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

My best recollections are from early primary school films. *The bring the world to the classroom* black and white images from across the globe in a pre-television era had a big impact on widening my early horizons. I recall the transition from a small rural high school to a board at a private school in Melbourne as the worst experience. It had shades of a *Clockwork Orange* – gang feel about it.

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

My great-grandfather was an underground miner; on the Victorian goldfields, so from my early teens I always wanted to be a geologist. I completed my Geology degree and loved the wild areas where we explored for minerals, but with a growing awareness of environments and people, figured that finding a new mine for a South African mining company might not be such a good idea and might not be either enjoyable or satisfying. For the next five years I became a full time touring musician with *Mulga Bill's Bicycle Band*. I have since discovered, several other times, that it is not necessarily good to do something you are passionate about as a paid job.

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

On the first few days in the then Victorian Mines Department I was given a range of jobs – and completed them much faster than I was supposed to. I was taken aside and counselled to ensure that the jobs I was given took as long as the time

allocated. These and other early experiences of working for governments convinced me that the way I tend to work, of idealistically *grazing* on things that fascinate me rather than pragmatically *feeding* on what I am served up, might not fit me to some conventional jobs in life.

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

From my research: that older men have lives apart from their jobs or former jobs, and that coming together in a wide range of places and spaces can make a huge difference to their overall wellbeing.

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

My desire is to become more skilled at translating and presenting research in ways that work more effectively for the many groups of adults I have been privileged to work with as a researcher. I honestly don't know exactly where the stream of my research is actually going – that is part of the fascination. Knowing where I have been and enjoying the journey is always more important to me than any ambition, and keeps me grounded.

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

Contemplative activities: long distance road cycling and bush walking, gardening and home brewing.

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

Given the brevity of your journey through life and the many risks and penalties associated with becoming disconnected, find something to savour, explore and nourish, regardless of age. Follow that passion in the company of others, whatever it is.

*Thank you for participating!*



# Michael Newman

— award winning author

**Michael has been a visiting scholar for brief periods in Canada, South Africa, the Netherlands, Thailand and New Zealand. Two of his books have won the Cyril O Houle Award for Outstanding Literature in Adult Education, awarded by the American Association for Adult and Continuing Education.**

## **Michael writes about adult educators teaching defiance...**

We may not yet be sliding into fascism but the treatment of refugees, the behaviour of senior political and corporate figures, our invasion of Iraq, and the riots at Cronulla worry me. However, adult educators can respond. We can help ourselves and others think straight, think imaginatively, make choices, and make moral choices.

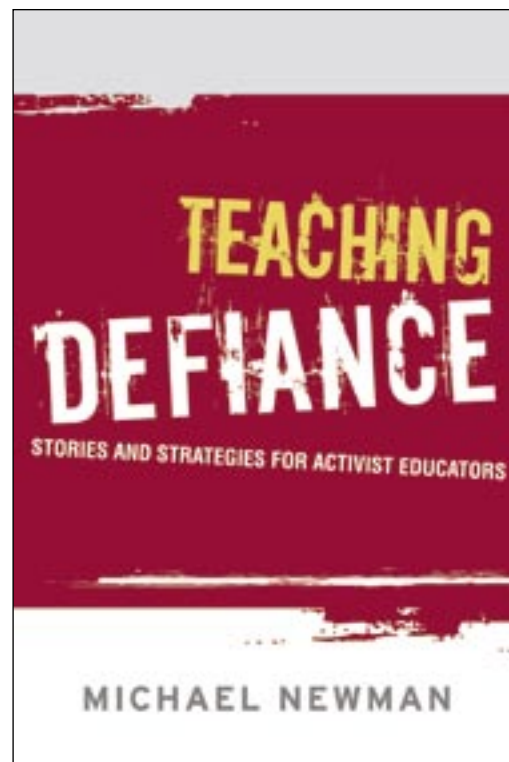
Of course we can set up an entire course on critical thinking, but we can also make people think about what they say in a class on local history, flower arranging, slate roof repair or using the internet. Rather than contest a statement, we can say: "That's an interesting point of view. Where does it come from?" and get people to think about the history of their thinking. We can get people into the habit of reviewing their sources.

We can find opportunities to get people to think outside the box. We might use an unusual image, we might distribute a short poem, we might respond to a statement with a question. We might simply say: "Let's try to look at this as if we had never seen it before."

We can teach choice. We can teach problem-solving models, no matter what the subject: look at the facts, look at the issues, examine the options, and only then decide on action. We can point out that we go to a coach to learn golf but rarely go to a problem-solving coach to learn the most basic skills of life.

We do not have to let our leaders, experts or self-appointed moral guardians make choices for us. We can research our own locality, arrange our own flowers, fix our own roof, use the internet for ourselves, and run our own lives. And we can make the point that if we run our own lives, we need to do that well. We often talk about acting according to our own consciences, but how often do we ask ourselves: "Where does my conscience come from? How does it work? Is it on track or off with the fairies?" We can ask our learners: Is that the right decision? And why do you think it is the right decision?"

In good adult education we teach and learn how to do our own thing. We can learn to think and act well. No matter what the subject, we can learn to defy the futures being laid out for us by others.



To order a copy of the book visit [www.wiley.com](http://www.wiley.com) or contact (02) 9856 0200, cost \$AUD53.95.

# How well off are you?

## Here is one measure for assessing your wellbeing

- If you woke up this morning with more health than illness; you are more blessed than the million who will not survive this week.
- If you have never experienced the danger of battle, the loneliness of imprisonment, the agony of torture or the pangs of starvation you are ahead of 500 million people in the world.
- If you can attend a church meeting without fear of harassment, arrest, torture or death you are more blessed than three billion people in the world.
- If you have food in the refrigerator, clothes on your back, a roof over your head and a place to sleep, you are richer than 75% of this world.
- If you have money in the bank, in your wallet, spare change in a dish somewhere, you are among the top 8% of the world's wealthy.
- If you can read this, you just received a double blessing in that someone was thinking of you, and furthermore, you are more blessed than over two billion people in the world who cannot read at all.

*Author unknown.*

## National Literacy and Numeracy Week (NLNW) 2006

National Literacy and Numeracy Week (NLNW) celebrates the work of schools, individuals and communities in improving literacy and numeracy skills and outcomes. It is an Australian Government initiative, run collaboratively with State and Territory education authorities.

In 2006 it will be celebrated from 28 August to 3 September. Key national events associated with NLNW include a *Read Aloud Conference*; *National Simultaneous Storytime*; *Reach for the Stars* – a national mass participation numeracy event; and the *Dorothea Mackellar Memorial Poetry Awards*.

You can find out all about NLNW 2006 including the awards available to schools and individuals in the community, key national events, sponsors and champions at [www.literacyandnumeracy.gov.au/2006/](http://www.literacyandnumeracy.gov.au/2006/).

**national literacy  
and numeracy week 2006**

# Michael has energy for uni and work



*While many of his friends spent the summer break relaxing, Michael Parker from the University of Newcastle was gaining valuable work experience as an undergraduate chemical engineer.*

## **The 20-year-old has just completed a second ten-week placement with Eraring Energy as part of the University of Newcastle Industry Scholarships Scheme (UNISS).**

UNISS is a five year program that allows students to combine degree studies with industry experience. It provides students with financial support throughout their degree and an accelerated start to their careers.

Michael says at first the idea of working and studying appeared a little daunting. “However, the way that the UNISS program is structured means that you are not working and studying at the same time.”

“Working full time is very different from studying full time; in fact working full time at the end of the year is a great way to channel your studying stress into productive applications.”

“It has been a great experience to observe and apply the theory I have learnt through the year at Eraring Energy.”

“My most recent placement involved tracking down excess water usage in the fire services system and checking the accuracy of the monthly accounting system for water usage.”

“To go back to university after working with engineers helps you to understand the concepts you are studying even more as you have seen the concepts being applied on your placement.”

Now back at uni, Michael says he really appreciates the confidence the company has had in him and is already looking forward to going back for a third placement at the end of this year.

Bob Nelson, Executive Director of UNISS at the University of Newcastle, says students are placed with their sponsor for a total of 78 weeks over a five-year period, including a ten-week placement in each of their first three years and a 12-month placement in year four.

“UNISS is all about producing the best possible quality graduates for industry and their industry placement is a vitally important aspect of this,” says Bob. “UNISS scholars are sent out to industry with a clear aim of contributing to their sponsor organisation.”

There are currently 49 sponsors and 101 students involved in the UNISS program.

For further information about UNISS, visit [www.newcastle.edu.au/uniss/](http://www.newcastle.edu.au/uniss/).



AUSTRALIAN JOURNAL OF

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# The Australian Journal of Adult Learning

The Australian Journal of Adult Learning is an official publication of Adult Learning Australia (ALA), and is published three times each year. It is concerned with promoting critical thinking and research in the field of adult learning as well as the theory, research and practice of adult and community education.

Its prime focus is on Australia, though papers relating to other contexts are also sometimes published. Papers in the refereed section of the Journal have been blind peer reviewed by at least two members from a pool of specialist referees from Australia and overseas.

Each issue also carries articles that have been reviewed by the Editorial team but are not double, blind-peer refereed. These articles are generally

of a more practical and applied nature, and/or from authors who do not want or need to go through the full refereeing process.

Each issue also contains short Research Reports and Book Reviews. These smaller pieces of work provide opportunities for people to publish, and in many cases to 'start' on their publishing journey. Readers are therefore strongly encouraged to contact the Journal Editor if they would like to participate in any of these professional development opportunities.

**For further information contact the Editor, Professor Roger Harris on (08) 8302 6246 or via email: [roger.harris@unisa.edu.au](mailto:roger.harris@unisa.edu.au) or visit [www.ala.asn.au](http://www.ala.asn.au) – Notes for Contributors – AJAL.**

# Tamworth Mechanics' Institute building celebrates 140 years

**Driving north through Tamworth, you come to the last set of traffic lights in Brisbane Street just near the railway line before you turn right and head north to Armidale.**

On the right just as you make that turn, down the hill from a pub and where a major retail complex is going to be built, there is a fine old building. It could be a church or perhaps a lodge building. In fact, it is the Mechanics' Institute building.

On Queen Victoria's Birthday, May 24, in 1866, the good people of Tamworth on the Peel met to open their own fine Mechanics' Institute building. Now this was Tamworth Northern NSW in the colonies, not Tamworth on the Peel in England, the Old Country.

A very appropriate day for such an *imperial* event for there were the links of geography to be strengthened by the common goal of seeking to improve the lot of the mechanics. One small problem was that there really were few mechanics in this colonial area as it was focused on farming and grazing.

But there was some sense of wanting progress.

*The entry of the Mechanics' Institute*

On Wednesday 24, 2006, a small group of Tamworth NSW citizens met to celebrate the 140th birthday of the Tamworth Mechanics' Institute building.

The original building was 8 by 20 metres. To this original were added office rooms and a special section with an octagonal ceiling that was designed as a Reading Room and later used as an Art Gallery.

An ongoing feature of Tamworth has been the co-location of the library and art gallery in the same building. This has occurred in 1961 and 2005 when new structures have been built for these facilities.

The Mechanics' Institute building offered the usual fare of lectures, discussions and debates plus the library. But there were also social activities and a venue for community meetings and activities. The term *soirees* was used for many evening entertainments featuring music.

Serving local needs as they emerged, the building housed recruiting for World War I, *comfort fund* activities for the army and air force personnel stationed in Tamworth during World War II. The first meeting of the local *council* was held there as well as the early services of several churches. That is, before they built their own church.



Billiards were also a feature of the building's activities like many Mechanics' Institutes. Usually the locals were competing but in 1936, it was Walter Lindrum and the attendance, like Lindrum's performance, broke records.

## *The term 'soirees' was used for many evening entertainments featuring music.*

The *educational* cause has remained central in the life of the building. From 1961 for almost 30 years the University of New England used the building for its largest regional office. Programs were organised for an area that stretched from Murrurundi at the top of the Hunter Valley to the Central West around Dubbo and the north west beyond Moree.

But even during this period the use of the building for meetings, concerts, the showing of films and the trial broadcast for the community FM station illustrated its wider role.

At the 140th Birthday, those attending were reminded of the building's history in words and by photographs and print material. Importantly, they also recalled personal experiences – at meetings or using the library when they were children or attending a class in pottery or their first contact back in the 70s with a Commodore computer.

In 2006 the building serves as the headquarters for the Australian Country Music Foundation (ACMF). There are offices, an archive and importantly a museum. So the educational and learning functions continue.

The ACMF hopes in the near future to have its own building. Those gathered for the 140th Birthday shared the birthday cake in the shape of the original building. As they chatted and shared the cake, they wondered how the building would be serving the community in 2016.

*Barrie Brennan*

*About the author*

Barrie was the University of New England's Continuing Education Regional Director from 1973-83 and is now involved on the Board of the Australian Country Music Foundation who have their office at the Mechanics' Institute. Barrie is particularly involved with the museum's operations, policy and developing an archive.

## ALA New Members

### Individual New Members

**Robert Templeton**

Bundaberg South,  
Queensland 4670

**Mark Pearson**

Castle Hill,  
New South Wales 2154

**Mechelle Moore**

Melbourne, Victoria 3000

**Jan Peterson**

Henley Beach,  
South Australia 5022

**John Collins**

Murrumbidgee,  
New South Wales 2703

**Maree Anderson**

Abu Dhabi,  
United Arab Emirates

### Online New Members

**Catherine Abraham**

Brisbane, Queensland 4002

### Organisational New Members

**Jobs Australia Limited**

Carlton South, Victoria 3053

Contact: David Thompson

# Calendar

United Nations Literacy Decade 2003–2012

## 19–22 September 2006

### *ALIA 2006 Biennial Conference: Click 06 – WA*

The Australian Library and Information Association (ALIA) 2006 Biennial Conference will be held at the Perth Convention Exhibition Centre. The theme is: *Create, Lead, Innovate, Connect, Knowledge* and asks you to think about the library profession's role and responsibilities in coming years.

For further information visit <http://conferences.alia.org.au/alia2006>.

## 24–27 September 2006

### *Learning Communities Conference 2006*

The 2006 *Learning Communities Conference* aims to provide networking, skills development, policy debate and trigger conversations and actions which will support increasing community activity making a positive social and economic impact in Australian communities. The conference will actively bring together leaders in all forms of learning, service providers, industry and government to pursue how communities can embed real learning outcomes. The conference will be held at Queensland University of Technology's (QUT) Gardens Point Campus.

For further information visit

[www.learningcommunities2006.qut.edu.au/](http://www.learningcommunities2006.qut.edu.au/).

## 29 September– 30 September 2006

### *Transforming Information and Learning 2006*

This conference is being organised by LIS@ECU, School of Computer and Information Science, Edith Cowan University. The conference theme is *Making and Keeping Connections: Life, Learning and Information Networks*, which reflects the significant connections that exist between technology, information, information agencies, schools, libraries and learning.

For further information, visit [www.chs.ecu.edu.au/conference/TILC/](http://www.chs.ecu.edu.au/conference/TILC/).

## 2–4 October 2006

### *Learning Brain Expo Down Under 2006 – Queensland*

Join some of Australia's and the world's top educators as they present the most recent findings in brain research and translate them into powerful new strategies to enhance the student learning and performance. The Expo will be held at the Caloundra Cultural Centre.

For further information visit [www.learningbrainexpo.com.au/index.html](http://www.learningbrainexpo.com.au/index.html).

## 5 October 2006

### *Inclusive Practices*

This workshop explores systemic and personal barriers to Vocational Education and Training (VET) participation and difficulties relating to inclusion. It will cover inclusive environments and relevant policy and legislation regarding access and participation. The workshop will be presented by Brian Traenor and will be held in Launceston.

For further information visit [www.opcet.tas.gov.au/vet/06/vetworkerspdbrochure06.pdf](http://www.opcet.tas.gov.au/vet/06/vetworkerspdbrochure06.pdf).

## 16 October 2006

### *Health and Physical Education (HPE) Week – Queensland*

Celebrate HPE week by participating in a walk or other physical activity. This event is organised by the Australian Council for Health, Physical Education and Recreation (ACHPER), a not-for-profit national

organisation. ACHPER recognises the wonderful role physical educators make to young people's lives through physical activities and team sports, developing problem solving and leadership skills in young people – Step out for HPE Week. For further information visit [www.achperqld.org.au/HPE\\_Week.html](http://www.achperqld.org.au/HPE_Week.html).

## 17–19 October 2006

### *Global Summit 2006*

The second Global Summit hosted by education.au will reflect on the themes and recommendations developed at the 2002 Summit and will focus on formulating future strategies for e-learning, Information and Communication Technology (ICT) research and career information services in the connected world. The conference will be held at the Shangri-La Hotel, Sydney. For further information visit [www.educationau.edu.au/globalsummit2006/](http://www.educationau.edu.au/globalsummit2006/).

## 25–26 October 2006

### *Going Virtual – The Future of Work*

The exchange and consolidation of knowledge and experience about virtual, remote and mobile working is the aim of this annual conference. Topics this year range from virtual teaming within an organisation to outsourcing and the global mobility of work.

The conference will be held in Melbourne.

For further information visit [www.knowab.co.uk/GoingVirtual](http://www.knowab.co.uk/GoingVirtual).

## 5–8 November 2006

### *International Education Conference – Sustainable Learning Cities*

Conference themes include: *Learning Cities in the 21st Century*, *Internationalisation at Home – Campus and Community*, *Creative Cities*, *Global Competitiveness and Collaboration*. The conference will unite key international educators with business, community and government leaders and delegates will explore the mutual benefits of international education and the creation of sustainable, dynamic cities.

The conference will be held at the Adelaide Convention Centre.

For further information visit [www.dfeest.sa.gov.au/dfeest/pages/conferences/learning\\_cities/](http://www.dfeest.sa.gov.au/dfeest/pages/conferences/learning_cities/).

## 11 November 2006 – 7 January 2007

### *National Treasures Exhibition – Queensland*

This is an exhibition of more than 170 priceless treasures that have shaped the nation, (drawn from magnificent collections from Australia's great libraries) and includes familiar icons such as Cook's Endeavour journal, Ned Kelly's helmet and Sir Donald Bradman's favourite bat. Other may be less well known, such as the heartbreaking diary of Mary Watson, who perished with her baby off a deserted Queensland island, or the diary of Shane Gould written as a teenager during her record-breaking swims at the tragic Munich Olympics. The exhibition will tour all capital cities until August 2007.

For further information visit <http://nationaltreasures.nla.gov.au/>.

## 23–25 November 2006

### *Adult Learning Australia – 46th Annual Conference*

Adult Learning Australia looks forward to welcoming delegates to its 46th annual conference to be held at the IBIS Hotel, Melbourne. The theme for the conference will be *Social Capital: Learning for Living* (learning in communities). Additional information will be regularly updated on [www.ala.asn.au](http://www.ala.asn.au).