



## **A national directory—we wish!**

The ALA website received an honourable mention in the Icon section of the Sydney Morning Herald of 12-13 April. (Congratulations, Jacqui, our webmaster!) The article drew particular attention to the website as a starting point for people wishing to find a course. That was very pleasing; however, we do know that ALA has not been in a position to do as it would like and create a comprehensive national database for adult and community education. It is something to which we continue to aspire. I raised the importance of making adult training and learning opportunities more accessible to the disengaged at an ANTA forum Garry Traynor and I attended last week. This was a gathering of industry leaders brought together to comment on (what I think was the eleventh draft of) the 2004-2010 national strategy for VET, a document which employs very pleasing language about inclusiveness and lifelong learning but will be a challenge to implement!

For those who wish ALA to broadcast their activities or add a link to the website please do not hesitate to contact us at [info@ala.asn.au](mailto:info@ala.asn.au).

## **Funding Grants for Adult Learners' Week**

Adult Learners' Week raises the profile of learning as an attractive, relevant and important aspect of adult life for all Australians.

In Queensland, the closing date for applications for Adult Learners' Week 2003 grants is Friday 9 May 2003. Funding of up to \$550 each is available to adult community educators within Queensland to develop activities during the week, 1-7 September 2003. Joint applications are also welcome. For more information phone 1300 303 212.

In Tasmania the State Awards and Small Grants program was launched on 1 May 2003. If you are involved with an organisation that presents learning for adults you can plan a special event to coincide with Adult Learners' Week and receive funding of up to \$250 through the Department of Education Small Grants Program. Any organisation in Tasmania that provides learning for adults is eligible, although this year, priority will be given to activities which promote literacy in one of its many forms (including financial, IT, visual and workplace literacy). Application forms are available online at

[www.education.tas.gov.au/equitystandards/ace/alw2003.htm](http://www.education.tas.gov.au/equitystandards/ace/alw2003.htm)

For more information, contact Maggie Aird on 03 6233 7133 or email [Maggie.Aird@education.tas.gov.au](mailto:Maggie.Aird@education.tas.gov.au).

## **Centennial Medal**

Congratulations to Dorothy Braxton who was awarded a Centennial Medal for services to education, especially through the University of the Third Age. We'd love to hear from other ALA members who were also honoured.

## **Facing the Future**

I attended a very interesting conference on citizen engagement in public policy convened by the National Institute for Governance and the Australian Public Policy Research Network. The presentations of the keynote speakers Geoff Mulgan (UK), David Zussman (Canada) and Sandra Nutley (UK) are available at [www.apprn.org](http://www.apprn.org)

It seemed to me that one of the unresolved issues raised by the conference was how to translate

knowledge into action; how to implement research findings and to formulate policy which will result in effective programs. Here are some of the comments made which are pertinent to this issue:

Peter Cullen, Ecologist and the Wentworth Group  
What's needed are knowledge brokers--make science understandable.

Robert Fitzgerald, NSW Deputy Ombudsman  
We need to move from consultation to engagement

Robin Batterham, Chief Scientist  
How do you better use the knowledge base?

Ian Marsh, ANU  
Consultation with citizens should add value, create better informed public opinion.

Sandra Nutley, University of St Andrews  
We need to build capacity in research, enhance dissemination and aim at changing practitioner behaviour

Fiona Stanley, University of WA  
We should be translating evidence into user-friendly packages: evidence nuggets.

For Adult Learning Australia, citizen engagement in the formulation and delivery of policy is of particular interest. We have been using learning circles in a variety of fields—health, environment, reconciliation, governance—to encourage learning and debate around the topic and to prompt action. This methodology has proved an effective way for government agencies to get their messages across to groups in the community. I think there would also be potential to use such learning circles in a similar way to the Canadian model of public policy forums, that is by encouraging participants to provide feedback on issues of both policy and implementation. It is something we will be pursuing.

## Wangaratta

I spoke to the Alpine Valleys Community Leadership Program in Wangaratta on 28 April. It was a great opportunity to inject the theme of adult learning into the thinking of a diverse group of community leaders in regional Victoria. I also spoke to a forum hosted by the Centre, Wangaratta's adult education provider. In

both sessions, participants posed the hard questions: how do we convince policy makers and funders of the effectiveness of community education and how do we measure its benefits in a way that does not end up in just crude dollar amounts? If you have answers please tell us! ([info@ala.asn.au](mailto:info@ala.asn.au))

## ALA National Conference

You will recall that for those expressing interest in the conference by the end of March there was the chance of winning a \$100 reduction in the conference registration fee. The draw took place at the last national executive meeting and we are pleased to announce that the lucky winner was Teri Merlyn, a Sydney resident who is a visiting scholar at the University of Technology in Sydney.

The conference program is shaping up well, with the Minister for Education, Science and Training and ACTU President Sharan Burrow, as well as two impressive New Zealand adult learning practitioners already confirmed speakers. Please keep your eye on the website for further information.

([www.ala.asn.au/conf](http://www.ala.asn.au/conf))

## The Federal Budget

The Federal Budget will be delivered next Tuesday 13 May. We will be watching with anticipation the education budget, in particular the outcomes of the higher education review. ALA's concern is to see education accessible to all and we will be concerned if the budget measures appear to undermine this principle.

For those who would like to know more about the Budget, see The Commonwealth Budget: Process and Presentation (April 2003)

[www.aph.gov.au/library/pubs/rp/2002-03/03RP06.htm](http://www.aph.gov.au/library/pubs/rp/2002-03/03RP06.htm).

To find out more about the AVCC's view on the higher education package visit [www.avcc.edu.au](http://www.avcc.edu.au). The media release from Shadow Treasurer Bob McMullan,

outlining the ALP's position on the forthcoming education budget is available at [www.bobmcmullan.com/Releases%20&%20speeches/Press%20Releases/treas03048w.htm](http://www.bobmcmullan.com/Releases%20&%20speeches/Press%20Releases/treas03048w.htm).

### **NCVER: ACE statistics**

NCVER has just issued a new publication, 'Australian vocational education and training statistics 2001: Adult and community education - An overview.' The paper analyses 2001 data on training activity undertaken by students enrolled in adult and community education (ACE) programs. It covers such areas as recent trends in ACE, students' characteristics, ACE programs, and training outcomes. It is available as item 942 in publications: [www.ncver.edu.au/cgi-bin/srchCat.pl?list=942&action=show](http://www.ncver.edu.au/cgi-bin/srchCat.pl?list=942&action=show).

### **NCVER Research Forums: Generic Skills**

If you are interested in knowing about NCVER's latest research into generic skills you may like to attend one of its forthcoming forums. Discussion will include:

- \* an overview of what these generic skills are and how well they are being dealt with by the VET sector;
- \* the environments which best foster generic skills from teacher, student and workplace perspectives
- \* The national view of 'where to next' will also be presented.

The forums will be held:

20 June - Brisbane - Brisbane Convention and Entertainment Centre

24 June - Sydney - Novotel Homebush

27 June - Melbourne - Eden on the Park

For more information or to register to attend, go to:

[www.ncver.edu.au/news/conf/generic.htm](http://www.ncver.edu.au/news/conf/generic.htm).

### **Ballarat: A Learning City Forum**

The Ballarat Learning City Advisory Board is arranging a presentation on community building on 20 May between 4.15 and 6pm (cost \$20). The speaker will be Dr Don Edgar, a member of the Victorian Premier's External Reference Group on Community Building and formerly Director of the Australian Institute of Family Studies. Dr Edgar is the author of 'The Patchwork Nation: rethinking government, Re-building community' which argues that structural and cultural change are essential for meaningful 'community building'.

For further information, contact Rachel Fry, Executive Officer, Ballarat: A Learning City, 03 5337 9035 or email [learningcity.ballarat@brace.vic.edu.au](mailto:learningcity.ballarat@brace.vic.edu.au)

### **Website of the Month**

Learning Centre Link ([www.learningcentrelink.asn.au](http://www.learningcentrelink.asn.au)) is awarded website of the month as a good example of modest yet effective information and presentation. As the association for community, neighbourhood and learning centres in Western Australia the Link provides resources, training and support to its member centres, helps to establish new centres, and facilitates networking between centres, other agencies and the general public. The website offers details of the association's history, current activities, facilities available and regularly updated news. Also listed are member centres, their current courses and events – a valuable feature for both the WA community and for the individual centres. Keep an eye out for the forthcoming online discussion board.

Francesca Beddie

Executive Director, Adult Learning Australia