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#### **TIPS AND TRENDS**

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# Serving up culture

#### In the Central Victorian town of Castlemaine, an Indigenous catering group is tapping into the skills of local women and creating jobs.

You just have to follow the delicious cooking smells and the sound of laughter and you'll find Murnong Mammas, an Indigenous catering service working in the commercial kitchen at Castlemaine Community Education (CCE) in Central Victoria.

In the Centre's commercial kitchen Sarah Ridgeway Frost is putting the finishing touches to platters of kangaroo and myrtle leaf rolls and wraps filled with pumpkin, roasted chickpeas with riberry and cinnamon, and a yogurt and tahini dressing. Debbie Dunnolly is keeping an eye on the oven and trays of wattle seed butter biscuits. And Melinda Harper is finalising the paperwork and pay for the day's job before they leave to deliver lunch to the council's community round table meeting.

For women who have been out of the workforce and caring

'It's just been fantastic for our centre. It's one of the best partnerships I've ever worked on. I think the Murnong Mammas are fantastic and inspiring. They bring a great and positive energy to Castlemaine,' Jane Gehrig. for families, the options for work are limited in small country towns like Castlemaine and its surrounds.

'We wanted work that was meaningful,' Melinda says. 'Something that was enjoyable and used our skills.'

'This is so much more interesting than the usual work for the dole programs,' Sarah adds. 'It beats working at the op shop,' she laughs. 'In this job you're always experimenting and learning.

'We've been adapting some of Yotam Ottolenghi's vegetarian recipes and adding native ingredients and new flavours – and that's really exciting. Some of those dishes we've made have been amazing.'

For Sarah who met Melinda at their son's footy club, the experience has been life changing. Sarah said cooking healthy food using fresh Indigenous ingredients was an eye-opener and completely changed her eating habits. 'I always enjoyed cooking for my family of five kids but then I discovered all this amazing vegetarian food and these wonderful flavours.' Sarah is diabetic and working for Murnong Mammas has had a big impact on her health as well as her wellbeing. She's lost 40 kilos and these days has her diabetes under control.

Mother of nine Debbie Dunnolly says, 'It's great for getting out of the house, for learning new things, but it's wonderful

#### (Story continues on p. 3)



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# Message from the CEO



Next year is the National Year of Lifelong Learning where we will be calling on the Australian government to adopt a formal policy on lifelong learning as an essential feature of a healthy active democracy. Lifelong learning helps to create healthy societies where people are able to lead decent lives, in terms of skill development and work, social connectedness and health and wellbeing.

In this edition, you will find a diverse range of stories that illustrate how adult education can empower people to make significant changes in their own and other people's lives.

Health literacy is a crucial skill that helps people live their life to the fullest but men are more reluctant than women to seek health and wellbeing advice early. According to the Australian Men's Sheds Association, five men die every hour from potentially preventable causes.

Spanner in the Works? is a health education program run through Men's Sheds that encourages men of all ages to learn more about how their bodies and minds work and take a more active role in managing their physical and mental wellbeing. Shedders who have taken part in the program are now more likely to talk about their health, compare notes and offer support in way they would have found difficult to do in the past.

Another fantastic ACE initiative in this issue is Murnong Mammas, which is a social enterprise that provides meaningful work for Indigenous women who run a catering service and pop up café. The project has had a ripple effect, engaging more Indigenous people with the local adult education centre and sparking interest in Indigenous foods. The Centre's popular classes run by a local Elder raises awareness of plants and foods but also of the local Indigenous people and their connection to the area.

Inside also, adult literacy services like the Read Write Now program in WA and the Australian Council of Adult Literacy (ACAL) celebrate their 40th anniversary this year. Read Write Now is supported by the committed work of volunteer tutors who provide free one-to-one assistance to adults wanting to improve their reading, writing, spelling, maths and/ or IT skills. And ACAL is celebrating four decades of advocacy and research. We know from our own experiences and research – both in Australia and overseas – how transformative it can be for adults who have struggled with low literacy to get the help they need.

Congratulations to all involved in keeping these services going for forty years!

The not-for-profit sector is currently facing some extreme challenges, particularly in terms of funding. Many community organisations are reliant on government funding to support the important work they do for those that need it most. And the ACE sector is no different. We need financial security over the longer term to ensure that everyone has access to the opportunities derived from lifelong learning. Lifelong learning counts because it helps to increase productivity; builds skills and knowledge and supports people to keep 'learning and earning' throughout their lives.

As many of the stories in *Quest* show us, lifelong learning can transform people's lives and their communities. In this current socio-economic environment people need every opportunity to make that change so they can reach their best potential.

I will take this opportunity now to wish you all a happy, healthy and safe festive season. Remember to look after your own mental health and wellbeing and take some time out for yourself to rest, relax, imagine and have fun!

Jenny Macaffer

CEO



#### (story continued from p. 1)

for the friendships I've made, the way we have fun while we work'.

Between her work with Murnong Mammas Debbie volunteers with the Dja Dja Wurrung Clans Aboriginal Corporation, providing cultural advice on the preservation of artefacts in infrastructure projects in the area, a job which also gives her unique insight into the Indigenous foods of the region.

Murnong Mammas was established in 2014 with initial funding from the Adult and Community Education Board (ACFE) under a scheme to encourage Indigenous people and their families to come along to and be engaged with neighbourhood centres, CCE Co-ordinator Jane Gehrig says.

'If you have parents learning and engaged in community activities it has an effect on the whole family including disengaged young people. It has a community wide effect.'

The project began after discussions between Jane Gehrig from CCE and Kath Coff from Nalderun, Castlemaine Community Health Centre's Aboriginal program.

'Kath told me about a group of women who love to cook and wanted to share their love of Indigenous food. As soon as I heard how involved and passionate they were I thought "Yes, let's try it."

'The women came up with the idea of a catering group and pop up kitchen where they would be the casual employees. After training in food handling, they could work and earn and become self-sustaining. Being sustainable is really important, Jane said. 'The women were not interested in programs that ran out when the funding ran out. They'd

'There's no hierarchy in the group, we pitch in and get along really well together. We love the work but the friendship and social interaction is just as important,' Melinda Harper. seen enough of that already to be really wary. So the idea was to create work that was ongoing and jobs that were interesting and enjoyable, not boring or dull, and jobs that had an impact.'

Jane says the project has had an impact on all the women involved. 'They have developed a lot more independence. It's affected their families because now they come to the Centre too for lunches and they are much more relaxed coming in here now. It's great for the community that we're working together. It's a genuine partnership.'

As for the future, Melinda says the biggest challenge is getting regular bookings. 'We've got plenty of competition in Castlemaine, but we're the only Indigenous catering group in the area and I think we're only one of two in the state, which makes us unique. And people love our food!'

Monthly pop up lunches have proven a drawcard with up to 50 people at a sitting, many of whom might not have been inside the Centre before.

The pop up café has sparked interest in the community about bush food, Jane says. 'We run an Indigenous plant and cooking course run by a local Elder that's open to the whole community and it's extremely popular. It raises awareness not just of plants and foods but of the local Indigenous people and their connection to this place,' Jane says. 'It's been a fantastic project for our centre, the women involved and for our community.' http://www.cced.com.au/



# Spanner in the works?



A health literacy program recommends men treat their bodies like their cars.

While most of us know the importance of having our cars regularly serviced and checked, when it comes to health and wellbeing men are much more likely to have the car checked than their own physical and mental health, according to the Australian Men's Sheds Association (AMSA).

The men's health initiative Spanner in the Works? hopes to change all that by encouraging men of all ages to take a more proactive role in their own health.

The project website offers positive tips on how to improve their health and their chances of a longer and happier life. Using the analogy of the car the website emphasises that often minor adjustments can have a major impact on health, relationships with loved ones, friends and workmates.

The Men's Sheds Spanner in the Works program encourages men to learn more about their health and wellbeing and get regular physical and mental health checkups.

The second component of the program is a health check program run through Men's Sheds by health professionals who offer on the spot screening and advice.

The philosophy behind the project is to make health information easy to understand, non-threatening and appealing, AMSA project worker Gary Green says. A former community health nurse Gary had worked on a similar program in WA, the Pitstop Program which used the analogy of cars and mechanics as a way of interesting men in their

'You've got to keep the health information short and sweet. If there's too much text men won't read it. And if they don't read it, it's a complete waste of money,' Gary Green. health. Delivered in familiar environments such as agricultural, boating and car shows the health program encouraged men to put themselves 'over the pits', have their 'roadworthiness' checked and get any necessary maintenance.

Spanner in the Works? is a simpler and more streamlined version, he says.

The idea of using a car as a metaphor made intuitive sense to Gary. 'As a community health nurse with a young family money was always tight and I couldn't afford a mechanic. So I learned how to do my own car repairs and maintenance. It gave me really good knowledge of how it all works so it was a good idea to describe the human body in a way that men could relate to and understand.'

Being able to communicate health information in an engaging way and taking it out to environments where men gathered was a skill he developed working in rural Victoria. It was at local agricultural shows, talking to farmers and doing blood pressure checks that he got used to explaining to farmers exactly what a blood pressure reading of 150 over 85 meant.

'I used the example of an irrigation system as a simple way of explaining what happens when blood pressure is too high for too long. The system can run on high pressure but over time too much water pressure in the system puts pressure on the joints, the pipes, the sprinkler heads and eventually they'll give. And if there's a leak in your head you'll end up with a nice stroke.

'Like everywhere else, health literacy in Sheds is poor and men are often misinformed. For example, many men don't know the difference between prostate cancer and an enlarged prostate. I don't think health workers are good at explaining things to the public. I don't mean you patronise people, you don't. But you have to get back to basics. Diabetes is a classic example. It's important to explain to people why we want them not to be obese. When you back up health advice like 'restrict your diet and do more exercise' with reasons that are simple for them to understand, you



get a lot more co-operation.'

The website provides resources for running face to face health check programs at community locations and supplies a booklet that men can use as the basis for their health screening, which Gary says was developed with the needs of men in mind.

Sheds around Australia have held around 40–50 Spanner in the Works? events a year Gary says. 'These can be big events or small local ones. Local health workers come along to do the health checks. Having the local community health nurse along is ideal because they have good general knowledge and it's a great way to link Men's Sheds with community health staff who we find really get on board with the idea. Anecdotally we are getting feedback that shedders are using local health services a lot better than before because they know the staff.'

**Ron Lutton**, grants officer at Albury North Men's Shed in New South Wales was the brains behind a successful Spanner in the Works? program that attracted around 100 men from across the region.

Ron's used to looking for funds to install things like a dust extraction system and modifications to improve safety around machinery. But when he heard news of the Spanner in the Works? program he thought it was not only a great idea for the Shed but was an ideal opportunity to tap into the resources of the nearby Charles Sturt University health sciences program.

'I see the difference when we sit round the table and have a cup of tea. We tend to discuss health more, there's lots of comparing notes and informal chat and discussion, it's become part of our normal conversation,' Ron Lutton. Knowing how reluctant men could be to talk about health, Ron said making the day appealing and 'dangling some carrots' was an essential part of planning. 'We offered free lunch, a tub of Shed goodies donated by local businesses as well as free cans of paint. One store donated around 19 10–15L cans so we stacked them all up and took a photo and included it with the invite. That was a real drawcard.'

The full day event was divided into information sessions and health screening programs. 'We divided the men into two groups. While half went off for a series of health checks run by allied health students from the University, the others heard from a range of speakers, including a local GP who had them eating out of his hand and an OH&S expert who talked about the importance of knowing first aid and demonstrated CPR.

'Each person took a copy of their booklet along with them for their screening that was filled in with each health check. If the allied health student suggested they see their doctor they had a copy of their assessment to take along with them.

Since he put the health wheels in motion, Ron's got a grant for the Shed to buy a new first aid kit and a defibrillator. His goal is to have every one of the supervisors gain Level 2 Certificate in First Aid. After that he's planning to run a course in Mental Health First Aid.

'The spin off from Spanner in the Works? is that we are more aware of mental and physical health and what to do about it.'

**Murray Henderson** was the health event co-ordinator for the third Mt Pleasant Men's Shed Spanner in the Works? event and it was the most successful yet, he says. 'We made it an expo with a whole range of people at booths in the local hall available to talk about everything from cancer and diabetes, sleep apnoea, coping with ageing and more. We had JPs and lawyers, nurses and local health workers there to offer all sorts of information, advice and medical tests. So the set up allowed people to mix and mingle and shop



around for the health information they needed. We had 80 people along which given it was the school holidays was a pretty good turnout.

Murray says Men's Sheds are a good fit with health and wellbeing promotion programs. 'Men's Sheds are great for people with anxiety and depression and offer real mental health benefits. We get calls from doctors and the chemist asking us to contact someone they think would benefit from joining our Shed.

'We advertised the event at a range of venues like RSLs,

bowls clubs, golf clubs, medical practices, as well as around 30 Sheds in the Adelaide Hills and Barossa region.

'The feedback we got after the event was great. People were very happy with it. We're already planning the next one in 2019 and we're going to hold it at Mt Pleasant market on a Saturday with a marquee rather than mid week in a hall.

'The event this year was a great way of finding out more about our health but also from the Shed point of view it was a great networking event. So many of the organisations involved want to continue working with us.'

# Join now

Being a member of ALA is a great way to support lifelong and lifewide learning in Australia and join a thriving national network of adult educators. As a member of ALA, we champion the work you do; develop policies; conduct research and provide professional development to ensure a vibrant, valued and visible adult and community education sector.

To find out more about all the benefits of an ALA membership, go to: https://ala. asn.au/why-join/





OH&S expert John Garratt demonstrates life-saving first aid.

# Tips for taking stock

The end of year is fast approaching and you've likely got some great plans for improvements and changes for next year. But before you forge ahead it's a great time to kick back and look at how your job worked for you this year.



#### Here are our tips for taking stock.

#### 1 What made you happiest

Think about a project or situation that completely absorbed you. Try to focus in on the specific detail of what it was that you found so absorbing and satisfying so you can replicate those circumstances in the future.

#### 2 What you'd like to learn more about

Putting your finger on what piqued your interest can help you set some learning goals for next year. So what was it that made you think, 'Wow, I'd love to know more about that!'

#### 3 What you'd like to follow up

Perhaps you had some great ideas that you didn't have time to pursue or opportunities that you felt you missed. Look at which are achievable and practical ones to follow up in the new year.

#### 4 How your work made a difference

Perhaps you're one of the lucky people who sees every day how much of a difference their work makes. But for most of us it can be easy to lose sight of the bigger picture. Write down some examples of how your work had an impact on people, systems and your organisation.

Keeping a work journal is a terrific way to keep on track of your daily thoughts, feelings and reactions during the year. At the end of the year it's can be a great source for looking back and taking stock.

#### 5 What new tools would help you

Perhaps there's new technology that would make your job easier or allow you to be more creative and productive. Make a list of things you'd like to try and add them to your new year wish list

#### 6 What are the biggest obstacles in your job

Focus on ones that you can change. Is it working in an open plan office; a boss who micro manages or simply a lack of time?

#### 7 What isn't working for you

What parts of your job do you find most difficult, challenging or boring? Be specific. Now think of some strategies you could adopt to manage these more positively next time round.

#### 8 What things you could have done better

Perhaps you're disappointed with your performance around particular tasks this year. Think about how you could have done them more effectively, and what help you might ask for next time round.

#### 9 Who you most admire

Name someone in your field who you look up to and whose work you admire. Describe what exactly they do that you'd like to be able to do too.

#### 10 Swap your list with a colleague or your boss

This allows your co-workers and manager to get to know you better, to help you identify your individual strengths and weaknesses and develop your job to play to your interests and abilities. It's a great discussion to have at the start of a new year!

# Sharing insights into adult and community education

Up close and personal our Board members describe what they've learned about adult and community education in 2017.



## **Ros Bauer**

### Making changes in people's lives

'Leave no one behind' are the words of Warlpiri educator Barbara Napanangka Martin, in describing her vision of adult community education in Yuendumu, NT. It is an inspiring refrain that recognises the many different ways adults need support in furthering their education, whether it is remote Indigenous people or the wider Australian community of learners. The ACE sector assumes much of the responsibility for informal and non-formal learning, often undervalued and often underfunded, but so critical in engaging and supporting people seeking to make changes in their lives. Consider that each time an adult participates in an ACE activity, this translates to a literate experience, whether it is reading, writing, speaking, listening, learning, using technology or working with numbers. It is a contribution to a more literate nation that is incremental, nuanced, embedded, contextual and enhances wellbeing. Thumbs up to the ACE sector for their contribution to 'leaving no one behind'.



## Chris McCall Knitting communities together

It has been my privilege to have been on the of ALA board for 3 years, and I continue to be inspired by the people I meet who work in the sector and are passionate advocates of community education. People who work in community education never cease to amaze me in the way they rally to a cause both at a local level and within the broader community. These are people who view ACE as key to social justice.

This year I attended a number of forums and conferences that inspired me and where I met a range of interesting people who work across different sectors and communities and in different countries. I started the year attending 'The Getting of Wisdom, Learning in Later Life' conference in February, which included a number of international presenters talking about ACE initiatives for older citizens. I was particularly interested in Swedish academic Ann-Krisn Boström's presentation on Study Circles and knitting cafes. The knitting cafes have up to 100 people attending. As she explained, when there are no daylight hours in winter, activities like these are important sites for informal learning, for sharing skills, enjoying conversation and improving people's wellbeing.



## **Cath Dunn** Making learning happen

Some of my most valuable learning about ACE this year came through attending the Getting of Wisdom international exchange on learning for older adults, in which ALA was a central player. There were formal presentations, learning activities and insightful visits to various kinds of learning centres (including Men's Sheds, nature parks and museums) in Victoria and in Wellington, NZ.

This gathering of experts from Australia, NZ, Europe and the UK reinforced that, wherever you are, adults enjoy and benefit from learning together, no matter how informal the experience or setting. The opportunity to share, reflect on and discuss new ideas is key. It really highlighted for me how ACE gets its strength and purpose from the people who participate.





## **Paul Mulroney** Beyond the statistics

Through my many years working in the ACE environment, I have heard providers talk about the many outcomes participants achieve which do not get captured in traditional reporting. There are wonderful stories of those whose lives are significantly changed through developing their foundation skills which enables people to be more engaged with their communities as well as helping them move to further learning, study and work. As wonderful as this is, there are other outcomes which may on the surface appear less spectacular, but are equally as life changing for an ACE participant. For example, for people who have been socially isolated being able to make a new friend, leave home to go to a movie or shopping centre, walk along the beach or just sit in a local park can be huge steps. This is what excites me about ACE – the possibilities it offers and the way it can help people overcome barriers that can be the start of a whole new life.



## **Robbie Lloyd** Chicken and egg

Wrestling with governments in the begging competition for increasingly scarce resources for ACE, I am reminded of the old expression 'I'm not going to feed the chicken until it lays an egg'. This is the value system of current government programs and bureaucratic policing that require ACE providers like us to 'prove what jobs your participants will get from doing ACE programs'. We know (and privately they very well know, but can't admit) the jobs aren't there, especially for the vulnerable community members we try to serve. These guys are struggling but somehow before ACE can get any funds to help them to start rebuilding their lives, we've got come up with guaranteed jobs for them! Give me a break.

What would be nice is for ACE to be trusted to work closely at the local level, and to build social enterprises where these folks can get a start in life, and work towards empowering themselves. That would make a nice change from governments giving billions to the already rich and telling us we're not helping enough to find the solutions. Call me crazy ...



## Sue Howard Creativity from chaos

'Leave no one behind.' This is the second law of thermodynamics – which argues that over time, even isolated, ordered systems become disordered. So, what has this got to do with adult education in Australia? To me, quite a lot! It's been a period where we've seen ordered systems fall into disorder – the VET FEE-HELP loan scheme; an increasingly narrowly defined post school education system focussed on training people for work, despite a lack of job-creation programs; and finally a proposed citizenship test for migrants that many Australians who struggle with literacy would find difficult to complete.

I am grateful to Prof Melissa Steyn from the University of Witwatersrand who reminded me in a presentation this year that when ordered systems become chaotic it's a great opportunity to examine our assumptions and learn from the experience.

# Adult literacy turns 40

Leading literacy organisations around the country are celebrating their 40th anniversary this year.



In 1977 a small ad appeared in the pages of the *West Australian*, inviting applications from people interested in being trained as volunteer literacy tutors. The woman behind the ad was Kath Napier a Perth based English and ESL teacher who'd noticed in her work in TAFE how often new apprentices struggled with their reading and writing. She was one of a growing number of educators recognising what had been a long ignored and hidden problem, the number of Australians reaching adulthood without the necessary confidence and skills in literacy.

In Perth Kath Napier had been inspired by the development of adult literacy programs in the UK that used volunteers instead of trained teachers and saw this as a great strength especially for those adults with literacy problems who had had a tough time of it at school. 'Often the students can relate more easily to those with a non-teaching background, particularly if they share the same interests,' she told a journalist at the time. The newspaper advertisement drew an enthusiastic group of applicants and the first tutor training session was held in a CWA house in West Perth in 1977.

Today the Read Write Now (RWN) program has over 500 volunteers who each year tutor over 600 students and receives over 20 enquiries a week. Pam Thurbon, literacy support & training officer says there's no typical volunteer tutor, they come from different age groups and from all walks of life. They are retired and working, part time and full time. All of them says Pam 'love what they do'.

To overcome the geographical challenges of a state the size of WA, RWN have divided it into 22 regions from Broome in the north to Esperance in the south, and rely on regional coordinators to interview potential tutors, assess new

'It's not just the individual with literacy problems who gains from getting help. Their children and families, their employers and the economy, the community and society as a whole all share in the benefits of helping an adult improve their ability to read and write.' students' literacy needs, and monitor progress once the tutor and student are matched.

'Our wonderful coordinators are the "glue" that holds the Program together, and enable us to reach people in a wide geographical area,' Pam says. 'One of the amazing things about RWN coordinators is the length of time they stay with us. We have some coordinators who have been with us for over 30 years.'

After 4 days of training tutors feel 'very well equipped and can't wait to get out there and start,' Pam says.

'Looking after our volunteers is the key. Making them feel appreciated and worthwhile is so important. They do this job for the intrinsic rewards of seeing people's lives changed and the new opportunities that literacy opens up for them. This energises them, and encourages them to continue. We try and make sure our volunteers all feel appreciated. We send out regular newsletters, friendly emails and we make sure we're always cheery on the phone whenever they ring. And we offer plenty of opportunities for them to upskill through conferences and workshops.'

RWN celebrated its anniversary with a day long conference and celebration that attracted 200 coordinators and volunteers from across the state. http://www.read-write-now.org/

In 1977 when Kath Napier was recruiting literacy volunteers, in New South Wales academic Judith Goyen was conducting research that would establish the prevalence of adult literacy difficulties. In her survey of adults in metropolitan Sydney she found that 10% of people over the age of fifteen had low level functional literacy. Having identified the demand for adult literacy and basic education Adult Literacy Councils were established in 1977 in New South Wales, Western Australia and nationally. This year in celebration of four decades of actively promoting language, literacy, numeracy, and communication advocacy and research the Australian Council of Adult Literacy held a symposium, research forum and national conference, 'Traders, Neighbours and Intruders: points of contact' in Darwin. http://www.acal.edu.au/conference/

The NSW Adult Literacy and Numeracy Council will celebrate the anniversary of their establishment at their conference on December 1, called '40 yrs on - Creating Spaces for Learning and Teaching in ABE.' http://www.nswalnc.org.au/

## ACE news from around Australia



In **Western Australia**, peak body Linkwest's conference explored the theme of Belonging and drew 180 delegates from across the state and culminated in the 'Awesomeness' awards.

With a new state government in place, and significant proposed changes to funding in the WA community sector,

Linkwest has launched a state-wide campaign to highlight the breadth and impact of the services its Neighbourhood and Community Resource Centres provide across the state.



## Broome Community Resource Centre

Nikola "The staff & facilities have been an integral support while I've been setting up my own small business ( Upcycle Revolution ) . BCRC facilitated my New Enterprise Incentive Scheme Course & has been an ongoing resource hub, which has enabled me to complete important work administrative duties. The staff are always friendly and helpful. It would be devastating for locals and tourists and small business if this service discontinued." #MoreThanJustASmartPhone



Nicole shares her love of her local Community Resource Centre in the Linkwest campaign

The 'Strength in People, Strength in Place' campaign makes free postcards available at Centres across WA and encourages service users to describe the impact and value of their local centre on their lives. Completed postcards are then posted to local and state politicians.

Linkwest's marketing and office manager Jane Billham says, 'With our postcard campaign, state and local representatives are hearing directly from people in their electorate. The power in this lies in the fact it's the people who use our member's services who are getting their message out to politicians about how vital CRCs and Neighbourhood Centres are in our state.'

In **Tasmania** 26TEN – a network of organisations and individuals working together to improve adult literacy and numeracy – celebrated their fifth birthday with 26TEN Week. Over 80 events around the state celebrated the power of families learning together and the vital role parents and carers play in developing the reading, writing and numeracy skills of children.

In **NSW** the peak body for Community Colleges CCA recently ran a forum at Mullumbimby to explore how the sector participates in regional and rural economic development and identified strategies and action plans for colleges to further their economic development collaborations. CCA also recently released an analysis of NCVER data that demonstrates the sector's strength in catering for particularly vulnerable and disadvantaged adult learners.



At Linkwest's conference: Jane Chilcott, Federal Member for Cowan, Dr Anne Aly, Cate Rocchi.

# ACE News

In **South Australia**, peak body Community Centres SA (CCSA) are gearing up for the state election in March 2018 with the launch of the 'Surviving to Thriving: Communities Bouncing Back' campaign. The key message is that with increased state government support, community centres across the state have the capacity to strengthen the foundations of communities to ensure all members thrive, not merely survive, in times of change.



Along with print material, digital branding and a social media campaign, CCSA have produced a powerful video featuring ACE participant Aaron Dyer. Diagnosed with extreme social anxiety Aaron was unable to work or study and was socially isolated. Through CCSA's Personal Support Program, a mentor worked closely with Aaron to support his return to study through adult and community education and his transformation is amazing. You can see and share Aaron's story here https:// www.youtube.com/watch?v=Sd6625RNc7Y&feature=player embedded

In **Victoria** Neighbourhood Houses Victoria (NHVic) has just completed its Neighbourhood House participant survey. Around 380 Neighbourhood Houses around the state surveyed all their visitors during a designated week.

Ensuring all visitors complete the survey is a huge job. In 2013, the last time the survey was held, NHVic collected information on over 46,000 Victorians engaged in activities, classes and events in these community centres.

The survey's snapshot of who is using Neighbourhood Houses and why, as well as what benefits they gain from being involved can be used for promotion and publicity, lobbying and grant applications, and planning and evaluation.



NHVic have also launched a lobbying campaign in the lead up to the Victorian 2018 state budget and election that calls for an increase in: Neighbourhood House Coordination Program Funding, the number of funded houses and support for networks of Neighbourhood Houses.

# QUEST

Quest is the national magazine for adult and community education. It is published four times a year by Adult Learning Australia.

CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER Jenny Macaffer

EDITOR Gina Perry

g.perry@ala.asn.au

#### 2017 ALA Executive and Board

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