President’s Report AGM October 2016

Thank you for joining us at ACAL’s 2016 AGM. This is our first online AGM which is significant as we contemplate the changes literacy and numeracy education for adults have gone through in Australia as we come into our 40th Year. These changes have been reflected in the work of ACAL over the last year.

ACAL representation

I have been pleased to represent ACAL on the Reading Writing Hotline Steering Committee and the Foundation Skills Professional Standards Framework Project which has just begun. I attended a Back Bench Committee Meeting for Education in Canberra in February and am excited to be heading to an Indigenous Leaders Forum in Darwin in November. These opportunities allow ACAL to have input into tools, policies and strategies as they are developed.

NCVER Foundation Skills Literature Review Project

During 2016, four foundation skills practitioners in the VET sector were selected to undertake literature reviews in different topic areas of adult foundation skills. The project was funded by the National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER) and supported through a partnership between the NCVER, University of Technology Sydney (UTS) and the Australian Council for Adult Literacy (ACAL). The project was conceived as an initiative to build the practitioner research capabilities of the foundation skills workforce by mentoring practitioners to plan and write literature reviews of current international and grey literature pertinent to the field, and then disseminating their reviews through NCVER’s public website. The four scholars selected to undertake the project were: Lynda Cameron (TAFE NSW), Daniella Mayer (Chisholm Institute, Vic), Jo Medlin (TAFE NSW) and Jane Newton (Manufacturing Skills Australia). They were supported by mentors Keiko Yasukawa from UTS and Michelle Circelli from NCVER. Their work is expected to be published on the NCVER website by the end of the year.

Resilience

When ACAL and our sister organisation in the UK, Research and Practice in Adult Literacy (RaPAL) started to explore the possibility of a joint project at the beginning of 2015, it did not take long to decide on a joint publication of adult learners’ stories. One of the salient characteristics of many adult learners is their resilience, and this was decided to be the theme of what the learners would be asked to write about. Both ACAL and RaPAL, through their respective networks encourage adult literacy teachers to encourage and support their learners to write their story. After 18 months of collaboration between the RaPAL representatives Tara Furlong, Julie Furnivall, and ACAL representatives Ros Bauer and Keiko Yasukawa, we were able to compile a rich collection of stories. A key support for the project was Michael Chalk, our project officer, whose position ACAL was in a fortunate position to be able to fund, and this project would not have been completed without his tireless assistance. The publication will be available in various digital modes on the ACAL site, and a print copy will be available for order.

One of the interesting observations about the stories from the learners in the UK and the learners in Australia was the degree of similarities in the lives of many of the learners in the
two countries and the benefits they experienced from participating in adult education programs.

Advocacy

Thanks to the input of committee members ACAL has actively advocated including writing letters to the following people;

- Senator McKenzie, Back Bench Education Committee
- Leaders of the major Political Parties
- The Hon Karen Andrews MP, Assistant Minister for Vocational Education and Skills
- Senator the Hon Scott Ryan, then Minister for Vocational Education and Skills in collaboration with AWPN
- Tanya Plibersek, Shadow Minister for Education
- Kate Ellis, Shadow Minister for TAFE and Vocational Education
- Jodi Schmidt, Chairperson for the Education and Training IRC
- Philip Le Feuvre, Head of Engagement, PwC’s Skills for Australia, Skill Service Organisation with responsibility for the vocational TAE and FSK training packages

These letters have had varying responses but have allowed ACAL to outline our position on issues that we believe are essential for developing a dynamic, equitable and sustainable policy of lifelong learning and education for all members of the Australian community:

1. enabling all Australians to access low cost public provision of adult literacy and numeracy education as a basic right;
2. supporting affordable education and training for a high quality professional workforce of adult literacy and numeracy educators;
3. recognising and valuing adults’ literacy and numeracy learning for the range of benefits it affords, including but not exclusively, economic benefits; and
4. engaging in genuine, respectful consultations with a wide range of community stakeholders to develop a national policy, informed by educational principles, on lifelong and lifewide learning and education in which adult basic education is a critical part.

This year it has been great to see the SBS Insight show on Adult Literacy airing, the Foundation Skills Professional Standards Framework Project back on the agenda for completion, and the Foundation Skills Assessment Tool released for further trialling.

ACAL Aims

As always, there is still much work to be done. Amongst other things ACAL could work on over the next year, there is still a need for;

- Consistent accessible professional development for Adult Literacy and Numeracy teachers especially in regional and remote areas where there are limited opportunities to build upon their practical skills
- A coordinated State and Federal approach to provide community and family literacy and numeracy learning pathways to support better outcomes across schools and into adult training contexts and workplaces
- A program to effectively replace the former Workplace English Language and Literacy (WELL) program; and
- Positive change for adult Indigenous language literacy and numeracy

ACAL Participation
Thank you to the ACAL Executive Committee for their participation and work this year in these activities; Keiko Yasukawa, Vice-President, Vicki Hartman, Secretary, Lorraine Sushames, Treasurer, Ann Kelly QCAL Rep, Michele Sutcliffe from SACAL, Yvonne Webb seconded NT representative, Pam Osmond, NSW ANLC, Annette Griffin of TCAL, Rhonda Pelletier of VALBEC and Margaret McHugh of WAALC, who is retiring after many years on ACAL. Also thank you to Don MacDowall, ACAL Executive Support, Joyce Paliza-Benda ACAL Cadet, and Michael Chalk Project Officer.

I would also like to recognise Kita Scott who was awarded ACAL Life Membership at the SACAL conference in recognition of her contribution over many years.

The ACAL 2017 Conference in Darwin and the associated webinars are some of the ways ACAL is continuing to support adult literacy and numeracy practitioners across Australia. I look forward to seeing you there.

It has been an honour to serve as ACAL President 2015-16 and over the last four years. Thank you for the opportunity and I would encourage you to get involved in ACAL or your state Council for adult literacy and numeracy.

Jenni Anderson

ACAL President