



Adult Learners' Week: Another Year, Another Success

With over 530 events listed on the official Adult Learners' Week calendar, the eighth Australian Adult Learners' Week was the largest celebration of learning this country has seen. And if the size of the press clipping folder is anything to go by, the Australia press are starting to take notice of the Week and the great stories we have to tell.

This year, for the first time, we gained live national TV coverage of the Week through the appearance of John Gates, one of our international guests, on Channel Nine's Today Show. We also enjoyed national coverage through a special Radio National's Australia Talks Back program dedicated to Adult Learners' Week broadcast on Monday 2 September. The program was a wide ranging and stimulating discussion about adult learning and featured, among others, our two international guests, John Gates and Johan Norbeck. For information on how to order a copy of the program visit: www.abc.net.au/rn/talks/austback/stories/s663235.htm.

Results from an AC Nielsen survey conducted a couple of weeks ago shows that 29% of Australians have an awareness of Adult Learners' Week. This is a high level of awareness for a campaign of this type and confirms the value of the Week as a powerful tool for learning providers to promote themselves to the wider community.

The next Adult Learners' Week will take place between 1-7 September 2003. Now is the time to start talking to colleagues about how use the Week to bring new audiences to learning and how to put adult learning into the minds of all levels of government.

We welcome your feedback about Adult Learners' Week and especially invite reports and images of your activities. (Send reports, images and feedback to jcross@ala.asn.au). The Adult Learners' Week website - www.adultlearnersweek.org - carries details of all the award winners and is being updated with Adult Learners' Week photos from around Australia.

Addressing the Learning Needs of Older Men

Adult Learning Australia is developing a guide for learning providers with ideas on how to better meet the learning needs of men, especially those who express negative attitudes towards learning.

We are looking for case studies of programs that have successfully engaged reticent men. If you have

been involved in setting up or presenting innovative programs for men, please email the details to John Cross at jcross@ala.asn.au

Tax issues

Coming back down to earth, our next topic is tax! The Australian Taxation Office has a service which can provide speakers to talk to groups of 10 or more people on various tax topics such as Activity Statements, GST, PAYG and Income Tax. This presents opportunities for members to receive further guidance about the New Tax System and may be of particular benefit to those facing a turnover of staff. Please contact Phil Robson (phil.robson@ala.asn.au) if you would like to take advantage of this service.

Ellyn Martin has been the ALA representative on the ATO's Education Industry Partnership but will soon be retiring from the executive. She considers that ALA should continue to bring before the partnership issues of concern, including the extraordinary complexity of rulings which have a bearing on ACE. If members have specific matters they would like to have aired, please contact me at fbeddie@ala.asn.au.

It is opportune at this time to thank Ellyn for all her work on GST issues over the last couple of years.

Learning Communities

Engaging Jenny Macklin

On September 12 2002, a delegation of the Australian Learning Communities Network came to Canberra to advocate for the development of a national lifelong learning framework. (The head of the delegation was Jim Saleeba from Albury Wodonga.) I joined their meeting with Jenny Macklin.

It was clear that Ms Macklin has been giving serious thought to issues concerning lifelong learning and is keen to build concepts into Labor policy that have demonstrable outcomes. She heard from the delegation about how the notion of learning communities is forging new partnerships with local government, business and other community organisations.

There was also discussion about some of the barriers to learning. These included: the difficulty of accessing information about what is available; the introduction of competitive tendering processes which have discouraged learning providers from working together; the lack of buying power of learners; and insufficient support from State and

Federal Governments, particularly for less conventional, informal learning pathways.

Two areas of particular interest to Ms Macklin are:

- a scheme of lifelong learning accounts (see ALA's comment on lifelong learning accounts at www.ala.asn.au/macklin_letter.pdf)
- a learning portal model where libraries, neighbourhood and community centres become hubs of learning where learning providers can provide outreach services.

Ms Macklin is keen to receive information about successful lifelong learning projects - so please, if you have ideas about the models she is proposing or shining examples of learning you think she should know about please be in touch.

In a recent speech to the "Financial future of Australia's universities" conference, Ms Macklin referred to research released in May by David Johnson and Roger Wilkins from the Melbourne Institute of Applied Economic and Social Research. Using a balance sheet approach, this research shows that universities return more to the Commonwealth in HECS income, improved productivity and increased taxation revenue from higher graduate earnings, than they receive. (See www.ecom.unimelb.edu.au/iaesrwww/mipub/netbenefits.pdf)

Canberra as a Learning Territory

The ACT branch of ALA hosted a forum on 19 September to draw attention to the varieties of learning in Canberra and to encourage interest in forming a learning territory. I reported on the forum to the ACT Minister for Education, Simon Corbell. We talked about the potential for Canberra to link national and local initiatives and the role of learning communities to help reach those who are less advantaged. We agreed on the importance of business involvement in learning communities and the potential to get the local information technology sector interested. To find out more, contact Mary Hannan at m.hannan@ala.asn.au.

Australian Learning Communities Conference 2002

Ballarat hosted the second Learning Communities Conference which was a tribute to its organisers, in particular Rachel Fry (also a member of the ALA executive). They could not be held responsible for freezing temperatures and rain (the first for months) but did compete successfully with the AFL Grand Final.

The conference participants were full of enthusiasm for learning communities and clearly delighted at the progress achieved since the first conference in 2000. An important message to emerge was that each community must shape its own learning

partnerships and approaches, many of which were described during the conference. For Peter Kearns, the keynote speaker, the unifier will be the ability of communities to harness the full potential of information and communication technology for learning purposes. For further information contact learningcity.ballarat@brace.vic.edu.au.

EdNA workshop

In order to fulfill Peter Kearns's prophesy, we need to make the best possible use of the expertise available to us. That includes EdNA Online, the education portal funded by all eight Australian ministers for education. EdNA is keen to assist the ACE community to use its resources, thereby removing parallel development that squanders meagre resources. It has also offered to help ACE communities develop a web presence. To explore how this might best be achieved, Dan Nicholas will be running a workshop in Canberra on 1 November (directly before the AGM) to tell you more about EdNA and find out from you how you would like to work in cyberspace. Please advise Margaret Bates (m.bates@ala.asn.au) if you are able to come. The flyer is available at www.ala.asn.au/news/edna.pdf.

AGM and Governance paper

You will have received the notice of the AGM to be held in Canberra on 1 November and will know that this meeting will provide another opportunity to discuss governance options. The paper outlining two possible models can be accessed at www.ala.asn.au/members/ - you will need to log in and follow the links.

Website of the month

NOEL, the National Organisation for E-Learning (www.noel.org.au), aims to promote the appropriate use of electronic learning in business, community and government and encourage Australian organisations to share their knowledge of e-learning on a national level, by collecting and disseminating e-learning resources and acting as a forum for discussion and information sharing.

The website is well-designed and simple to use, providing useful introductory articles on e-learning, newsletters, links to related websites and information on upcoming events. Check out the details of the inaugural NOEL conference "From here to e-learnity", scheduled 9-10 October.

As a relatively new form of learning in Australia, awareness of e-learning is on the increase thanks to organisations like NOEL. Established only last year, NOEL itself is still young; however alongside the e-learning phenomenon, will evidently continue to grow in size and strength.

Francesca Beddie
Executive Director, Adult Learning Australia