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Learning Communities Catalyst

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News From The Executive

New Members

We welcome our newest members: Learning NQ, in Townsville Queensland

Conference 2010

This is scheduled for Mandurah in Western Australia in early September. At the moment the planning team is researching possible key speakers and seeking potential sponsors.

Hunter Seminar

There is a good report about the conference in this issue. Our congratulations to Hunter Central Coast Lifelong Learning Forum for organising such a worthwhile event. Our AGM was held as part of that Seminar.

Executive Outcomes

Advocacy - *gaining support and forming partnerships.*

In the last quarter we made the following representations on your behalf;
Queensland

Accompanied by Trevor Cooper of Granite Learning Region, Jim Saleeba met with officers from the State Library of Queensland and the Local Government Association of Queensland.

NSW

Jan Simmons, Max Eastcott and Jim Saleeba met with the Assistant Secretary General Policy and Communications of the NSW Local government Association.

Victoria

Jan Simmons and Jim Saleeba are scheduled to meet representatives from the State Library of Victoria.

Membership & Promotion

On a trial basis, it is planned to introduce a personal membership directed at those who lack an institutional base to support them.

The membership brochure has been revised and a portable banner has been designed and purchased for members use where possible.

Can we help?

The ALCN is committed to helping all our practitioners in the field. This newsletter is one form of assistance. If you need some help its possible others in the Network could assist you. Let us know and we will put your request out to members. Sometimes it is amazing the results that come from the collective knowledge of our membership.

Meet your Members

Susan Ross



Sue was appointed to the position of Chief Executive Officer of the Workers' Educational Association (WEA) of South Australia.

The WEA is the largest provider of adult education in South Australia offering over 1800 courses with in excess of 33,000 enrolments per year.

With over 25 years experience in the adult community education sector she has been involved in many exciting and innovative programs which have included:

- capacity building of Community and Neighbourhood Houses in SA
- community based language, literacy and numeracy
- community engagement for people with a disability
- parents returning to work
- youth at risk
- mature aged and long term unemployed.

Prior to commencing with the WEA, Sue was the former Manager of the Adult Community Education and Community Partnerships Unit (Department of Further Education Employment Science and Technology – DFEEST). She represented the department on several state and a national committees including the MCEETYA ACE Taskforce.

Since 2007, Sue has worked with the Adult Community Education Reference Group of the SA Training and Skills Commission in the development and implementation of the South Australian Governments Community Learning Strategy.

Jo Patten

Jo Patten is the facilitator of Frankston City Council's "Our Learning City" Strategy. She is passionate about the power that lifelong education and training has in improving people's health and wellbeing, and in redressing social and economic disadvantage. Prior to being the Learning City facilitator, Jo's portfolios included the Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan, and Social and Affordable Housing.

Before commencing in local government, she was a training and development officer in community and employment agencies. While completing a Social Science degree and Arts Honours degree, Jo was an active member of AKADEMOS, the Australian Tertiary Education Co-operative.



Learning Communities Catalyst



**Australian
Learning
Communities
Network Inc**

Have you seen the new, updated version of our website? This website is yours and we would love you to use it. You can read articles from around the world about learning communities, add events, find out the latest news about learning communities in Australia, and even download back issues of Ripples. Check out the great new website at www.lcc.edu.au

NSW Learning Communities

Forum - 21st August 2009

by Janice Biggin

Manager, Library Services

ACT Library & Information Service

The forum took place at Mayfield, a suburb of Newcastle with a cross-section of delegates representing local government, education and public libraries. Delegates had travelled from across NSW and as far as Victoria.

The Forum commenced with a Welcome to Country by Aunt Phyllis Darcy, a direct descendent of the Arwarbukarl people, the traditional custodians of the land in the lower Hunter.

In introducing the proceedings, ALCN Secretary/Treasurer and Forum organiser, Brett Gleeson outlined the purpose of the Forum. The Forum was an opportunity for people to learn about Learning Communities in their many forms; to share the successes and lessons in forming, nurturing and developing a learning community. The Forum was also an opportunity to share and celebrate our passion for community and for leaning.

The day began with the keynote speaker, Stuart Hornery, Chairman of the Hornery Institute. His Institute's charter is to help make communities better places to live, learn, work and play. We heard how Stuart has been highly successful in working with businesses and industry to achieve outstanding results in these areas and for the communities they serve.

Rod Smith, Training and Development Officer at Gwydir Shire Council spoke about the successful model of learning developed for their region. Rod's presentation highlighted the "essential nature of partnerships in the success of the model, developing and maintaining the Gwydir Learning Region, and tailor made learning in schools". The critical success factor of this model was that of local government involvement and support.

I was very pleased to be invited to attend the forum and speak about libraries as learning communities and the strategic direction for our public libraries in the ACT that will embrace lifelong learning outcomes for our communities. As the "street corner university"

the public library provides resources and activities to enable everyone to learn and develop knowledge. From reading for pleasure to accessing an "English as a second language program", libraries support lifelong learners in informal self-directed learning as well as formal education courses.

Jan Simmons, Manager, Morrison House at Mt Evelyn (and our National President) was the final speaker of the day. We enjoyed an inspiring and entertaining presentation from Jan on Mt Evelyn as a Learning Town. Mt Evelyn was one of the 10 state government funded learning towns in Victoria and remains the only one to remain sustainable post funding. Jan's presentation took us through the experiences that enabled the sustainability of the project.

A small community of around 9,500 people, Jan took us through the amazing experience of learning and growth within the Mt Evelyn community, especially with young mums sharing time with each other and learning together.

Final wrap up of the day was a session facilitated by Jim Saleeba, Hon. CEO ALCN to consider and seek agreement for the formation of a NSW Learning Communities Network. Key stakeholders at the table were keen to pursue and participate in such a forum – so watch this space as NSW brings together some excellent examples of learning communities – from large cities to regional jurisdictions across NSW and the ACT.



ALCN Executive members at Mayfield NSW from left: Max Eastcott, Jim Saleeba, Jan Simmons & Brett Gleeson

Keynote Speech to NSW Learning Communities Forum by Stuart Hornery

Learning Communities as Vehicles for Social Inclusion and /or Community Engagement

Thank you for inviting me to speak on the role that Learning Communities can play in areas such as social inclusion, community engagement and capacity building.

By way of introduction, I chair The Hornery Institute, a not for profit organisation established by shareholders and employees when I retired as Chairman of Lend Lease. Its charter is to get a better deal for communities when capital is being invested. We do this through consulting assignments from a variety of public and private sector organisations. These assignments evaluate the social, economic, cultural and sometimes environmental consequences on projects being undertaken by these clients. Several projects have multi billion dollar price tags. Many organisations are now required to prepare social impact assessments as an integral part of their approval process. In other cases, clients do so because they believe a better commercial outcome is likely. And a few believe, it's the right thing to do anyway.

The investments are across the board, a \$10b resource project, a new community for 100,000 people, redevelopment of downtown CBDs including Newcastle (*City of Learning Nick Saunders, Phil Cox story*), the creation of an urban village in a university campus (such as Canberra, QUT, Newcastle, Townsville & James Cook). (*Indigenous housing story*) We've been told that some of our work is leading edge by global standards. We are also retained on smaller projects, and by government agencies. For example, we put together neighbourhood houses in new greenfield developments, deliver learning programs, and wherever possible set up independent not for profit vehicles so that the communities can manage these entities for themselves.

Learning is obviously a key ingredient in almost everything we do, and it is underpinned by a number of philosophies. For example, the 1996 UNESCO Task Force on Education for

the 21st Century maintained that "education is at the heart of both personal and community development. It should enable us, without exception, to develop all our talents to the full. The Taskforce identified four pillars of learning essential to deliver such an outcome.

The first, "Learning to Be" is designed to promote high esteem, creativity and personal fulfillment. The second, "Learning to Know" relates to the discovery of knowledge and understanding. The third, "Learning to Do" is the acquisition and application of job-life skills, and the fourth, "Learning to Live Together" is about exercising tolerance and mutual respect.

In addition to Learning, we are also committed to the concept of sustainability. The basic and most widely used definition of sustainability comes from the Brundtland Commission on Environment and Development in its report from 1987. In essence it says that:

Sustainability of the planet means "Meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs".

It can be argued that 20 years on, such a definition has even greater relevance today.

So that's our underpinning framework and of course it allows us then to address concepts such as the "learning city" or the "learning region". These capture the idea that the development of human potential is central to the economic success, social cohesion, cultural identity and environmental sustainability of these areas.

Learning Regions, and there are not a lot of them in Australia, are places which have recognised that multiple players have a role in promoting and facilitating learning that develops the social and economic wellbeing of the locality. The concept can refer to a region, a city, an urban or rural area, regardless of whether its identity is defined in administrative, cultural, geographical, physical or political terms. Learning regions are about lifelong and lifewide learning, and as such embraces learning across the lifespan.

Learning is not only to help people develop skills, but to shape and mould attitudes, develop confidence, and foster enthusiasm

and a passion for new discoveries. It is the vehicle to engage people within their community, keeping them connected to community and to each other.

A learning community is an asset based approach that builds on strengths and opportunities and realizes potentials within the community. It's more than just a community of learners. It's about a community's culture, how it uses social infrastructure, how it develops leadership and how the community views its learning assets.

In practical terms, such a Community is comprised of a series of pearls which, when you pass a connecting strand through them becomes a necklace. This is an affinity cluster of related activities such that their co-location is of benefit to each element but done so in a way that releases the synergy between them. Many regions have some of the pearls, the libraries, the schools, a TAFE, and so on, but most have not turned the pearls into a necklace.

Here are a few illustrations, not in any order of importance:

Neighbourhood House is a generic term for a variety of community owned and managed organisations that share a set of defining features. They are also known as Community Houses, Living and Learning Centres, or just Learning Centres.

Community Gardens are an open and accessible way for people of all ages, backgrounds, skills and abilities to come together in an environment where everybody's contribution is valuable. No two are alike. They are places where people get to know each other, share knowledge, skills and experience and learn how to work together in positive constructive ways.

The **Australian Business and Community Network** is a partnership of about 30 highly committed national business leaders and companies working on mentoring and coaching programs with students, principals and staff of disadvantaged public schools. The companies include the likes of Commonwealth Bank,

Microsoft, Fairfax, Qantas and Amex. These companies collectively support some 120 schools, and since 2005 have engaged with over 20,000 students.

Group Training Organisations – this movement was established by a joint venture between Lend Lease and the ACTU back in 1980.

Not your normal Library
Around the world, a revolution is going on in the library domain, and in many ways they are becoming the centerpiece for Learning Communities. Time does not permit me to explore the differences between traditional libraries and 21st Century ones. Suffice to say they are light years apart, whether you consider their location, spaces, layout, architecture, services, programs, collections or policies.

Universities and the Education Revolution

In the Government's "Review of Higher Education" the working group established by the Deputy Prime Minister Julia Gillard refers to "a trend amongst many universities towards a third function". This third function is described as community engagement, and is in addition to the two traditional functions that underpin most universities: teaching and research.

So where have we found some successes?

Here are three, from the eastern states:

Gwydir Learning Region .

The initiative works because of the enthusiastic support of the various partners, the leadership and funding provided by the Council and NSW Government, the "federation" of facilities available for skill development in both towns, the program's availability to both school students and mature age people, active participation in training by commerce and industry.

Gladstone is a variation of Gwydir. It has three state schools catering for some 3000 year 8-12 pupils. Each has a strong VET in schools program, close links with industry, TAFE and the University of Central

Queensland and each works closely with the Gladstone Area Group Training company. There is a skills centre and a Business & IT Skills Centre, and Doorway to Civil Construction, each hosted by one of the schools. The outcomes for the students are not dissimilar to Gwydir, with over 50% of Year 12 going on to further education, 40% into a job and 9% seeking a job, according to 2007 figures.

In Victoria, the **Hume Global Learning Village** is an innovative project facilitated and supported by Hume City council that links learning and education providers across Hume City.

Hume is probably the most extensive and leading example of Learning Regions in Australia.

THI has also been associated with the development of a number of learning communities that are place based around **Town Centres**.

Our first project was at North Lakes in 2002, a new suburb in the northern corridor of Brisbane that will eventually be home to 25,000 people.

The community now has a \$30 m Pathways Centre, which contains a 21st century library, lots of computers as part of an enterprise and training centre, long opening hours, a coffee shop, a variety of sport and recreation facilities, and a senior school.

Rouse Hill is located in Sydney's north west corridor approximately 42 km from Sydney CBD.

Our research combined with the community views yielded six key areas for learning in north west Sydney, these being: Agriculture and horticulture; Environment; Community building; Volunteering; Indigenous and cultural; Economic development
The centre contains a library and 7000 sqm of learning space. It's called Learn Two, and goes from strength to strength.

Despite this vibrant migratory history, it is not widely known that the net overseas immigration to Australia these last 8 years has been 1.2 million people, exceeding the national

increase of some \$1.0 million. In 2008, the figure was 213,000, over 400,000 coming in, 200,000 going out. The mix of those leaving was totally different to the mix of those coming in. Today 25% of our population, over 5 million people, were born overseas. 1 million of them came from 5 quite diverse cultures, the Peoples Republic of China including Hong Kong, India, Vietnam, the Philippines and Lebanon. The other 4 odd million come from over 50 countries, and speak some 200 languages.

The learning demands across the spectrum for such a diverse society are complex, but essential for our country's wellbeing.

Education affects people's lives in ways that go far beyond what can be measured by labour market earnings and economic growth. Important as they are, these social outcomes of learning are neither currently well understood nor systematically measured.

For many of us, it is fragmented, uncoordinated, and hugely frustrating. But we should never give up. I hope I've given you some food for thought.

Please Note: This is an abbreviated version of Stuart Hornery's keynote presentation. Full keynote speech available on www.lcc.edu.au

New library for Gungahlin– ACT By Janice Biggin - Manager Library Services ACT Library & Information Services

ACT Library and Information Service will open a new public library in Gungahlin early 2011. This library is a joint use facility with the Department of Education (DET) and the Canberra Institute of Technology (CIT).

Our libraries provide a welcoming environment for a range of purposes - spaces for quiet reflection and study, areas for fun and activity, spots for sharing stories and books and rooms for classes and workshops. A range of learning spaces has been incorporated into this new library and will include spaces to accommodate small groups of 20 people up to large conference spaces capable of seating up to 200. These spaces will offer lifelong learning opportunities across our diverse Canberra community.

As centres for celebration and sharing and beyond the passive role of simply a venue, libraries of the 21st century facilitate the exchange of cultures and celebration of community in a more active, inclusive way than ever before. Such use of our public libraries builds communities and their connectedness.”



For more information:

Email: janice.biggin@act.gov.au

Visit our website: www.library.act.gov.au

Read our blog:

www.actpubliclibrary.blogspot.com

Hume Global Learning Village Annual Research Conference

Social Inclusion: A Learning Tool - Aug 27

By Dr Leone Wheeler

**Convenor of HGLV Research Working
Group**

The theme of the fourth Annual Hume Global Learning Village Research Conference was Social Inclusion: a Learning Tool.

The Keynote speaker Rhonda Gallbally AO, gave a message of hope for those of us who believe in learning communities of place. The main point was that investing in individuals, families and organisations can improve health and well being of those involved and will have some impact. However, there are always people who miss out - in particular, some families and workplaces undergoing change. Investment in learning communities can have a huge impact on the health and well being of that community. You can build hopeful communities, belonging communities and in control communities. The learning community is the geographic place and also the network of learning organisations within that place and can also include online communities. You

have structures for learning, people learning shoulder to shoulder, you have hope, belonging and a sense of control. Rhonda praised the Hume Global Learning Village and the City of Hume for investing its learning community.

The conference showcased a number of practitioners who reflected on their work. The chairs of each session said the presentations were inspiring. Topics discussed included lifelong learning, informal learning, active aging, e-learning and online communication. Speakers got us to think more holistically about learning, employability skills, life skills and innovation skills. We were challenged to stop and think about barriers.

There was a nice overlap between social justice and human rights learning. The research was based in every day activity and there were lots of connections. We were also given challenges. Rev David Peake AO challenged us to ensure that kids from poor areas did not become the road kill of an affluent society. We need to overcome the barriers. The presentations were so rich that as key note speaker Dr Jennifer Gidley noted, it might have been more appropriate to use the theme Social Inclusion as a learning garden.

For more information about the Hume Global Learning Village go to

http://www.hume.vic.gov.au/Page/Page.asp?Page_Id=182&h=0



Rhonda Gallbally AO at Hume Conference

Your contributions to Ripples

Do you have a story, article or news item to share with the ALCN membership?

Send to: learning@yarraranges.vic.gov.au

Deadline for next issue: **December 4**