

# Quest

→ Balancing life, work and wellbeing



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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 Australian international education bodies, co-ordinates Adult Learners' Week and more.

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#### FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

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

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ALA also publishes the Australian Journal of Adult Learning three times a year. Many ALA members receive this publication as part of their membership but single or extra copies are available for a small cost.

ALA gratefully acknowledges the assistance of the Department of Education, Science and Training. It thanks the many volunteers who submit material to Quest.



Australian Government  
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# Editorial



## **Each Executive Director of ALA has made a significant contribution at the organisation as it has moved forward.**

Ron Anderson (CEO) has introduced many during his tenure, a period characterised by the dismantling of the Australian National Training Authority (ANTA) and the funding shift to the Department of Education, Science and Training (DEST).

To mention but a few of those initiatives, and the ones I believe Ron sees as being significant, I would like to comment on the introduction to ALA of the role of Visiting Research Fellows – individuals who are recognised as being important contributors in the field of adult education and who provide sound policy research. ALA has expanded this capacity greatly over the past three years to the point where our direct and indirect research has had a marked input into many important policy documents.

There has also been the deliberate shift in direction which supports quantitative research that will assist the ACE sector to present an aggregated picture of its achievements. The commissioning of such research through the ALA Visiting Researchers, Choy and Haukka, must be noted here as we have identified that 15.6% of all accredited training provided in Australia is provided through the ACE sector. We have begun to identify what those accredited programs and their AQF levels are and are currently working on the development of a Register of accredited and non-accredited programs delivered through ACE nationally. The high response to this survey demonstrates that many others believe we are examining an important area, one that needs to be fully explored if ACE is to be properly represented at state, territory and national levels.

On a personal level, Ron's solid-based, frank and friendly communications skills have allowed the disparate elements of the membership and sector to speak as one coherent voice. At a membership and government level, he has fostered a strengthening of the relationship between all parties and allowed ALA to play an appropriate role linking the two. At a governance level, he has worked tirelessly to streamline and update office procedures and ALA communications with its membership. He has always encouraged the staff and others to build on and develop their inherent skills.

Ron has therefore demonstrated leadership at both micro- and macro- levels within our organisation.

The last few months of his appointment have been characterised by the same dedication. This, and the next, issue of *Quest* highlight some of the initiatives he has been involved in:

- The importance of e-learning and technology
- The need for ongoing research and evaluation
- The need to diversify
- The importance of all parts of our country and
- The forming of relationships with other bodies, such as APIA.

The Board, membership and staff of Adult Learning Australia thank Ron for his service and wish him well as he leaves the currently cold capital of Australia and returns to the equally cold Blue Mountains, a place where we know he will continue his own intellectual growth and the education of those adults around him.

### **Greg Peart**

President





## E-Learning Updates

Vetadata documentation has recently been updated according to the recommendations of the E-standards Expert committee. This metadata profile has been developed specifically for the VET system and can be viewed at **<http://e-standards.flexiblelearning.net.au/vetadata/index.htm>**

## Changes to General Skilled Migration

Reforms to Australia's General Skilled Migration (GSM) programme, which take effect from 1 September 2007, will ensure higher standards of English are attained by students coming to Australia to study according to the Hon Julie Bishop MP.

Ms Bishop said, "The changes are important for students and our education providers as it creates greater certainty that international students will have the language proficiency to gain the full benefit of their studies. This also assists in maintaining the strong reputation of our education sector as a provider of high quality education to international students."

The English language threshold requirement for all GSM visas will increase and the points system adjusted to benefit applicants with advanced Australian tertiary qualifications, Australian skilled work experience and strong English language skills. There will be major structural changes with fewer categories while all GSM visas will be able to be lodged via the internet.

A temporary visa will be created to enable overseas students already studying in Australia to remain while they gain skilled work experience, improve their English or undertake a professional year. A new temporary visa will also be created for recent graduates from recognised overseas institutions with key skills in demand in Australia.

## AQTF 2007 Standards

The new Australian Quality Training Framework standards for registered organisations are available online in draft form.

The Essential Standards for Registration comprise three components:

- Conditions of registration
- Standards
- Quality indicators

The draft version is available by visiting **[www.training.com.au/aqtf2007](http://www.training.com.au/aqtf2007)**

The final hard and electronic versions will be available in June 2007.

## Skilling the Existing Workforce Project

The Australian Industry Group has commenced the Skilling the Existing Workforce Project, a national project focussing on identifying and better understanding how skilling existing workers are being addressed and how current workplace practices might be built in to achieve accelerated outcomes for enterprises and students.

There are four elements in the project:

1. The development of targeted consultation papers to put the issue into context and to raise the key questions around how skills are being and can be developed in the workplace.
2. A national round of consultations to give companies the chance to discuss the issues raised by the research from a practical industry perspective.
3. Approaches to workplace skilling to be trialled as case study pilot programmes.
4. An evaluation to document and review the outcomes of the trials.

**The project runs until April 2008.**

# From the ALA Archives

## BEGINNINGS – Part 1

Long time ALA member and former staff member of the Department of Adult Education at The University of Adelaide, Colin Lawton was involved from the early 1960s in the very early days of one of the ALA predecessor organisations, the Australian Association of Adult Education. In this edited extract from an extended oral history interview with ALA's Tony Ryan, recorded in Colin's home in the Adelaide suburb of Mitcham in 2004, Colin shares some of his recollections of events leading up to the first meeting, in Hobart in 1960, convened to give consideration to the formation of the AAAE, and of the first National Adult Education Conference held in Adelaide in October 1961 which he attended, and at which meeting the draft constitution of the new association was ratified.

**Tony Ryan:** Colin, the Australian Association of Adult Education was formed way back in 1960. How did this come about?

**Colin Lawton:** The prime movers would have been the Directors of Adult Education in Queensland, Tasmania, Victoria and Western Australia and the Director as they were called of Tutorial Classes within the universities of Sydney and Adelaide. These people held informal gatherings, not under any kind of banner of an association as we now have it, but as a way that professionally those in charge of non-vocational

adult education could speak to each other over a day or two – they met in various capital cities mainly Sydney, Melbourne and Adelaide.

Included in the meetings were the secretaries of the Worker's Educational Association in South Australia but based in Adelaide, and of the WEA in Sydney - of course covering New South Wales and in Sydney there were some branches - but it was the Sydney and the Adelaide WEA secretaries who were at these meetings.

**Tony Ryan:** Colin, I understand that, at one of their regular meetings - in Adelaide in 1959 – the idea of pulling together the various options for an adult education association was agreed to, to be formalized at a meeting in Hobart in 1960.

**Colin Lawton:** Yes. At the 1959 meeting, it was resolved that there should be another meeting in Hobart in 1960 and that, at that meeting, formal steps should be taken to establish an Australian Association of Adult Education.

Before we move into that, what was the background to Adult Education in Universities in the mid-to late 1950's?

In universities it was non-vocational adult education. That means the educational courses which were offered by small departments of adult education - in Sydney and in Adelaide they were called Tutorial Classes. These were the creation of co-operation between the Workers' Educational Association which was brought to Australia by Albert Mansbridge in 1913 based on the work of William Temple a few years earlier – he later became the Archbishop of Canterbury.

The whole idea of the WEA was that it should organise publicity for courses which were provided by the universities in Sydney and in Adelaide - there had previously been university





cooperation in the other states, but this had lapsed. The courses offered in cooperation with the WEA were in areas such as the humanities and the natural sciences and these courses might be of say up to 24 weeks duration. The WEA idea in Britain was that written work would be required and that people's attendance was essential. It was expected that students would give an undertaking that, barring illness, they would try and attend all meetings.

People doing the teaching were mainly university staff – they were paid for this extra work on a part-time basis, or other people in the teaching profession who were recommended by heads of appropriate university departments. The whole purpose of the courses was that people should be more equipped for citizenship really. It was education for social purposes and it is really hardly known of these days.

**Tony Ryan: I think the words “university extension” were often used?**

**Colin Lawton:** Yes, that's right. Yes, that was a continuation of a 19th Century practice of universities in Britain and of course in various parts of the world in which academics should give occasional lectures not only in main cities, but in country towns too. This does survive to a small extent now when universities ask new professors to give inaugural public lectures.

**Tony Ryan: Colin, earlier you referred to the prime movers. Who were some of the prime movers in the mid to late 50's in this move to set up an association of Adult Education?**

**Colin Lawton:** Tony, at that time, the Directors of Tutorial Classes in the two universities were ASM (Arnold) Hely in Adelaide and Lascelles Wilson in Sydney. In addition, there was Arch Nelson, Director of Adult Education in the University of

New England, George Shipp who was secretary of the WEA in Sydney in NSW, and Eric Williams who was secretary of the WEA in South Australia.

There was also Colin Badger who was Director of the Council of Adult Education in Melbourne but had responsibility for Victoria, and Kenneth Brooks who was Director of the Adult Education Board in Tasmania and Hew Roberts who was Director of Adult Education at The University of Western Australia.

At the inaugural meeting in Hobart in 1960, there were also other people. As I recall, there was Les Carter, Director of the Board of Adult Education in Queensland; John Cope who was a member of the staff of the Council of Adult Education in Victoria; John Penfold who came from the University of Sydney Tutorial Classes Department; Peter Piericcini who was a Board Member of the WEA in the New South Wales; Mrs Dulcie Stretton who was secretary of the student body of the Council of Adult Education, called the Adult Education Association of Victoria.

John Vaughan Williams was at the meeting representing the Adult Education Department of the Education Department of South Australia. The Education Department of South Australia through its technical branch had for a number of years provided through technical schools, a range of evening courses for adults but there was an extension of this in the late 1950s to create an Adult Education Branch and John Vaughan Williams was one of the first speaking employed there.

**Tony Ryan: Colin, as I recall from that list you've just given me, very few women.**



*“The main focus was the resolution to form the association, the election of a pro-tem executive and a resolution that they would meet again at a conference in the following year...”*

**Colin Lawton:** Yes, only one. There were in fact one or two female tutors in the University of Sydney - Joan Allsop and Madge Dawson were both employed not part-time, but full-time on the staff of Lascelles Wilson and they continued there for some years and were there until retirement I think. But elsewhere there was a predominance of men, and it's a very different picture now.

**Tony Ryan:** And at that time most of the women in the photograph I've seen of the 1961 conference in Adelaide were in hat and gloves!

**Colin Lawton:** Yes, that's right. Although, I think those like Madge Dawson and Joan Allsop you know, would have almost certainly taken the gloves off, well and truly. One of the great things that Madge Dawson pioneered was the education of families and parenting courses for mothers particularly and later on of course for fathers too, was very essential. Joan Allsop was one of the few people in adult education who held a Doctorate in Education, whereas most of the other directors had done Masters courses. These days, Doctorates are all the thing, you know.

**Tony Ryan:** Colin, let's move back to that first meeting in Hobart in 1960.

**Colin Lawton:** The main focus was the resolution to form the association, the election of a pro-tem executive and a resolution that they would meet again at a conference in the following year in Adelaide, not only themselves, but others interested in the association.

**Tony Ryan:** I have the Constitution in front of me and I notice that “the three objects of the Association, shall be (a) to encourage interest in and support for the further development of adult education, (b) to promote understanding of and cooperation in adult education and (c) to provide and undertake services in adult education in ways appropriate to a national organization and in fields where only national action can be effective.”

**Colin Lawton:** Yes.

**Tony Ryan:** But it was certainly very much university based, wasn't it.

**Colin Lawton:** Yes. But I think they realized too that the work being done in the Council of Adult Education in Victoria, the Board of Adult Education in Hobart, in Western Australia and in Queensland sometimes was in very practical courses which would not at that time have been accepted in the course programs from Sydney and Adelaide. In terms of the universities, studying a subject for a person's own satisfaction would hardly conform with universities' ideas at that time.

The actual drawing up of the Constitution was undertaken by an executive group elected in Hobart and chaired by Lascelles Wilson. The Secretary-Treasurer was Des Crowley, Deputy Director of Adult Education at The University of Adelaide. There were ten or so others including Eric Williams from the WEA in Adelaide.

Over the following twelve months, the work of drawing up the draft Constitution was completed, for consideration by the larger gathering at the first Australian National Adult Education Conference, held at the Hotel Richmond in Adelaide on 3 – 5 October 1961.

**Tony Ryan:** I've often heard you speak about Lascelles Wilson. Could you maybe just give me a bit more background because he seems to be a seminal figure in all of this?

**Colin Lawton:** Yes. He was a New Zealander who, at one conference, gave an excellent talk on the topic All My Life in Adult Education. He, like Arnold Hely also a New Zealander - and Des Crowley another New Zealander - had their start in the WEA in New Zealand which was established in places like Wellington and Auckland and Otago and so forth and they proceeded from their informal studies to formal studies in New Zealand.





*“Over the following twelve months, the work of drawing up the draft Constitution was completed, for consideration by the larger gathering at the first Australian National Adult Education Conference, held at the Hotel Richmond in Adelaide on 3 – 5 October 1961. ”*

I'm not quite sure without reference to his actual talk what his early experience was after he graduated, but he was giving talks to the Railway Workers at the workshops in various places in New Zealand. When he left there to go to Sydney as Director, he was asked to go on the footplate of one of the trains. I thought that was an example of how the men he was working with, all men of course in the Railway Workshops at that time, just admired him and appreciated what he'd done.

***Tony Ryan: And Arnold Hely?***

**Colin Lawton:** Arnold Hely had spent some time at sea and he worked in Wellington NZ before he came to Adelaide. One of the first things he did in Adelaide was to make contact with the Country Women's Association to see if he could help them by organising small festivals. They used to have a Festival of Music and things like that and also theatre too, and various CWA branches used to put on One Act Plays. He tried to help these things by providing people well experienced in music and acting to make it all more productive.

Hely also had an interest in the operation of the rural radio forum in Canada, in subjects which were interesting to those involved in agriculture. He organized within the CWA in South Australia sets of notes, a bit like things that the ABC did in the time of Gerry Porteus and people like that, in encouraging radio discussion groups. These were always held at a certain time each week - the groups were formed to listen to the talks, with notes to support their discussions.

***Tony Ryan: Another name often mentioned at that time is that of Kenneth Brooks.***

**Colin Lawton:** In Tasmania, there was a WEA/university partnership and the WEA had become rather smaller in scope. W.G.K. Duncan - who until his retirement was Professor of History and Political Science at Adelaide University - was previously Director of Tutorial Classes at The University of Sydney. Professor Duncan had led a National Enquiry into the future of adult education in the 1940s and after that, he was asked to undertake surveys of the needs of adult education in

various places. In Tasmania he recommended that a change should be made and that the WEA and the University Grants for adult education should be withdrawn and replaced by a Board of Adult Education, so that's what happened there and Kenneth Brooks was appointed.

Community Centre Movement is important there too. There had been community organisations in Tasmania in agriculture and so forth, and Community Centres had been established in a number of places like Launceston and Burnie and other places and I think that a good deal of work had been done centred on these regional centres.

Anyhow Kenneth Brooks has written about adult education – in his book *An Affirming Flame*. He later worked with UNESCO in Ethiopia – I remember he talked sometimes about students there having to bring their own stone to sit on and another one to write on!

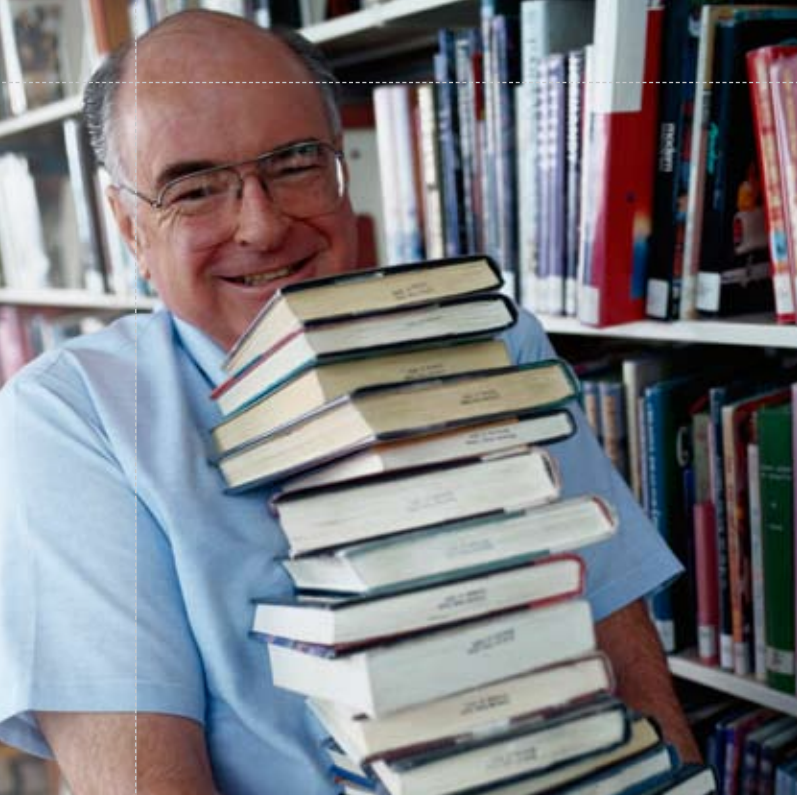
**To be continued in the Winter edition of Quest.**

**Colin Lawton has kindly donated to the ALA Archives his personal copies of the first nine Annual Reports of the AAAE (1961 – 1969), together with two group photographs, one taken at the First National Adult Education Conference in Adelaide in 1961, the other taken at the 1963 National Conference in Warburton Victoria. Any ALA members able to assist in identifying participants is asked to contact ALA's Visiting Media Fellow Tony Ryan — [t.ryan@ala.asn.au](mailto:t.ryan@ala.asn.au)**

## ANNOUNCEMENT

**Peter Imant Peterson has been appointed the new Chief Executive Officer of Adult Learning Australia .**

**Peter will take up his appointment in the middle of July, 2007.**



# The Value of ACE Providers – A guide to the evidence base

*The EXECUTIVE SUMMARY  
of a paper by Kaye Bowman,  
ALA Visiting Research Fellow  
published in October 2006.*

This paper presents key research evidence on the contribution that Adult and Community Education (ACE) providers make to key policy objectives of Australian governments. Some evidence is also presented that suggests ACE providers could make increased contributions to Australia's development. The aim is to raise discussion and achieve a better understanding of the activities of ACE providers and their value to individuals and their local communities and economies.

ACE providers are taken to be community- owned and -operated, not-for-profit organisations that provide organised learning opportunities for adults in community settings. Research on these providers in Australia reveals that they are a diverse group. They are heterogeneous with respect to what they call themselves, how big they are (both staff- and student-wise), the types of students they attract, the learning programs they offer, the funding sources that support their activities and the outcomes they achieve.

ACE providers present a challenge to promote because there is no common agreement on who precisely comprises the ACE provider sector. There is not a complete set of national data on ACE providers. There is a lack of consistency across the States and Territories of Australia, and among researchers, as to how ACE providers are perceived (see for example Golding et al, 2001 and Borthwick et al, 2001). Only some ACE providers are supported, and to varying degrees, by State and Territory governments. There is no national specific-funds support.

A recent estimate by Choy et al (2006) is that there are 1,027 ACE providers across Australia and most of them are small- only 13.6% were recorded to have government funding levels of over \$100,000 per annum. However, Choy et al have many unknowns in their tabulated data, and there are other 'surrogate' ACE providers beyond the scope of Choy's work, which are identified within the introduction section to this paper.

It is also not clear as to how many adults ACE providers serve collectively, but it seems that their annual "participant numbers" are in the same general ballpark as are those for the entire public vocational education and training (VET) provider sector (i.e. TAFE institutes), and for all other private VET providers combined. The overlap nowadays of the activities of ACE providers vis a vis other VET providers is why the participant numbers comparison was looked at, and also to reinforce the point that the focus of this paper is on ACE the provider type as opposed to ACE the program type (see the introduction to ACE providers).

In 2003 the first study was undertaken to document the full range of outcomes achieved by ACE providers across Australia. Clemens et al (2003) found that ACE providers contribute variously to an individual's personal health and well being, their social relationships and work-related needs. They also help build their community's capacity to work together to build assets and undertake a variety of local economic and community development projects, including natural environment projects in some instances. This broad range of outcomes is achieved because, although they are diverse, ACE providers have some defining features or commonalities.

ACE providers exist for the community in which they reside. They are community owned and managed, not-for-profits. They focus on meeting the needs of the members of their community and are proactive partnership builders for the benefit of their communities. They are flexible in their learning program offerings and have relaxed learning delivery

Each year, ALA commissions research that will be of value to both government and providers. This summary of a work commissioned in 2006 highlights the often underrated contribution made by ACE providers.



approaches that many adults prefer. In line with shifts in community interests towards vocational outcomes, ACE providers have developed from being providers of personal interest and development programs, only, to also offering basic education programs in literacy and life skills and, more recently, to delivering recognised VET programs as well.

The available research provides evidence that ACE providers are becoming significant economic development players as well as known community development players. ACE providers are contributing to the national human capital reform agenda outlined by the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) in 2006 communiqués. The human capital reform agenda aims to achieve improvements in Australia's workforce skills and workforce participation rates. ACE providers are contributing to these goals in three main ways and could contribute more, according to research.

Firstly, regarding human capital formation, ACE providers are successfully re-engaging adults with learning, including members of welfare recipients groups who COAG wants assistance for to help raise workforce participation rates given our ageing population and therefore our shrinking workforce. Unemployed adults seeking to succeed in moving into employment often involves them re-engaging with learning, as a transition step. ACE providers often are providers of first choice for these second-chance learners because they offer relaxed learning environments in which a platform of basic skills in literacy and numeracy and other general "employability" skills can be developed. ACE providers also offer employment advocacy and career advice services. There is evidence that this role of ACE providers could be expanded. There are many more adult Australians who need to develop their basic skills, be better acquainted with the contemporary world of work and develop the skills to manage their careers and life pathways (Foster et al, 2005; Beddie et al, 2005).

Secondly, ACE providers are providing bridges into further, formal tertiary education study and paid work for their clients. The results of two longitudinal studies are presented that demonstrate the high capacity of the ACE provider to engage adults in learning and then connect them to further study at a higher level (in TAFE's and universities as well as ACE providers themselves) and/or paid employment, including adults that have been unemployed previously (Birch et al, 2003; Walstab et al 2005). Up-skilling has become a necessity in today's world of work situation, given the increasing degree to which higher level skills are needed across the economy.

Thirdly, ACE providers are contributing to the human capital development agenda through delivering accredited VET programs in their own right. Of those ACE providers who contribute data to the national VET provider data base, more than fifty per cent of their participants are enrolled in nationally accredited VET courses. Other data shows that ACE providers who are accredited to deliver VET programs collectively cover all the main fields of education and all VET qualification levels (Harris et al, 2006). They may not (yet) be a large player in VET, however they are assisting in identified skills shortages areas that are affecting the immediate growth of the Australian economy (Choy et al, 2006) and at the higher VET skills levels (diplomas), where more effort needs to be focused in future, according to COAG.

ACE providers continue to be strong in their traditional roles as well, and contribute to the social and community welfare and development agenda in three key ways. Firstly, ACE providers are improving the health and wellbeing of adults by engaging them in various activities. Good health is a fundamental for all and is another of the pillars of COAG's new National Reform Agenda from 2006. Good health is also important if our ageing population are to stay active members of the workforce. COAG has included some health-related issues within the human capital pillar of the new reform agenda.



# The Value of ACE Providers

## – A guide to the evidence base



Evidence that ACE providers contribute to positive health and wellbeing comes in two forms: direct responses from participants in their programs, and more general research into the links between learning and education on the one hand and health and wellbeing on the other. Cross (2005) has profiled some of the recent research around health outcomes and learning to focus attention on these important non-vocational outcomes. Investment in activities that prolong health and wellness is more desirable than is overloading the current health system, argues Cross. He suggests actions for ACE providers to take to move the nexus between structured adult learning and better health to a more profound level.

Secondly, ACE providers contribute to community welfare by achieving active citizenship. They both engage adults as volunteers in their businesses (Birch et al, 2003) and there is evidence that their graduating students become volunteers within their communities (Walstab et al, 2005).

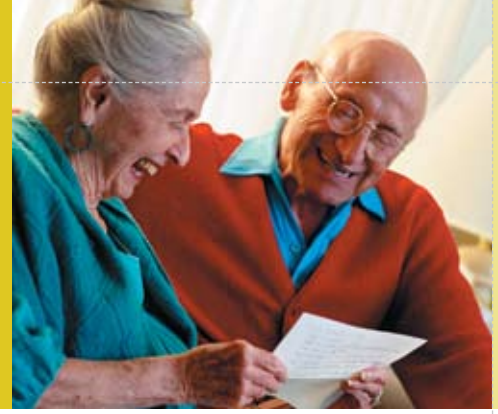
Thirdly, ACE providers are aiding the building of community capacity. ACE providers develop local networks of organisations or people and build community resources and local leadership skills. Some ACE providers are local learning and employment services coordinators, particularly in relation to youth, for example through the Victorian Learning Towns Initiative, funded through the Adult, Community and Further Education portfolio. Strengthening Australian communities through the facilitation of co-operation between groups or social capital

development is a key goal of Australian governments. It has much in common with the notions of self-help and resilience that are the basis of regional development policies and programs across Australia.

In summary, the research evidence is suggestive that ACE providers are addressing key economic and social priorities of Australian communities and their governments, the latter as indicated by the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) National Reform Agenda for 2006 onwards. There is also research evidence that indicates there is a demand for more of what ACE providers have to offer. Thus the author suggests national government funding of ACE providers in ways that provide incentives to the States to maintain or improve their support for ACE providers is worthy of consideration within the Review of the Ministerial Declaration on ACE that was endorsed in July 2006 by the Ministerial Council for Employment, Education, Training and Youth Affairs (MCEETYA) and also within the next wave of reforms from 2007 associated with the COAG Human Capital Stream of the National Reform Agenda.

# Understanding Over 50s

## An APIA Research Project.\*



### *“We share the interests, concerns and attitudes of Australia’s Over 50s”*

There is much consistency in the key findings of the APIA Report, Understanding Over 50’s which talks about new beginnings and new perspectives for this demographic.

The mood of Over 50s in Australia is mostly optimistic. People like living in Australia and are proud of Australia and its achievements.

They are well informed and realistic. They are prepared to question existing policies.

Over 50s plan to shape their future and intend to remain active in the workforce, education and community engagement as they believe this will benefit their mental and physical health.

One key finding is that Over 50s have a strong desire to keep learning and see technology as having an important impact on their life. They believe they have a lot to contribute; and believe they should not be made to retire or accept lower wages than others.

Their relationships are increasingly important to them; indeed they value family and friends as much as their parents did.

They acknowledge changing family structures but believe society can accommodate these. They also believe the family will remain at the centre of their lives.

This demographic are worried about:

- Climate and global warming; they think Australia should explore all its resources.
- National and personal security.
- Getting old as they want to remain independent as long as possible.
- Their health, although medicine will assist them, there is concern with the quality of care they will receive.
- The amount of pressure placed on families (financial and other).

Over 50s are sceptical about:

- ‘political correctness’
- multiculturalism
- immigration

They know they have ‘broken the rules’ and intend to keep doing so; many are not concerned about leaving anything for their children although they are concerned that ‘money is too easily lent’ and many families ‘want it all’.

Tying in with this is the realisation that that they may not have saved enough to fund their own retirement but this does not overtly worry them.

There were only subtle differences when the research was broken down into more discrete ages and sexes:

- Males aged 50 - 54 placed priority on continuous education. They valued advances in technology but were concerned that political correctness was stopping debate on key issues. These men wished to retire when it suited them.
- Males aged 55 - 64 were aware of the financial pressures placed on families but were likely to spend all they had.
- Males aged 65 - 75 were confident about their life experiences. They were aware of the changes to family structures and values and concerned about the impact of drugs on society. They were aware of mental and physical health issues.
- Females aged 50 - 54 were worried about the pressures on families – the need for two incomes, problems with child-care and time spent away from children. They were conscious of how changes in the community were affecting relationships and hence tended to become more religious or spiritual.

Being aware of the importance of emotional and physical health, they were prepared to consider different types of health and medical practices.

- Females aged 55 - 64 were worried about retirement savings. They believed they should have saved more but readily adjusted to their circumstances and participated in much volunteer work.

Personal security was a concern.

- Females aged 65 - 75 had maintained community links. Although not enamoured with new technology, they believed in continuous education. They remained financially confident because they believed wealth was not necessary for a happy retirement.

Most Over 50s are confident about their future. They see themselves as being able to contribute to building and maintaining a stable and unique nation well into the future.

A copy of APIA’s Understanding Over 50’s research can be obtained from ALA by contacting Margo Brebner at the National ALA Office on 02 6274 9500.

\*APIA is a business partner of Adult Learning Australia. The information in this report was drawn from recent APIA research which is one of Australia’s largest and most comprehensive research projects.

# Some thoughts of a city-dwelling radio producer

Tony Ryan, ALA Visiting Media Fellow

**In Adelaide in October 2006, at the annual Dr Margaret Tobin Awards for Excellence in Mental Health (see Quest Issue 04, Summer 2007, Pages 20-21), I met and chatted with fellow finalist Trevor Brown from the Resilience in Rural Australia.**

Renmark/Paringa Museum Community Group, a category winner for their work with a group of disadvantaged men in South Australia's Riverland. An invitation to visit the group was readily accepted and I made plans to visit the group in the third week of January.

However, in mid-January, the Riverland town of Renmark was hit by a very short but quite severe storm, leaving a trail of devastation in a district already reeling from the effects of drought and water restrictions. So I now had two reasons for my visit.

The trip from Adelaide to the Riverland was uneventful, but things soon changed. The long straight road through the outskirts of Renmark was soon showing first signs of the damage that the storm had caused. I was later to hear about – and see – more evidence of the effects of this ten minute storm on this tight-knit community, including the virtual ruin of many orchards and vineyards. Like many in capital cities around Australia, I had seen some of this on the nightly TV news, but seeing the reality was something again!

My first destination was Paringa, a small satellite village on the outskirts of Renmark. In fact, to reach Paringa, I had to cross the River Murray by means of the ancient road and rail bridge which travelers along Highway 20 will easily remember



on their way from Renmark to Mildura – the rail service no longer operates in the Riverland. Having crossed the river, I immediately turned off the highway to travel along a short but dusty track leading up to a group of tin sheds, surrounded by various farming implements of past times. This is the home of the Renmark/Paringa Museum Community Group.

In the dry heat of a typically very hot January day, I was welcomed by Trevor Brown and some ten men who were onsite that day. Trevor reminded me of the origins of this group – as I had earlier seen on their website, “..... this group has been started by people with some form of personal battle, for example mental illness, unemployment, family issues or financial difficulties, in fact anything that had stopped them from living a full and contented life”.

From this initial and very small group of guys, the group has now expanded to the extent that about thirty men now meet up to three times each week, for a chat over a cuppa, and if they wish, to be involved in activities such as car maintenance, painting, paving, woodwork, or rebuilding old computers. I was given the guided tour of their facilities, starting in the communications area (tin roof, open air air-conditioning, and dirt floor, and containing a large table and some benches, but





described as the hub of the centre) and the computer room (an old shed, again dirt floors and few other amenities). And, as the website shows, they might occasionally just head off together and simply go fishing! This is a centre with very few facilities, but with an enthusiasm for providing support, friendship and involvement for these men who are often quite marginalised by their personal circumstances.

For my weekly radio program *Take Time*, I was able to speak with Trevor and to several of the men who took up my invitation to speak into a microphone about their situation. The interviews are online – [www.taketimeradio.com](http://www.taketimeradio.com) and go to the Online Resources section.

My second visit that day was to the Renmark/Paringa Community Centre where the Coordinator Cheryl Ingerson had agreed to talk with me about the effects of the recent devastating storm on the local community. Cheryl had also organised for me to meet a local farmer and his two sons who told me about their harrowing experiences during the storm, with family members either in the house alone or elsewhere on the property and unable to communicate with each other. They also spoke about

how they were managing in the days that followed, and how lucky they were, even with their house severely damaged and possibly facing demolition.

While most of their crops were saved, they recounted for me their experiences in working in the community with others who had lost home and crops, including the many families who saw row after row of almost ready to be harvested grapevines simply blown over. They all spoke of the work of the local emergency services men and women, and of the unannounced arrival of people from neighbouring areas just to help in any way they could – one group just arrived from the far-away Barossa Valley. Again, the interviews with Cheryl, and with David, Sean and Nicholas are on the *Take Time* website.

As I drove back to Adelaide, my many thoughts included the determination of those in the men's group at Paringa to reconnect with others in their local community and to become involved in small activities which may eventually lead them back into their communities and even into some paid work. I also dwelt on the resilience of local communities when faced with the fury of a unexpected wild storm, on top of the effects of many months of drought and dwindling water supplies.

I could only hope that, in some small way, my radio interviews, and the consequent mp3 audiofiles online, would help to give some recognition to those many families in rural Australia facing difficulties which, for many of us in capital cities, often amount to fleeting images on the TV news, soon to be replaced by other world news. The reality of unemployment, mental illness or family breakup, and/or loss of home and livelihood because of the effects of drought and storm, can have long-term consequences for many in rural Australia and require great reserves of resilience to continue when the going gets really tough.

# E-learning opens up ACE in regions

**Six adult and community education (ACE) organisations have received \$240,000 between them to help regional and rural learners access education and training programs through technology.**

The funding has come from the Community Engagement Project of the national training system's e-learning strategy, the Australian Flexible Learning Framework.

Community Engagement Project Manager Mary Hannan said e-learning opens up the parameters of ACE, with isolated learners able to develop job-related skills via the social networking tools and the internet.

"Traditionally regional and rural learners don't have access to the same opportunities to education and training as their urban peers, but e-learning redresses the balance," said Mary.

"These projects will provide models that can be replicated by communities across Australia – supporting economic and regional development as well as helping to build skills and sustainability."

## **Building online communities in East Gippsland (Community College East Gippsland, Victoria):**

This project is increasing the skill level of staff and volunteers in community centres to enable them to facilitate the delivery of e-learning resources that most urban learners take for granted. It is also helping develop online access to, and demand for, libraries and other local government services.

"Potentially students have a trip of up to four hours to access vocational training face-to-face in a region that has limited public transport," said Community College East Gippsland Program Manager Jan Roberts.

"Internet access is improving in our region and we want to take advantage of that. The infrastructure is there through community centres – people don't have to have a computer at home.

"But it's no good saying people can use technology to access training courses if they don't have the skills to use it. We are going to develop the skills of the staff and volunteers in the community centres so they can facilitate learning and become a resource themselves."

Once trained, the staff and volunteers will run courses in the community centres to spark an interest in e-learning but also to support learners that are using technology to access education and training.

The decimated timber industry has left high unemployment East Gippsland, with many people trying to establish themselves in new industries, such as tourism.

"We will be providing new options for people to upskill and retrain," said Jan.

## **E-learning for natural resource management (Queensland Murray-Darling Committee, Queensland):**

This project will demonstrate to land managers how e-learning can be used to access a wealth of training and technical resources relating to land management.

"Land managers are very time-poor," said Community Training Coordinator, Sandy Robertson. "Their time is dependant on the seasons, workloads and family commitments. We can offer one-day workshops but that is not enough time for accredited training. But if we use e-tools, such as online forums, wikis and blogs, then land managers can access flexible training."

Initially, Landcare coordinators will be skilled in using e-tools through face-to-face workshops. They will then become advocates for the technology. Through their networks, they will show land managers the benefits of going online to learn about issues such as natural resource management, erosion, water use and vegetation management.

"Science and technology is moving at a very fast pace," added Sandy. "So why not use the technology to inform land managers about best practice and innovations as well as support them with accredited training?"

## **CultureLink Queensland (Queensland Community Arts Network, Queensland):**

This project will show isolated women over 45 how to use e-learning tools, such as wikis, digital storytelling and podcasting, to increase their cultural development and community building skills in the arts field.

"Many women in regional and remote locations provide essential skills in their communities but in a voluntary capacity," said Audrey Hutchinson, Manager Education and Training.



“They could be organising an arts festival, be on a vision arts development committee or managing a local event. Culturelink Queensland will use technology to further their effectiveness and build on personal and community goals. The experience will also open up pathways to further online learning.”

All the training will be carried out via the internet, using e-learning tools such as blogs, wikis, virtual classrooms, online forums and personal learning environments.

VoluntElearning (Community Technology Centres Association, New South Wales): This project will develop a core of 50 volunteers from Community Technology Centres (CTCs) in small regional towns to assist them in their roles and to use e-learning as a platform for training workshops, information exchange and upskilling.

“A lot of people get roped into volunteering on a management committee but don’t really understand what they are getting involved in,” said CTCA Executive Officer Linda Woodrow. “There are a range of issues they could be involved with, such as managing a budget, occupational health and safety, public liability, decision making and conflict management.

“It is not viable to conduct face-to-face training for these volunteers but we can use technology to connect them and provide training in governance so they understand the legal aspects of becoming involved in volunteering.

“Many of the CTC volunteers also volunteer with other bodies, such as country shows or sporting bodies, so their new skills will be shared within their communities.”

The project will use online forums, learning management systems, multimedia and video conferencing to deliver the training, which will be accredited and create a pathway to further online training or employment.

### **Regional skills for a changing environment (Byron Region Community College, New South Wales):**

This project will enable a group of learners to explore work and study options in rural, business, social and environmental areas using e-learning.

“In Byron, there is increasing community concern about climate change in our communities,” said Director Richard Vinycomb. “We currently have a series of courses under our Living and Working Sustainability program that support people in taking

action for themselves and the environment. Although these are face to face, we will now investigate an e-learning component of select courses to establish wider participation. After all, it’s a bit hypocritical to expect lots of people to travel a fair distance in their vehicles to a course promoting lower energy use!”

The project will also set up a leadership training program using virtual classrooms to look at environmental issues in the shire. And it will work with Byron Shire Council to encourage local people to learn about the latest ideas and then get involved in public debate and consultation using e-tools.

“People might not want to go to a public meeting to get involved in the facilitated debate but if that debate is online then they may be more comfortable participating in the democratic process,” added Richard.

### **Supporting e-learning in rural and regional communities (Tasmanian Communities Online, Tasmania):**

This project will use a group of 12 Online Access Centre staff in rural locations to help unemployed people re-engage in formal learning through study circles, mentoring, coaching and e-learning.

“This project is about equity,” said Executive Office Janet Parsell. “In many rural communities in Tasmania there is no local training provider for people to access education and training. Yet they don’t have the skills to do an online training course.

“We aim to skill the coordinators at the Online Access Centres, they can then set up ‘mini projects’ with local people to expose them to the technology and build community skills.”

The ‘hook’ could be looking at ‘My Place’, with learners making digital stories or podcasts to explore why their town is special to them.

“And in the process they will be gaining the skills required to access online education and training,” said Janet.

To see how these projects progress and for more information on the Community Engagement Project visit: <http://www.flexiblelearning.net.au/communitypartnerships>

**Hayley Beck**  
flexiblelearning.net.au



# A morning with Jimmy Wales



In the six years since it has been launched, Wikipedia has become the thirteenth most visited website in the world but it has raised questions as to how readers decipher fact from fiction when multiple users have the capacity to both create and edit content.

The founder of Wikipedia, Jimmy Wales, who has been in Australia presenting seminars for education.au, believes everyone should be given free access to information.

Intrinsically, this belief brings problems:

- How can one ensure that this information is neither biased nor incorrect?
- How can one ensure that all changes will be comprehensively tracked?
- How can users store earlier versions or return to information or ideas that have been previously entered?

Therefore, Wales and his team set about developing guidelines that would allow these potential difficulties to be overcome.

In doing so they faced the same problem that face today's educators:

- What are the implications for education in using an online culture?
- What opportunities exist to best develop and utilise collaborative learning in our global community?
- Who holds knowledge in the world today?
- What barriers may stop us sharing knowledge?

The protocols Wikipedia developed have led to the online encyclopedia becoming one of the most recognised wikis in the world; one which utilises "a culture of sharing and creativity which is not based on market exchange but rather intellectual exchange."

As Wales states, "communities are becoming aware of the knowledge latent within them." He added that educators must continue to build on these concepts and let communities of learners manage themselves rather than educators taking on the role of an umpire.

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# A 100 years of service



## **It's the Year of the Lifesaver and the Australian Government is investing \$10 million to support the Australian Lifesaver Training Academy.**

Announced by the former Australian Minister for Vocational and Technical Education, The Hon Gary Hardgrave MP, the investment over three years to June 2009, will provide nationally consistent surf rescue, public safety training and education programmes for the first time in Australian life saving history.

There will be an additional 31 vocational and technical education accredited programmes and it is hoped 60,000 lifesavers will be trained over the next four years because of the establishment of this unique Academy. Most importantly the Surf Life Saving Association plans to be financially self-sufficient by 2009-10.

National headquarters have been established in Sydney but regional headquarters will also be established in each state and the Northern Territory with Centres of Excellence in New South Wales, Queensland, Victoria, South Australia and Western Australia.



"The Australian Lifesavers Training Academy forms a natural partnership with the Australian Government in encouraging young people to consider a vocational career path," Mr Hardgrave said.

"Surf lifesavers are community-minded role models; they're a cultural institution embedded in our culture. They were effective in maintaining harmony in the wake of the Cronulla riots and just last week they saved dozens of swimmers in wild seas up and down the east coast."

# Adult Learning Australia In Quest of Learning

*Greg Peart, State Manager Adult Education Tasmania*

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

Not so much a lesson. More about striving to do my best through hard work, whether academically or on the sporting field. In my early days, Mum in particular was a hard task-master. Tend to be a perfectionist, and that drives me and others crazy.

## **What were your best and worst experiences from school? Were you a good student?**

Could have been a better student academically, but too interested in playing state hockey and cricket. Almost anything could distract me from the grind of homework, and to be honest, girl friends were a real distraction! But I suppose I was a good student in others ways, accepting several leadership roles.

My best experience would have been as an AFS student in Oregon USA. That is where I first developed a love of language and a strong interest in history, politics and literature which carried through into my university studies.

My worst experience would have been in the Physics and Chemistry classes – no idea what was happening, and results reflected that lack of interest. My friends studied science and it was thought that I should follow suit, but it just didn't gel with me – except for pure mathematics.

## **What did you always want to be?**

For a while I wanted to be a dentist believing that this experience should be relatively pleasurable and not painful for kids, but I was counselled into a teaching career. I really loved working with young people, and the idea of being a good teacher was a prime motivation. Sometimes I still miss working with young students.

I certainly didn't want to be a politician but ... well ... ended up in state parliament for a short time as Shadow Minister for Education.

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

During the long Uni Xmas break I would work at the Burnie pulp and paper mill as a cleaner or electrician's assistant, but my first real job was as a Junior Teacher Assistant at a primary school for six months prior to studying in the USA. As the grade VI teacher was on sick leave I had responsibility for this class of 31 for a term.

I learnt many things – the value of thorough preparation, and the importance of displaying a sense of humour with kids.

## **Complete this sentence: "The most valuable thing I've learnt in the last year is..."**

"how to build large deck for our shack."

## **What new skills do you hope to acquire and how?**

An understanding of the 12 volt electrical system so that I can rewire our yacht safely, and carpentry skills so that I can undertake renovations on our little shack by the water - knowledge and skills that I will learn from reference material, and from informal learning through watching, and working with, friends.

## **What unfulfilled ambitions have you yet to conquer?**

Cruise to Port Davey and Bathurst Harbour in Tasmania's south west; spend a week sailing the Bay of Islands (NZ); and sky-dive. The last will never be conquered – just a fantasy!

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

Playing the piano and blues harmonica ... and close-up magic.

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

Follow your dreams, and work towards a more tolerant world based upon respect and kindness.



# How to contribute

## articles, news, stories, reviews, pictures in Adult Learning Australia's publications...

### Australian Journal of Adult Learning

Contact the editor:

Professor Roger Harris

Adult and Vocation Education

School of Education,

University of South Australia

Mawson Lakes Boulevard, Mawson Lakes, South Australia

Ph: 08 8302 6246

Fx: 08 8302 6832

Email: [roger.harris@unisa.edu.au](mailto:roger.harris@unisa.edu.au)

**The Australian Journal of Adult Learning is seeking short summaries and reports from Post-Graduates about their research and experiences.**

### Readers of the Australian Journal of Adult Learning

will be aware that refereed and non-refereed papers are published in the Journal.

Please contact the National Office if you require information about the refereeing process.

### Quest

Contact

Janie McOmish

GPO Box 260

Canberra City, ACT 2601

Ph: 02 6274 9515

Email: [j.mcomish@ala.asn.au](mailto:j.mcomish@ala.asn.au)

## ALA New Members and Subscribers

### Professional (MALA)

Annette Gillanders, Casuarina NT 820

Fernando Garai, Kooringo NSW 2650

Margaret Kling, Brisbane QLD 4000

Nita Robertson, Shorewell Park TAS 7320

### Individual New Members

Dr Mike Brown, Hoppers Crossing VIC 3029

Catherine MacAdam, Cooroy QLD 4563

Dr Sally MacKinnon, Beechmont QLD 4211

Suzanne Morrison, Croydon NSW 2132

### Organisational New Members

Gloucester-On-Line, Gloucester NSW 2422

### New Subscribers

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Natalia McGuire, St Leonards TAS 7250

Kerry Ryan, Epping NSW 2121

IBS BUKU SDN BHD, Selangor, MALAYSIA

Dartpoint Technology Co Ltd, TAIWAN

National Open University, TAIWAN

University of Qatar, Basel SWITZERLAND

Wen Tzao Ursuline College of Languages, TAIWAN

India Book House Subscription Agency, Mumbai, INDIA

# Work Voucher Scheme



## Has your organisation registered yet?

In January 2007, Australians aged 25 and over who do not have a Year 12, an equivalent or a Certificate 11 qualification and who fit into four defined groups became eligible for Work Vouchers worth \$3,000 to help them improve their qualifications in Year 12 and equivalent courses, Vocational Certificate 11 qualifications and accredited literacy and numeracy courses.

The following categories have been assigned a proportion of available vouchers:

- People currently in the workforce – 60%
- Income support recipients who may have a requirement to find work or other forms of participation within the next two years (including parents whose youngest child has turned four and participants in the Disability Employment Network, Vocational Rehabilitation services and the Personal Support Programme) – 20%
- Activity tested income support recipients in the Job Network scheme who are looking for work – 10%
- People not in the labour force who intend to seek work after achieving a qualification – 10%.

Worth over \$837 million dollars during the next five years, the Skills for the Future package represents an opportunity for increased funding for the community training sector.

Business Skills Vouchers for Apprentices are also being provided for apprentices in traditional trades or those who have recently finished their trade apprenticeships. Each year, 6,300 vouchers worth \$500 may be used towards the cost of accredited business skills training which is separate to any business skills training. The Business Training Units approved by DEST must come from an accredited business course, Business Services Training package or other relevant Training Package. All must be listed on the NTIS.

The Department of Education, Science and Training (DEST) seeks submissions on an ongoing basis from organisations wishing to deliver these courses.



More information can be obtained by contacting Adult Learning Australia, the peak body for adult learning in Australia via email [j.mcomish@ala.asn.au](mailto:j.mcomish@ala.asn.au) or by telephone (02) 62749515.

**Janie McOmish**  
Public Relations and Project Officer  
Adult Learning Australia

# Roger Morris



*Australian  
Adult Educator,  
Acknowledged  
Internationally,  
Dr Roger Morris  
has become the first  
Australian to be  
inducted into the  
International Adult  
and Continuing  
Education Hall  
of Fame.*

**Selected for membership in the Hall as part of the Class of 2006, Dr Morris is an Associate Professor in Adult Education at the University of Technology, Sydney and is the President of the Sydney Community College Council.**

The longtime National Secretary of Adult Learning Australia, Roger is active in a range of other community organisations and is the Vice President of both the Sydney Mechanics School of Arts and the NSW Council on the Ageing (COTA-N). He is also a member of the Board of Governors of Meals on Wheels (NSW) and the state committee of OM:NI (Older Men: New Ideas).

Roger was inducted with such international luminaries as Dr Alan Tuckett, Director National Institute for Adult and Continuing Education in England (NIACE) and Dr Paul Belanger, President of the 'International Council of Adult Education' (ICAE) and former director UNESCO Institute for Education UIE (Montreal), at a ceremony held in Bamberg, Germany.

The International Adult and Continuing Education Hall of Fame honours leaders in the fields of adult and continuing education and learning.

Its official home, the Centre for Continuing Education (OCCE), located in the Thurman J. White Building at the University of Oklahoma's campus in Norman, Oklahoma, serves as a repository for the materials, writings, photographs and contributions of the now over 200 inductees.

# RM



# Calendar

United Nations Literacy Decade 2003–2012

## 2007 Year of the Lifesaver

## 2007 edna - 10th Birthday

### 2 – 3 July 2007

#### *eLearning Masterclass*

Sydney

“Capitalising on online learning tools to strengthen learning and development strategies”

To find out more go to <http://www.arkgroupaustralia.com.au/events-elearnmc4.htm>.

### 11 – 13 July 2007

#### *National VET Conference - “No Frills”*

Jointly sponsored by NCVER and Charles Darwin University, this conference to be held at the Alice Springs campus will include the theme, ‘Developing VET Researchers for the Future’.

### 11 July 2007

#### *Indigenous Awareness Forum*

A Forum featuring the Keynote Speaker, Ron Murray, a descendant of the Wamba Wamba tribe of Swan Hill, Victoria will be held at the Darebin Arts & Entertainment Centre, Preston from 10am -12pm.

Participants can book on-line at [www.prioletticonsultants.com.au](http://www.prioletticonsultants.com.au)

### 9-10 August 2007

#### *Voc Ed Learning Group’s National Conference*

Brisbane.

For more details go to [www.velg.com.au](http://www.velg.com.au)

### 1 – 8 September 2007

#### *Adult Learners’ Week*

### 3 – 9 September 2007

*National Literacy and Numeracy Week (NLMW) 2007*  
– *Making a Difference*

### 13 – 14 September 2007

#### *CELEBRATION 2007*

U3A ACT celebrates its 21st Birthday at the Hellenic Club, Woden and hopes to provide visiting and local members with the opportunity to share in each other’s ideas and experiences while helping people to more fully appreciate the Nation’s Capital and its attractions, just prior to Floriade.

Information is available on the website [www.u3acanberra.org.au](http://www.u3acanberra.org.au)

### 15 – 17 November 2007 Orlando, USA

#### *LERN Lifelong Learning 2007*

This Annual Conference aims to be the most exciting week of the year in lifelong learning. There will be more than keynote speakers, 70 practical how-to sessions, roundtables and social functions with over 900 participants from over 45 US states, Canada and around the world.

More information can be found at [www.lern.org/conference](http://www.lern.org/conference)

### 8 – 10 November 2007

Fly, drive or train to Cairns, Australia’s most stunning location to be a part of Adult Learning Australia – 47th Annual Conference Cairns International Hotel 17 Abbott Street, Cairns, QLD

#### **Understanding Today’s Literacies**

Be stimulated by listening to adult learning delegates, engage in relevant education workshops and view the cultural delights of far north Queensland, then stroll with others in the warm, tropical nights and maybe even take a few extra days to see rainforests and reefs.

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