



Happy Adult Learners' Week!

This week learners, learning providers and learning communities across Australia are celebrating Adult Learners' Week. The Week was launched nationally yesterday by the Federal Minister for Education, Science and Training, Dr Brendan Nelson. (See the media release at: www.adultlearnersweek.org/media.html). If you are presenting an Adult Learners' Week event, don't forget to invite your local Federal MP along.

Adult Learners' Week is celebrated by hundreds of activities taking place around the country. Last year the official online calendar listed 528 events. Visit www.adultlearnersweek.org/list.html to see if we have broken this record this year (Is your event listed?) The Adult Learners' Week calendar offers free promotion for your organisation and is a powerful tool for ALA in its lobbying work).

This year we have a particular focus on men aged 45 and above. It is good to note that there are many Adult Learners' Week activities on the calendar specifically targeting this audience. It is our hope that national initiatives such as Adult Learners' Week can not only celebrate achievement but help stimulate real and positive change. Making it easier for men to participate in all forms of learning will be a valuable outcome this year. For a fuller discussion about the learning needs of men visit: www.adultlearnersweek.org/men.html

This year our international guests are John Gates and Johan Norbeck. They are giving talks across the country (see

www.adultlearnersweek.org/guests.html). If you don't have the opportunity to meet them in person, you will be able to hear them on ABC Radio National's "Australia Talks Back" program on Monday 2 September. It is also likely that John Gates will be on the Today Show, Channel 9, between 8:00 & 8:30am EST.

The winners in the Adult Learners' Week 2002 Collins Booksellers Writing competition have been announced. Online voting to help decide on eof the winners of the Adult Learners' Week 2002 Camera house Photo Competition remains open until Midnight (EST), Sunday 8 September. See: www.adultlearnersweek.org/competitions.html

I hope you all have a happy and productive Adult Learners' Week.

John Cross
National Coordinator, Adult Learners' Week

ACE Policy

The Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs has issued a declaration of adult community education. The declaration puts strong emphasis on community capacity building through community ownership, and on the importance of the ACE sector as a pathway to further education and training for 'second chance' learners and at-risk young people. It also identifies four goals for the sector:

1. Expand and sustain innovative community based learning models.
2. Raise awareness and understanding of the role and importance of adult community education.

3. Improve the quality of adult community education learning experiences and outcomes.
4. Extend participation in community based learning, and offers a menu of strategies for States and Territories to choose from in making progress towards those goals.

The declaration will be disseminated in each State and Territory during Adult Learners' Week. See www.curriculum.edu.au/mctyapdf/ace_declaration.pdf

ALA has welcomed the declaration as a first step towards national lifelong learning. We will be sending a copy of the declaration to members in a couple of weeks.

Recognition of Prior Learning

Our President, Ned Dennis, is part of a team from Southern Cross University engaged in a project commissioned by the Australian Qualifications Framework Advisory Board, to improve the national approach to assessing a person's prior unrecognised learning and to optimise their chances to improve employment opportunities and continue learning throughout their lifetime. The team is seeking feedback from teachers, lecturers, students, administrators, researchers and anyone else with experience of RPL, in order to better understand how RPL is implemented, and what works and what doesn't. Watch the ALA website for more information about this important issue but also go to www.scu.edu.au/research/rpl/index.html if you would like to complete the RPL survey.

National strategy for VET 2004-2010

A collaborative national effort has begun to develop the next national strategy for VET. This includes: an evaluation of A Bridge to the Future, Australia's current national strategy which runs

until the end of 2003; community forums in rural, regional and metropolitan centres starting in February 2003; consultation with groups of learners, training providers and industry representatives; and engagement with equity groups. Make sure that you are a subscriber to ANTA's free national fortnightly newsletter Fast Facts to keep up to date. Visit www.anta.gov.au/pubSubscribe1.asp

The Ageing Workforce

I have recently attended two workshops held by the Department of Education, Science and Training and the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations concerning older workers, and in particular their learning needs. In both these workshops, as well as at the one held during the ALA conference on the learning needs of men over 45, the emphasis was on the need for flexible approaches, which took account of the learners' circumstances. In the case of older people this flexibility should include the approach taken (e.g. a greater emphasis on small group work, with a recognition of the learners' experience and peer engagement); the timing (older learners may prefer time between sessions to practice or review what they have learned) and place (e.g. a non-threatening environment) of a training session. The focus of these discussions was on the disengaged rather than the passionate learner, i.e. on the person who was reluctant, if not fearful, of resuming their education in a formal way. I hope these workshops resulted in a greater recognition of the role adult and community education can play in kindling a love of learning and thereby opening up the pathways to more formal—and effective—training as well as greater economic and social participation in the workforce.

Learning Network Australia

LNA is a national business network of not-for-profit businesses committed to facilitating learning as the key to a sustainable, high quality future. LNA delivers consultancy services and learning programs at local state, national and international sites. See www.learningnetworkaustralia.com.au

LNA is holding a workshop on 19-20 September in Brisbane called Triple Bottom Line Sustainability Implemented. The workshop will help participants to develop a strategy for implementing triple bottom line sustainable practices. The keynote speaker will be Ted Scott, former CEO of Stanwell Corporation Limited and currently Chair of the Institute for Sustainable Regional Development. Places are limited. For more information call LNA on 073870 0155.

The Tiger is Out

We presume Jan Dunsby has recovered from the conference by now and congratulate her on such a smoothly run conference. There are some photos of proceedings at www.ala.asn.au/conf/ and if anyone has others they'd like us to publish please send them to j.levan@ala.asn.au. Feedback from the evaluation forms suggests that people loved being in Hobart and found the sessions stimulating. Members appreciated the opportunity to discuss the governance of the association. You will be receiving a further paper on this subject around the middle of the month. Your comments will be invaluable to the process of streamlining the Association's management.

Eureka Awards

I had the privilege of being a judge for the Eric Strom Environmental Education Award

which is sponsored by the NSW Environment Protection Authority. This year's award, after much agonising, because so many of the entries were inspiring, went to Griffith University for a multimedia teacher education resource, Teaching and Learning for a Sustainable Future, developed with UNESCO for use by teachers across the globe. The resource recognises the key role teachers can play in bringing about the changes needed for a sustainable future. For information about the other awards go to www.amonline.net.au/eureka/

Website of the month

Adult Multicultural Education Services (www.ames.net.au/) is a non-profit organisation that provides specialist language, literacy, education and employment services to new Australian residents, their families, international students, and the culturally and linguistically diverse community.

In a choice of twelve languages, the website offers comprehensive information on the background, goals and work of AMES. There are details of current and previous community projects; the wide range of courses, programs and services available; as well as hints and basic information about living in Australia.

The large volume and different levels of content is organised in such a way to cater to different users, broken into logical sections while at the same time offering multiple pathways to reach the same areas. As an organisation that needs to communicate to a multilingual audience, such clear design and navigation is of key importance - the AMES website does this well.

Francesca Beddie
Executive Director, Adult Learning Australia