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a journal of adult english language and literacy education
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VALBEC and Fine Print acknowledge the financial support of the ACFE Board.
Editorial

On a recent trip overseas I produced my own shopping bag to a young shop assistant in Rome, and she expressed surprise and delight at my care for the environment. With the hyperbolic and impulsive patriotism only capable of an émigré, I told her that in Australia we all bring our own shopping bags. Her face beamed and she replied ‘I love Australia. It is a beautiful country; Australians care so much for their country.’ It was my turn to be surprised at the reputation we hold in Europe, for being environmental custodians. On reflection I thought many Australians do have an intimacy with the land and the environment, possibly because it has a beauty and a terror that gives it presence. While many communities and individuals are doing what they can to minimize their impact on the environment, I only hope that our government and leaders make decisions that will facilitate our efforts. Pressure for change comes from the grass roots and this issue of Fine Print is testimony to that. The green colour of the cover is no accident and within the contents you will read about organisations and individuals who challenge and advance our thinking on climate change.

Dr Jose Guevara from RMIT University, who also works with our south-east Asian and Pacific neighbours, makes a phonemically subtle distinction between ‘education for climate change’ and ‘education in a climate changed’ world. In real terms the distinction is one of urgency. Dr Guervara’s views are echoed in interviews with Byron Region Community College in New South Wales (as first published by Adult Learning Australia in Quest 2, 2011), and with Paul Collins the environmental project officer at Wingate Avenue Community Centre in Victoria. I’m sure many more of you are providing education in a climate-changed world and I would love to hear what readers are doing. Write about your ideas, activities and projects and send them to me at fineprint@valbec.org.au

Holding on to the theme of change we have printed Dr Pauline O’Maley’s Arch Nelson address to the ACAL conference this year, which VALBEC hosted. Pauline’s humour and erudition make this a compelling read. Dr Rob McCormack removes the gloss and gives us the facts about what needs to be taught, and learnt, in literacy classes.

To balance the academic discourse read what Lesley Wilkins, and Rachel Wilson and Gilly Robson are doing at the chalkface. And as promised we have some reading for the numerate, but not yet as much as I would like.

Next year is National Year of Reading. Is anyone doing anything novel they would like to tell us about? Fine Print will focus on reading in each issue with teachers and students in mind, so watch this page.

VALBEC and the Fine Print editorial committee thank retiring Fine Print committee members Julie Palmer and Sally Hutchison for their participation. Both women were responsible for commissioning many articles from colleagues, contributing ideas for content, writing and proof reading. Julie and Sally have been committed members and will be missed. Good luck to you both in your future pursuits. We welcome Pauline Morrow to the committee. Pauline brings years of teaching, curriculum development and administration experience and we look forward to having her on board this fine committee.

Jacinta Agostinelli
Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you here today. It is both a privilege and the stuff of my nightmares, and I have had a few in recent weeks! This is the ACAL traditional Arch Nelson address and, as such, it is appropriate to focus on one of the principles that Arch Nelson himself, inaugural, longstanding and influential president of ACAL, valued and enacted so effectively, focusing on community.

Others have had the gig before me, I have, in listening to the Arch Nelson addressees over many years, enjoyed visits to virtual libraries, flights of imagination and golden magpie geese, personal museum exhibits of great interest, and a rather lively debate that had something to do with trolls and bridges—a hard and oh so varied act to follow!

J.S Ryan (1998) in his tribute to Arch at the time of his death talked of his and his university’s emphasis on the necessity of imagination, the ability to work together, and on encouraging personal objectivity and the feeling of belonging proudly to one’s own group and place. Conferences like this one give us some space to reflect, rethink our principles and our place, and hopefully renew our energy for the road ahead.

The focus of Arch’s work was on community building, on working together. I would like to take up this notion of working together and the way it resonates in the conference theme of Literacy on the Map: common visions, shared pathways as a springboard to reflect on the work of adult literacy teachers over time. Of course it is a personal and a partial view and I am also very aware it is somewhat presumptuous and naive to take this approach. Some of you may be disappointed by what you see as silences, gaps and flaws in my presentation, I can live with this, I see it as a part of an ongoing dialogue I look forward to other instalments and passionate conversations with you about the work we do and the sometimes contested ways in which we conceive and enact it. My concern is not to ignore or gloss over ways in which we differ, I am interested in interrogating these for they form the basis of learning, but I am also wary about getting lost in a debate about these. My focus here, therefore, will not be about ways in which we differ but rather ways in which we don’t.

Paulo Freire and Myles Horton (1990) wrote an influential book about education which they called We Make the Road by Walking: Conversations on Education and Social Change—a title that is apt in relation to our conference theme and one that has, for a long time, resonated with me. They adapted this title from a proverb by the Spanish poet Antonio Machado, one line of which reads, in translation, ‘you make the way as you go’.

There are several images that come to mind for me whenever I think about this image of us making our road by walking and the optimism it offers us in the eternal present tense of possibility.

The communal act of walking
As a teenager at boarding school (Catholic of course—what else, why else this ridiculous confessional mode?!) I had the pleasure of walking every Sunday, two nuns at the front and pairs of girls in a long crocodile walking for a couple of hours (I won’t go into what a frightening and
comical sight we must have made, tunics carefully covering the knee, forty denier school stockings—no glimpse of flesh—and oh so cute little felt or straw hats). I enjoyed these walks and think of them and the art of walking very positively. Walking is active, measured, consistent, and meditative and often, as it was for me in that far away world, done with others as a communal act.

When we are making our educational roads we do so with others, if we misstep or have to dance two steps back for every one forward we do so in joint collaboration and mutual engagement, negotiating, creating and learning as we go.

When I first started working with adult literacy in a community setting I worked for a supported employment service, they were specialists at supporting folk with mental illness back into work, they did so in a wonderfully calm and inclusive environment. On my first day the manager of the service summed up simply what he saw as the work they did by saying ‘we walk along the road a little with people’.

So, let’s talk about this road we walk and the walking we have done, are doing and will continue to do, sometimes in step with others, sometimes out of step. Not just as an exercise in nostalgia that can bring a warm flood of emotion but because the gift of occasions like these are they afford us the time to stop and consider what we do, why we do it and the agency of teachers and students in literacy classes in the 21st century in Australia. How did we get here? Why by this path? What influences do we have on future paths that will be taken? On our path there have been losses and gains, many here have felt them personally and they have also had particular impacts for adult literacy students. We know of the interrelationship between the ways in which literacy can be conceptualised and the impact of its conceptualisation in policy. We are only too familiar with the way that intersection plays out in practice. Rosie Wickert’s reflection on policy activism in the late 80s, Politics, activism and the process of policy production: Adult Literacy in Australia, is pertinent here. Rosie is quite clear that the process for her was ambiguous, both pleasurable and exciting and divisive and unsettling, that the work is messy and has an element of chance, that much can be gained but also much is lost, that content is important in policy production but context is equally important and that policy production is tied up with power (2002). In 1991 the Australian Language and Literacy Policy (ALLP) promised much, since that time there has been great debate about what it delivered but I think an agreement that a lot of what it delivered was both unexpected and unwelcome. But what came before 1991 and what reflections on that time do practitioners have?

**The road looking back**

I missed the halcyon days. I, like many of you I imagine, came to the field on the back of the ALLP. Bev Campbell in her wonderful book on the history of VALBEC in Victoria, as viewed through the lens of the journal *Fine Print*, gives a rich and complex account of the birth of adult literacy in Victoria, and the way in which it moved from being a grass roots movement into a joined-up field.

In relation to this journey Bev says ‘I have experienced the sense of belonging to a community of fellow travellers’ (2009) and counterbalances this with ‘I have experienced the pedagogical struggles and tensions of the adult literacy field’. For Bev ‘professional identity is formed through struggle and is constantly changing, as teachers make choices about how to act from available, and often conflicting, subject positions’.

So Bev’s account of the journey focuses on struggle, on change, on the historically situated nature of practice, but always in counterbalance with energy, with camaraderie, with passionate engagement.

She speaks of influences like Paulo Freire’s (1972) social justice approach and his notion of reading the word to read the world, of Brian Street’s (1984) autonomous and ideological models of literacy, of the work of David Barton and others (1991, 1994, 2000) on literacy as social practice and the work of the New London Group (1996) on multiliteracies. She describes an earlier time when theories and pedagogical approaches were seemingly uncontested and leads us to a time of discursive change and discursive tension around literacy and numeracy, a time when, as Marginson (1992) points out, the combination of economic rationalism and education has bought two different worlds into collision.

**All roads lead to Rome**

Over the last twenty years the majority of adult literacy provision has been grounded in neo-liberal discourses with an emphasis on human capital. This discursive space has bought money and in some ways mainstream legitimacy to literacy and numeracy, but we also know
that this alignment to economic rationalism principles of competitiveness, performativity (Lyotard 1984) and narrowly conceived criteria has been at a cost, there has been loss in terms of possibility.

For adult literacy teachers in the field at that time ‘the experience of achieving a public policy commitment seemed paradoxically to trigger the dismantling of what they had know as adult literacy in Australia’ (Wickert 2002). For many it was a case of be careful what you wish for.

There were many unforeseen effects in this new landscape that colonised adult literacy within an economic discourse, and thus as quasi mainstream. The discourses of social justice, personal agency and human rights were silenced in favour of the discourse of vocationalism and human capital. While the number of classes dramatically increased these were and continue to be staffed by a highly marginalised, casualised, predominately aging female workforce. Nevertheless this post ALLP gain of an explosion of classes, was also matched at the time by an expansion of professional development opportunities and money was dedicated to research. Time has eroded those gains.

This narrow focus on vocationalism and the reductive discourse of competency based training that has been matched by an approach that sees majority funding aligned to competitive tendering has had a significant effect on the continued increase of casualisation of teachers in this sector and the attendant problems of loss of expertise, disintegration of professional networks, lack of ongoing professional development and crumbling infrastructures. I agree with Allan Luke’s point of view if ‘we don’t invest in professional development we should give up’ (2001, p. 23) Shifting the burden of professional development of teachers to providers who have tendered at the lowest level for viability is, I believe, a dereliction of duty on the government’s behalf. These providers are often unable to fulfill their professional development obligations and the teachers and students bear the brunt of this. As in other education sectors there is an increasing expectation of doing more with less resources.

A lot of the rhetoric around literacy and numeracy within this model centres on notions of building a knowledge society, and the need for workers and potential workers within this knowledge society. I have always taken the view that if governments want to equip workers for these new times then focussing literacy provision, for example in LLNP, predominately at the lower ACSF levels simply makes limited sense. These knowledge society worker bees will need to have literacy capability that goes well beyond ACSF one, two or even three. Therein lies one of the elemental contradictions of this discourse. I agree with Hall (1996) that these new times are paradoxical, contradictory and ambiguous and that there is a complex interrelationship between the political, economic, social, cultural and moral impacts. These impacts continue to affect teachers and students. If the students in LLNP classes are not being equipped with the complex literacies and numeracies they need to be part of the knowledge society, why are they there?

We know literacy continues to act as a social shock absorber (Luke, 2001), ‘a continually contested and unfinished concept, an empty canvas upon which anxieties and aspirations from the popular imagination and public morality are drawn’ (Green, Hodgen and Luke 1997) yet conceiving literacy in this narrow way stifles opportunity and limits the range of students. Where is the voice of the student in this dominant human capital discourse? What opportunities are there for their aspirations to be foregrounded? What does success mean for them?

Within this discursive space large scale surveys like ALLS become important to quantify the link between ‘literacy, education and prosperity’ (Hamilton and Barton 2000), and governments of all persuasions are eager to see how we fare against other countries. Further, as Hamilton and Barton point out these surveys are powerful in shaping ‘the vision that funds literacy programmes around the world’ (p. 378) yet they only present a partial view. In Australia money that had previously supported adult literacy has been diverted into these surveys, dedicated LLN research funding has been lost, ACAL funding has been lost, while the Reading and Writing Hotline continues somewhat precariously, but at the same time the data gained from these surveys is underutilised. It seems there is no gain here for adult literacy practitioners and students. Rather, it is hard not to think cynically that the purpose of being involved in these surveys is merely to be in the game, and to provide sound bytes for the press, sound bytes that are very much grounded in the discourse of deficit, conversations about what Australian workers and potential workers don’t have rather than focussing on the funds of knowledge (Gonzalez et al 2005) they do have and ways this can be built on, strengthened and developed.
There have been challenges on this highway, as well as detours, side trips and dead ends. Serendipity and chance have played a role in this push/pull space as we have gathered some resources for the road ahead. As Bev Campbell says professional identity is formed through struggle and is constantly changing (2009).

Luke sounds a word of warning when he suggests many of us suffer from what he calls a kind of post-war generational change fatigue (1999); he said this in 1999, no wonder I feel exhausted now! One of the challenges for us is to conserve our energy and our optimism and to seek out and work with folk who have an abundance of both.

The road/s ahead

I believe we have now a moment in time for adult literacy; there seems to be a renewed focus on it to go with a potential new strategy and a commitment to more money for literacy and numeracy programs, although, I note, only programs that are related to employment. Industry is also responding to what they call the language, literacy and numeracy challenge, with their unfortunately named No More Excuses report. Yet this vocational focus is still very much just a part of the picture, it still focuses on human capital and economics, without equally privileging the social and cultural. The work of Stephen Black, Jo Balatti and Ian Falk (see for example 2009, 2006) on the social capital outcomes of LLN classes makes the salient and pertinent point that literacy and numeracy improvement is often dependant on social capital outcomes. The complex interrelationships among literacy, employment, social inclusion and health are under researched in this country.

There continues to be international work that is grounded in broad conceptualisations of literacy and numeracy. For example the work of UNESCO which continues to frame literacy in terms of human rights and the OECD whose secretary-general, Mr Angel Gurría, in a speech to the commission in 2009, welcomed their call for a change in emphasis in how we measure economic performance and social progress—to move away from a series of indicators based on production to one based on people’s wellbeing. A focus on wellbeing may also open up the dialogue on literacy and numeracy opportunities and needs beyond the traditional classroom; this is an area that ACAL, with its focus on literacy and numeracy as both lifelong and lifewide, has tried and struggled to maintain a focus on for a number of years (see for example Hartley and Horne 2006; and Wickert and McGuirk 2005) but it is an area that is primarily focused more on social inclusion and individual wellbeing rather than economic sustainability, and this may be why it is an area that has failed to gain traction.

Having spent the last twelve years working for the Salvation Army mainly in a drug and alcohol services funded program I feel I have been somewhat apart from a world driven by accountability and performativity. Having edged out of my billabong and into the mainstream this year in coming to Victoria University I have had the delight of working with folk who have done and are doing some remarkable work across three sectors, some of which you have heard about here in the last few days. Economics may remain the master discourse (Fitzclarence and Kenway, 1993) but it is not the only discourse, and our walk continues working against reductionist discourses—the discourse of performativity, of deficit and outside a regime that is focused punitively on responsibility and obligation—towards one that is focused on a view of a learner as subject not object, on building on and valuing students’ own funds of knowledge (Gonzalez et al, 2005), of rights, values, notions of trust and agency, on working with students to open up discursive opportunities and possibilities of their choice as we together continue to strive towards the better day. James Gee (1996) says literacy teaching is not for the timid, a touch of hyperbole perhaps? I think not. The consequences, as we know, reverberate down the years. I don’t suggest there is anything new in what I say here, some of you folk have been doing this for more years than you may care to remember, long may you continue. I urge you to continue to work together with an eye to the future.

Thanks to ACAL and VALBEC for another thought-provoking forum and conference. They have again provided
us with variety and stimulation. Workshops have focused on a range of environments including museums and health settings, as well as diverse locations; local, rural, remote, and international; much from our enthusiastic colleagues from across the ditch as well as programs from places as diverse as South Africa and Timor Leste. It is great to see the emerging focus on tertiary literacy. Thanks to ACAL and all state organisations for the work they are doing and will continue to do to open up spaces for conversations about literacy and numeracy policy and practice. This year the Federal Government has sought feedback on its National Foundations Skills Strategy for Adults. ACAL took the lead early, seeking feedback from members, engaging in online debate, attending forums and submitting a paper to DEEWR. Stephen Black and Keiko Yasukawa ably started this process with their paper *Time for National renewal: Australian adult literacy and numeracy as ‘foundation skills’* (2010) which focused on four key areas for action: social capital, cross-sectoral partnerships, integration and professional renewal. ACAL’s Some Suggestions Towards A New Strategy, prepared by Rosie Wickert, picks up these areas and proposes the establishment of a foundation skills learning improvement and support network, a national think-tank preceding the establishment of a foundation skills advisory council, incentives to achieve funding to support effective integration of foundation skills with VET and research, particularly longitudinal tracking studies and evaluations of different approaches and programs.

We need now, as Margaret Mc Hugh has so succinctly put it, to put the E back into VET, and develop that E into broader contexts both in and out of classrooms. We must continue to work the relationship among theory, method and pedagogical practice, having explicit conversations about what this practice constitutes—a multi-voiced exploration of what works where and why. Students need to be a part of this conversation. And of course research. I have tried to consciously work here, not always successfully, against lamentation, but just one lament please—if the government is going to fund, to the tune of millions of dollars, mass surveys then I ask them to take the next step and reinstate research funding which can be used to maximise the worth of this data, where we can learn much from the work that has been done in Canada (see for example, Statistics Canada and OECD, 2005; Canadian Council on Learning, 2007).

So, now I can hear the music begin to swell, the low throb of the drums, the violins lifting us up. It may be an inappropriate time for another confession but old habits die hard—I was rejected as a choir member when I was at school, couldn’t hold a note. One day, one winter’s day with many choir members sick, and needing numbers to produce a soaring of voices into the heavens for a funeral, a call went out: anybody could join the choir that day. Yes at last I was in! Then the clarification—anyone but me! Now I don’t want you to think that I have been scarred by that experience, that my whole life has been one long search for a microphone all to myself and an audience such as you, but here we go, join me if you will....

So be strong,
Reach the stars now,
Walk away
Walk on

Thank you!

**Dr Pauline O’Maley** has extensive experience and expertise in Language, Literacy and Numeracy teaching and support. Her PhD focused on the initial placement assessment of adult literacy and numeracy students. Pauline has recently joined Victoria University as an Educational Developer, Language, Literacy and Numeracy Strategy within the Arts, Education and Human Development faculty. Previously, Pauline worked with the Salvation Army in a range of teaching and management roles. She was involved in the development, implementation and coordination of two innovative and successful programs: More Intensive Flexible Service (MIFS) and Community Reintegration Program (CRP). Pauline is a long standing VALBEC and ACAL executive committee member, holding terms in the position of secretary for both organisations and a term as ACAL co-president (2004–2005).

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![](https://www.aspbae.org)

**Education in a climate-changed world**

*By Dr. J. Roberto Guevara*

The following article first appeared in the Asia South Pacific Association for Basic and Adult Education (ASPBAE) newsletter, ED-lines in January 2011 and we re-print it here with permission from the author and the ASPBAE Information and Communication Coordinator. ASPBAE is ‘a regional association of more than 200 organisations and individuals which works towards promoting quality education for all and transformative and liberating, life-long adult education and learning.’ [www.aspbae.org](http://www.aspbae.org)

Dr Jose ‘Robbie’ Guevara argues that there is nothing new about the kind of education we need in a climate changing world except urgency. Western economies are too much victims of their own complexity and self-interest to provide the necessary leadership to tackle the root causes of climate change.

Speaking as President of the ASPBAE Robbie Guevara argues that in this vacuum of leadership the transformation of the behaviours of the world’s populations must involve the vulnerable communities in regions that are most impacted by climate change. Often these are the same communities that have the least understanding of climate change and its causes, so it is up to educators within those communities to provide understanding of the relationship between development and the environment. With understanding comes empowerment and action, not just from within the most impacted communities but from across the world.

Robbie Guevara asks the very pertinent question, ‘Do we need education that teaches us how to adapt or do we want education that encourages innovation, and challenges the way the world’s populations live now?’

### ASPBAE history of action

In 1991 we explored the feasibility of an environmental education program within ASPBAE prior to the first General Assembly in the Philippines. In 1992, we participated in the First Journey of Environmental Education for Sustainable Development in Brazil. In 1995, we identified the key principles of adult environmental education in the Asia-South Pacific region. These principles informed the Darwin Declaration, which in turn, shaped our advocacy agenda at the 5th International Conference of Adult Education (CONFINTEA V) in 1997. In 2005, we were awarded the honour of being a Centre of Excellence in Education for Sustainable Development.

The above organisational history speaks of the depth of our experience that draws from the tireless work of our members who continue to ensure that the communities they work with understand the links between environment and development and act accordingly.

### Urgency

So when I was asked, what is new about educational responses required to address climate change, my answer was—There is nothing new, except that it is URGENT.

It is urgent that as educators we help to develop an Understanding of the complexity of climate change. We need to facilitate an understanding that recognises how politics and justice are central to effectively responding to climate change.

It is urgent that we Respond to the demands of our learners and their communities. The most vulnerable communities in the region are those at the mercy of disasters. These same communities tend to be those least capable of understanding the causes and impacts of climate change due to their lack of access to education and literacy. The most vulnerable within these communities are women and children. Therefore, whatever educational responses to climate change we propose needs to have a solid foundation on Gender.

It is urgent that our educational responses Empower individuals and their communities to not just prepare to adapt to the perceived impacts, but to challenge and transform the root causes of climate change.

The complexity and urgency of the problem requires that as educators we Network and Negotiate across the different key players and levels. No one can do this alone; we need to learn our way out of this complex problem—together.

Finally, it is urgent that the educational responses be Transformative. We need to develop education that will transform us all, including those who have contributed most to climate change, those who will have to adapt to
the impacts of climate change, and those who will have to develop ways to mitigate climate change.

We are not waiting for climate change; we are already experiencing climate change. So while it is URGENT to contribute to climate change education, I believe that we should within ASPBAE be creating the spaces and leading the debates of the kind of education we need in a climate-changed world.

**Dr Jose ‘Robbie’ Guevara** teaches in the School of Global Studies, Social Science & Planning at RMIT in Melbourne. He is the president of the Asia South Pacific Association for Basic and Adult Education (ASPBAE).

**Editor:** It was with interest that I read about the inclusion of the unit ‘Analyse and apply sustainability skills to learning programs’ in the new Training and Education Training package (TAE10). What this means for ACE will no doubt be invented by well informed teachers passionate about making our world a better place to live in. This unit is a small part of the response to the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) Climate Change Adaptation and Mitigation Agenda or ‘Green Skills Agreement’. Let’s hope it contributes to our country’s transition towards a low carbon, environmentally sustainable economy.
few months ago I was asked to present a history of the approach to academic literacy, which was developed with a group of colleagues since the early 1980s at Footscray TAFE to help students prepare for academic study in higher education. Going back through many old musty, unfinished, unpublished scraps of writings, sketches of curriculum activities, and stuttering attempts to theoretically articulate what we were learning through trial and error, I discovered, or rather rediscovered, a central theme threading its way through all our work—the notion of glossing.

However, in the presentation itself I was rushed and did not spell out clearly just exactly what glossing was nor why it is so important. Fortunately, the editor of Fine Print was in the audience and invited me to write this piece explaining our concept of glossing and what difference it makes.

This article comprises two parts: the first focuses on glossing, which I suggest is central to LLN from 1990–now; the second part suggests that we are entering a new era in which glossing will need to be supplemented by what I am calling counter-glossing.

Glossing

What is glossing?

Imagine you are discussing someone else with a friend.

You say, 'He is really inconsistent in his demands; sometimes he flies off the handle if they don’t instantly do what he wants; sometimes he completely ignores them and leaves them to their own devices; other times he resorts to hitting them without any real rhyme or reason'.

Your friend replies, 'That’s child abuse!'

Your friend has glossed the behaviour you were describing. She has taken the facts as you described them and interpreted them as a case of child abuse, which is a serious concept in social work, the law and government regulations. We call this act of interpreting something as a case of a serious concept: glossing. Serious concepts are concepts that carry the weight of academic disciplines and/or powerful social institutions such as the law or government behind them. They carry institutional or theoretical weight and clout. They correspond to what Jim Gee calls Discourses—with a capital D.

So, glossing is using the concepts of a Discourse to interpret something.

Another example:

You say, 'The weather has been really strange lately. We’ve had twelve years of drought and now a year of rain, rain, rain!'

Your friend replies, 'This is because of global warming.'

Your friend is glossing the facts you mention under the umbrella of global warming. Global warming is a theoretical discourse developed by climatologists and others.

Of course, someone else might reply: 'No! The weather is just an effect of sunspots!'

But sunspots is also a gloss, a theoretical Discourse. So, here we have a debate between two ways of glossing the same facts, two Discourses being applied to the same facts.

The significance of glossing

During the 80s we were supporting students from Technical Schools in TOP (Tertiary Orientation Program) to do Years Eleven and Twelve. In these years of secondary schooling, the focus is on learning the Discourses embodied in the curriculum subjects (science, history, legal studies) and how to gloss the world with these Discourses thereby demonstrating your mastery of that subject. In both upper secondary and higher Vocational Education and Training, facts are less important than being able to understand Discourses and see the facts through the lens of these Discourses together with their theories, paradigms, frameworks, models, concepts or ideas. It is important for students to realise that this, that facts or
experiences is now receding in importance. Teachers are not wanting you to learn new facts; they are wanting you to learn new ways of glossing.

However, the centrality of Discourses and glossing was obscured for many of us in LLN at the time because we had previously been primary school teachers, remedial literacy teachers or English teachers in secondary schools or technical schools. Primary trained LLN educators were tempted to revert to a focus on basic alphabetic literacy; English teachers were not comfortable with the explicit teaching of Discourses and glossing; and ESL teachers tended to focus on the linguistic peculiarities of English. Moreover, as progressives, many of us were committed to protecting and respecting the understandings, experience and cultures students brought with them into LLN.

And so, not by accident, the subject our Year Eleven and Twelve students at Footscray Technical College had the most problems with was English, because English did not have text-books, or learnable procedures. It did not seem to have any graspable content that could be learnt in the usual ways. All you could do was blurt out what you thought or felt and then hope for the best. There seemed to be no way you could study or systematically learn it. This was extremely frustrating, especially for students who are good students in other subjects such as biology, chemistry, maths, accounting, legal studies and so on.

Actually, it was in trying to help students understand what was expected of them in Year Twelve English that we first formulated the idea of glossing. Students thought they were being asked to simply write down their opinions on public issues or their thoughts and feelings about books and characters in books. What they didn’t realise was they were being asked to gloss Discourses onto public issues, books and characters. They were not being told that this was what they should be doing, nor were they being told which Discourse or Discourses to use.

In short English is an odd-ball subject. There are two stories about why this is so. One is that it is to make sure that students who do not already have these abstract Discourses from their families and background culture fail. On this view, subjects like English are designed to sort the future careers and lives of students based on the cultural capital acquired from their family and class background. This ensures that middle class families pass on professional work to do with culture to their children. Other children can achieve careers in explicitly learnable technical fields, but not in fields that rely on culturally significant Discourses.

The other story is that the ideas and Discourses that English deals with are ethical ideas, not just conceptual ideas, that ethical ideas are about transforming your soul and so they have to be learnt by gradually transforming the way you see and feel about the meaning of things, including your values, the direction of your own life, and your relationships with others around you, including the world as a whole. On this view, subjects like English are spiritual exercises designed to transform the way students understand and experience their lives and the world.

We felt both these stories to be reasonable, but still felt that even if you did interpret English as primarily an ethical subject (that is, not a subject about the English language or Literary studies), students without the correct cultural capital still should have a right to be made aware of the hidden Discourses being used by English teachers to assess their work as immature or insightful.

It was in this context that we realised that English teachers read student work for the qualities of the author, not for the quantity or quality of the facts or information. The way students gloss a character reveals to the English teacher just what Discourse (ideas or values) they are drawing on to interpret that character. What was weird is that this all happens without the actual Discourses themselves being mentioned or discussed in an explicit way with the students—as would happen in Philosophy, Psychology, Sociology, Anthropology, Cultural Studies and even in recent Literary Theory. So, we felt we had to help students understand that these abstract Discourses needed to be at work in what they were writing.

Teaching Discourses to students
To help students, we created names, diagrams and short writing exercises to draw attention to the values and Discourses valued by English teachers and how these can be put into writing. We found that most students, once they knew what they were aiming at and were given structured practice in how to do it, could quite quickly move from fail marks to Bs.

This educational work of bringing out the hidden Discourses that students are expected to draw on in glossing facts and situations can be seen in Public Literacy (McCormack & Moraitis, 1995), which dealt with so-called opinion writing. It shows students and
educators that there is a learnable field of Discourses, of -isms and ideologies that you are expected to draw on in interpreting public dispute and in interpreting the responses (glosses) of others in these public controversies. Aside: Unhappily, even though we did study the other kinds of writing demanded in senior English (personal reflection & literary responses) and did conduct many workshops for teachers during late 80s and early 90s, we never found time or resources to write these Discourses and textual patterns up as more lasting curriculum resources.

This was the beginning of our insight that literacy is a matter of learning Discourses and learning how to gloss them so as to interpret reality. We had found that even a subject like English, a subject that did not seem to have Discourses behind it, did! We had also found that these Discourses could be described and explained to students so that they could consciously use them in their reading and writing.

To do this, students must learn by being explicitly taught new ways of reading and writing. They need to learn how to produce new sentence structures and new paragraph patterns, patterns that are quite different from those they are familiar with from talking, reading novels or skimming the Herald-Sun. Moreover—and this is really important for LLN educators to think about—these reading and writing skills are best taught and learnt as part of grappling to understand and take on Discourses. This means that these new ways of reading and writing cannot be taught separately from content.

Taking on a new Discourse is not only learning to see things in a new way; it is taking on a new identity; it is being able to imagine yourself as the subject, as speaking to/for a Discourse and its corresponding field of things and people glossed by it; of being responsible for this Discourse and its worldly field and their future. Learning to write in this more advanced way is not just a technique or skill, it is a matter of learning to see the world with new eyes, being able to imagine new ways of acting, new ways of being responsible, new ways of feeling and responding to things.

Of course this new identity is at first self-conscious and stilted, but over time and with lots of practice, it becomes fluent, embodied, emotion-ed, unthinking, almost instinctive. Just like learning a new language, we have to learnt new Discourses; and just as we can become fluent over time in English, so too we can become fluent in Discourses of Economics or the Discourses of Child Care.

Learning connections

But, you might ask, how does this idea of literacy as learning Discourses connect with literacy as learning written language? There are, I think, at least five connections. The first is that, in order to create high status and to make themselves more difficult to learn or understand, most Discourses use words different from ordinary language—even when they are talking about pretty much the same thing. For example, they will say myocardial infarct instead of heart attack; or burglary instead of stealing. This means that our ordinary mother tongue English vocabulary has to be supplemented by lots of Latin or Greek words. So, this is the first problem: the words you learn from talking with people in everyday situations are not enough to be able to read or write the Discourse texts circulating in workplaces, bureaucracies, academic knowledge, or public discussions. They use big words—words like implementation and such like.

A second connection between learning Discourses and learning written language is that almost the only way to learn these Discourses is through reading and discussing written texts. Even though YouTube is now creating many video resources, the best way to learn Discourses is still by reading or listening to educators talk the Discourses. Moreover, it is almost impossible to learn Discourses experientially. This is because they are usually hidden invisibly behind what is happening, not out front in a way that can be seen, named or experienced. We can learn to perform the activities of a Discourse, yet still not really understand the Discourse or Discourses behind what we are doing.

A third connection between learning Discourses and learning written language is that how well you have learnt a Discourse is normally assessed through your ability to put your understanding into writing. Most students experience a large gap between what they understand and how well they can put that understanding into writing. This gap is an artefact of history. Before mass education, assessment was oral via debate or discussion, but with mass education this became impossible, and now assessment is via written language. This means that to demonstrate understanding, students now need advanced literacy skills in writing.
A fourth connection between learning Discourses and learning written language is that nowadays reading and writing are solitary private activities. In the past they were public communal activities where people could help one another. Because spoken language was collaborative and interactive, you did not have to develop the whole text and its movement by yourself; everyone involved could contribute to developing the conversation. But in writing, you have to produce a text by yourself in which you imagine yourself as a spokesperson for a Discourse and write for an imaginary audience of other standpoints or points of view also located within or adjacent to that Discourse. Moreover, you have to create a text that moves logically through issues and topics towards a compelling conclusion. You have to imagine yourself, imagine your audience, and imagine the moves in your text. And do this all by yourself.

Finally, the fifth connection between literacy as learning Discourses and literacy as learning written language is that written language has a different grammar from everyday spoken language. Halliday is the linguist who has helped us understand this. Spoken language is made up of short sentences with doing verbs. Written language expressing Discourses, by contrast, is made up of long sentences with almost no doing verbs. Instead there are sentences in which nominal groups referring to facts are joined by verbs of being (verbs such as is, means, consists of, developed into, resulted in and so on). Our writing has to shift from being centred around do-ers and doing to focusing on the relationships between facts and Discourses, glossing those facts. Halliday describes this shift as a shift from everyday spoken language to written language. Writing (or reading) these sentences is unnatural; it has to be learnt.

**Glossing and written language**

So, students need to learn how to write glosses; how to describe facts and situations in the world with glosses, and how to describe someone else’s glossing and discuss their merits in writing. Glossing demands new kinds of sentences and new kinds of sentence structure (grammar) from our usual ways of writing or talking. To write from within a Discourse you need to learn how to gloss in written language. Most importantly, you need to be able to put both the gloss (the Discourse concepts or ideas) and the glossed (the facts, the realities) into a single sentence. This is not easy.

Here is a glossing sentence: Inconsistent demands, flying off the handle, alternating unpredictably between demands and paying no attention, resorting to random physical punishment are signs of child abuse.

So, here we have taken that first conversation and turned it into a single sentence. Seems easy, but it isn’t.

First, notice that the facts have been turned into states. The normal sentence, He is really inconsistent in his demands, which has a subject, He, a verb, is and the rest, has been transformed into part of a sentence, into a noun group inconsistent demands. He has been got rid of. And the verb has gone. The whole fact—a sentence—has been transformed into a state—a noun group. Similarly, the other facts have also been nominalised (transformed into noun groups, states). And all these states are glossed as evidence of, signs of, child abuse.

- Inconsistent demands,
- flying off the handle,
- alternating unpredictably between demands and paying no attention,
- resorting to random physical punishment
- are signs of child abuse.

It was this focus on literacy as learning Discourses and how to gloss the world with them that explains why we moved into a more content-focused approach to literacy. Instead of trying to teach writing or literacy on its own, we taught them in context, when doing their job of glossing the world.

**Integrating learning of literacy and Discourses**

And so we branched out to develop the Liberal Arts Certificate IV and the Associate Diploma program; wrote Public Literacy (1995) in which the background Discourses of public life, in fact ideologies, were described; wrote The World of Work (1992) to show how first the Discourses of Industrialisation and then the Discourse of Post-Fordism were being used to re-shape and re-frame social life, especially the workplace; and, even developed a public speaking curriculum for Indigenous students at Batchelor Institute that explicitly drew on the Discourse values sitting behind public speech.

This integration of learning literacy and learning Discourses has not been easy to work out pedagogically or institutionally. It is still unfinished business. Many educators have been exploring different ways of weaving literacy and content together into fruitful curricula. To my knowledge, there is no simple template.
Counter-glossing

I would now like to move from the concept of Discourse glossing to the idea of counter-Discourse glossing. But to explain this new concept, it would help to give my sense of the narrative of LLN—of where we come from, where we are, and where we are heading (or at least, where we could and should be heading, if the government would support us).

The origins of counter-glossing

It is my belief that we are entering a new era of LLN, a very ambiguous and potentially conflicted era, because the government is running two incompatible stories about LLN side by side. According to one story, LLN is second chance education, an education designed to enable those who missed out on a basic education—for whatever reason—to make up that gap. This is a system of education dedicated to closing the gap.

According to the other story, LLN is foundation skills, a training focused on helping adults get into the formal workforce by improving their employability and workplace competencies. This system of education is dedicated to what economists call human capital—involvement of people in the paid workforce.

The Australian government, like many other governments, have been running both these narratives side by side, opportunistically appealing to one or the other as it suits the rhetoric of the situation or audience. On one occasion with one audience they emphasise one, on other occasions the other.

As someone who defines himself emphatically as a second chance educator, my life-long commitment has been to the first narrative. I believe that the mission of our field is to close the gap. I believe in this as a real practical task, not just a rhetorical flourish. And even though it is clear it will not be achieved in my lifetime, I wish to be part of that ongoing narrative—even if it turns out to be an unachievable, infinite quest. For me and I know for many others, investing our lives in second chance education has been a matter of social justice, equity and an effort to bring about a truer, more democratic, democracy, one that genuinely values plurality and difference.

And of course, as well as concerns for human lives and institutions, we now need to take seriously our responsibilities for the Earth itself. We now need to supplement these established values with the new imperative to help to create civic movements that can come together and pressure political and financial leaders to deal with the global ecological crisis we confront. Otherwise we will, I fear, be faced with a popular revulsion towards public discourse and an increase in resentful anti-intellectualism, a hatred of politics, and an insidious drift towards apocalyptic Tea Party-style fascisms that will undermine all attempts to find unity of purpose, paralysing any hope of global policy-making. We can already see strong signs of this across many so-called advanced countries, not just Obama's USA, but also here in Abbott's Australia.

So, my suggestion is that, looked at from the point of view of closing the gap, the history of LLN can be divided into three phases where each is defined by the threshold set for functional literacy, using the school leaving age as a marker for the functional literacy threshold. Thus, when the school leaving age was fifteen, functional literacy for both children and adults was set at mid-secondary school or perhaps the LLN levels needed to undertake an apprenticeship. Those who fell below this in school warranted remedial education, and adults were offered adult literacy classes.

Over time, the compulsory school leaving age has been raised. And so, even though governments have
not explicitly defined functional literacy thresholds for adult LLN, I believe it is fair to extrapolate it from the leaving age for compulsory education. The right to a basic education (functional literacy) is for all; not just for children. The increasing demands of adult life affect both children and adults.

So, for me, functional literacy is simply a shorthand way of saying what level of education is required for productive engagement in all aspects of adult life. This will be the same for both adults and children. Adults or children leaving education without these understandings, capacities or skills are at risk of slipping into marginality and finding it difficult to reconnect with broader social processes and institutions.

If this is a valid form of reasoning about levels of adult functional literacy, then I would like to suggest that we can divide the history of LLN into three phases defined by the threshold set for functional literacy:

- **Phase 1:** LLN as Adult Literacy (1970–1990)
- **Phase 2:** LLN as Adult Basic Education (1990–2011)
- **Phase 3:** no agreed name, but perhaps LLN as Universal Access (2011–2030s?)

**LLN as adult literacy:** During much of the twentieth century, basic education (functional literacy) was defined in terms of what we could perhaps call *alphabetic literacy*, the literacy of everyday reading and writing (narratives, recounts, personal writing, etc) and the ability to perform basic mathematical operations to a level comparable with upper primary or early secondary school. Adult literacy educators focused on creating educational environments in which people who had been humiliated by their previous education, could rediscover their desire and capacity to learn. Let’s call this the era of *Adult Literacy*, an era well-documented in Bev Cambell’s (2009) *Reading The Fine Print*.

**LLN as adult basic education:** Around 1990, LLN was subjected to radical and conflicting pressures to change. This was a time in which radically different missions for LLN were battled over. To simplify slightly, there were (at least) three major imperatives. First, there was the government drive to use LLN as a key tool in reforming and recognising the skills of Australian workers. Secondly there was the government’s desire to consolidate the historically disparate fields of foreign languages, ESL, Migrant Education and Adult Literacy into a single field with a single assessment framework—which set us all at one another’s throats since each field rightly felt that its essential *raison d’être* was being undermined—and it was!

Thirdly, many LLN educators wished to reconstruct LLN so that it also addressed the more advanced literacy in which serious Discourses from sciences, professions and ideas were in play. To use the same school-based benchmark, this was an LLN comparable to the initiation into academic subjects in middle to upper secondary school. It was this last development that I personally identified with, the push to shift LLN from a focus on basic literacy to a focus on literacy for learning Discourses. The key semantic structure at issue in LLN as adult basic education was learning to gloss abstract Discourses onto the world. This demands a different focus and contextualisation of LLN: it has to be embedded in grappling with Discourses—with theories, ideas and concepts. This meant the curriculum had to connect literacy development with an engagement with content. If LLN as adult basic education is defined as reaching similar outcomes and thresholds as secondary education, then it too must focus on Discourses and the application of concepts in those Discourses to interpret/gloss the world.

**LLN as universal access:** But now at the beginning of the second decade of the 21st Century, we are witnessing the emergence of a new definition of basic education and functional literacy for Australia, a definition that mandates engagement in higher education and training. All Australians, whether child or adult, are now expected to engage with higher education; such is the emerging norm. Governmentally, this definition is enshrined in a range of policy documents and funding mechanisms; institutionally, secondary schools and higher education institutions and VET providers are scrambling to redesign and transform their teaching and learning practices and offerings to address this new imperative.

(Of course, according to that other government narrative, LLN are now entering the era of LLN as Foundation skills.)

What this latest shift to *universal access* means is that, whereas learning to gloss reality through Discourses seemed a fairly accurate description of the demands of higher education and LLN as ABE during the 80s and 90s, it is no longer enough in an era of universal access. Both higher education and students are changing.
Basically, the Australian higher education system, which used to follow the class-based UK system, is now moving towards a US system in which it is normal for most young people and most adults to attend higher education. Commentators now talk about the mass university as opposed to the old elite university; I would call it the democratic university. And there is much talk about the new kinds of students entering higher education—low SES students, first-in-family students, non-traditional students, culturally and linguistically different students, and so on. All these terms imply deficits in these new students, but in fact what distinguishes these new students is not their deficits, but the fact that they already have access to alternative Discourses. Students entering education already have access to many Discourses: from their religious or cultural backgrounds, from access to the Discourses circulating on the Internet, from travel, or living in a more globalised world. In my view, it is this that educators fear!

Significance of universal access
These changes towards universal access mean that glossing has become a political and ethical issue. In the past the key question was: to gloss or not to gloss; to initiate into Discourses or not to initiate. Progressives favoured not initiating, but instead staying close to the primary cultural and personal experiences and meanings of students. Conservatives and post-progressives such as genre theorists and ourselves during the 80s and 90s insisted that everyone should be initiated into the Discourses used to rule and critique the world. Even if they could not be part of the ruling class, they should at least have access to the ruling ideas, to the ruling Discourses.

But now students already have commitments to Discourses when they come back into education, and so higher study can no longer continue to be a simple initiation of students into Discourses. Students from strong social, cultural and linguistic backgrounds resist giving up their existing identities and discourses in order to be assimilated into official mainstream Discourses. For many students such as Islamic or Indigenous students, it has been these very Discourses that have attacked and undermined their life-worlds and cultures. These students want more balance, more give-and-take in glossing: in who glosses who, and what glosses what. They desire a more dialogic, more both-ways notion of glossing, and thus more acknowledgement of other Discourses, of other ways of understanding the world and life. The key question now is: what Discourses to allow as glossers, as interpreters of reality.

The counter-Discourses
These students need to develop counter-Discourses: Discourses that can mediate and speak back to the power-backed Discourses of academia, the Government and imperialising Discourses generally on behalf of oppressed peoples and their life-worlds; counter-Discourses that can critique and relativise official Discourses and their glossing. Education in an era of universal access has to be a dialogue between Discourses, not indoctrination into the one true Discourse.

As a result of these changes, we will find that Discourses and their glossing will become less absolutist and more negotiated. Other cultures and languages are refusing to ‘go gently into the night’, and are insisting on being taken seriously. The Knower/Glosser and their Discourse is no longer interpreted as the eye of God, as the final absolute Truth, but as just one more voice or framework among a whole chorus of Discourses.

This deep shift in the educational landscape, however, simply raises the stakes for us as educators. Helping students to mobilise, engage and articulate these new counter-Discourses and counter-glosses in ways that enter into dialogue in theoretically responsible ways with existing Discourses is a mind-blowing exercise. As is persuading educators to re-design their curricula and assessment tasks to encourage this!

So, pedagogically, these changes mean that we will need to work even harder at developing practices that can initiate students into Discourses and counter-Discourses and into both glossing and counter-glossing. This means lots of creative learning for us all, because we don’t know how to do this. Places such as Batchelor Institute, an Indigenous-only higher education provider in Northern Territory, where staff and students have struggled for decades to create new educational practices around counter-glossing under the heading of Both-Ways, have been continually undermined and under-resourced.

A parallel with languages
Finally, it is important to note that the relationships that exist between everyday vernacular life, Discourses and Counter-Discourses also exist between languages. Everyone is brought up in some sort of mother tongue even if it is a Creole; everyone needs to learn (some variant
of) English as the dominant world language (maybe in 100 years time the world language will be Chinese); and everyone needs to develop their own vernacular language so that it can speak back to the dominance of standard English.

Until now the choice offered students from other cultures and/or languages has been: Either come with us to progress, to money and power; or stay with your family in poverty, shame and social decline; you can’t have both. To choose to learn Discourses meant learning English; you could not learn Discourses in your own language. Your own language was left to wither into a private family-oriented spoken vernacular language concerned with domestic and religious life, cut off from the larger worlds of economy, work, politics, knowledge, education and public life.

It shames me to admit that the educational institution I work in, Victoria University (VU), is also completely language-blind. Even though the majority of our students come from non-English speaking backgrounds, English is the only language of learning recognised at VU. Despite its proud boasts regarding the multicultural and multilingual backgrounds of its students, there is absolutely no attempt to include or develop these language capacities so that students can engage with Discourses in multilingual ways, and so that these languages evolve to be used in Australia in institutional and theoretical settings. The assumption is that Australians should only engage with Discourses via the English language! Australia in its important Discourses settings is strictly monolingual. What a contrast to the European Union where students must learn to learn in three languages!

So, it is going to be a steep learning curve for us all. We are still just learning how to help students gloss Discourses in English, especially in written English; but soon we will need to help them counter-gloss—in English, in written English, in their own vernacular languages, and in a whole range of multimedia including performance and digital media!

Dr Rob McCormack has been involved in language and literacy education for over thirty-five years including secondary literacy, adult basic education, tertiary preparation and academic literacy for university students. From 1983 to 1993 he was part of a team working to articulate a fruitful pedagogy for young people and second chance adults from the western suburbs of Melbourne. From 1996 to 2003 he worked at Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education, Northern Territory. Since returning to Victoria University in 2004, Rob’s major responsibility has been establishing a sustainable Student Rover program, however he is now turning his energies back to focus on his lifelong passion—the power of language and literacy to create and support learning pathways.

References
Byron Bay centre leads the way in Eco-literacy

Eco Parenting, Urban Farming and Bamboo Construction are just some of the courses on offer at the Byron Region Community College (BRCC), a learning centre that is showing real leadership in the area of sustainability.

Director Richard Vinycomb and dedicated Sustainability Officer, Katrina Shields have put sustainability at the core of their community education programs, right down to the local plantation wooden floor used for their dance classes.

Supporting the sustainability agenda in our own centres is becoming more imperative and it takes a conscious effort to become eco-literate, particularly when the emphasis on vocational skills is so dominant. However, the importance of sustainability across all aspects of adult learning is now being taken seriously by all three levels of Government.

Richard and Katrina are currently hosting a series of four webinars, where they are discussing their experiences and sharing practical tips on how to enhance sustainability both internally, and through community education programs.

They are hoping that the webinar series will grow into an ongoing network where many organisations can support and inspire one another towards genuine sustainability.

Ilka Tampke spoke to Richard Vinycomb and Katrina Shields about their innovative and passionate approach:

**How are principles of sustainability integrated into your education programmes?**

We run up to twenty Living and Working Sustainably courses each term covering topics such as organic food growing and energy efficient house design. Often we use the backyards and homes of tutors who are living sustainably to teach these courses and this provides inspiration for the students, to see the principles coming alive in people’s homes and farms.

We encourage our staff and tutors to do these courses as professional development. That way sustainability becomes part of the whole learning environment. We can green up the buildings with retro fitting but that needs to be supported with encouragement for behavior change such as how the participants use power, recycle waste, how the building is cleaned and decide on new products and so on. Any class is an opportunity to raise awareness.

Occupational health and safety first came in during the 70s and 80s and people soon realised it was not just about providing a first aid kit. It became part of everything. That’s what we’re working towards with sustainability.

**Tell us about the steps you have taken to green your building.**

Our main campus building is a retrofit of an old electricity depot and is designed along passive solar principles to maximize natural light and ventilation. One hundred and eighty solar panels power the building and also feed back into the grid, generating income for the complex. See figure 1.

All rooms have recycling bins, paper reuse containers and mugs and teapots for brewing tea from the garden. There are waterless urinals, LED downlights, motion sensor fans and lots more. We’ve produced an information brochure that outlines all the environmental features of our building which is available on the website.
What do you see as the biggest challenge in progressing the sustainability agenda in the broader community?

Helping people not to be disempowered by a lack of good leadership. We have to get away from divisive politics, climate change denial and misinformation. Australia is really quite behind in this issue. In the UK, the science is no longer being debated and everybody accepts that action must be taken. The ongoing debate here is a distraction from taking the action that needs to happen.

Other challenges are a lack of corporate responsibility and the perception that there is a cost to act sustainably. We are working against general consumer behaviour. Overall there is a low level of eco-literacy. If people don’t understand the terms and issues they are easily mislead. Eco-literacy needs to be taught just like reading and writing. People need to speak the language in order to understand terms like climate change and carbon tax or even sustainability and this is where the ACE sector has a lot to offer in terms of teaching eco-literacy. Kids are generally a lot better at this stuff than adults because they’re being taught earlier.

What has been the community response to the initiatives you’ve developed at BRCC?

There’s been a very good attendance rate at the practical courses and workshops. We are now beginning to run a lot of backyard food growing and composting courses regionally in the Northern Rivers Region of NSW (funded under a Food Security banner). We get a good response when we go to an established venue, such as community markets or community gardens.

People seem to respond better to practical information rather than abstract ideas have a fun day, planting, picking, tasting garden produce, for instance—the big picture seminars tend to only attract the converted. The challenge is to build bridges to people who don’t already know about this stuff.

One of the guiding steps towards sustainability listed on your website, is to develop an environment which supports human dignity through gender and racial equality. How do you see issues of gender and racial equality intersecting with a discussion of sustainability?

Social justice is a really important part of sustainability. Inter-generational equity is a viral part of this issue too. One definition of sustainability is enough for all, forever. Sustainability has ecological, social and economic dimensions like three legs of a stool. You can’t really leave one out or it falls over. You have to address all three.

In the field of sustainability it is often the traditionally disempowered groups (women, Indigenous communities, immigrants from cultures with more sustainability skills) who are leading the way. Big business and corporations are struggling. We can’t necessarily rely on the usual power sources to show leadership.

The shift to sustainability requires a high level of participation from all sectors to form a living vital democracy.

What do you see as the most successful way to inspire behavioural change around the issue of sustainability?

Activism is one way, but I think our role, as ACE providers is to keep providing practical working examples of how to do this stuff and to keep promoting the good stories. Show people how living sustainably can add connection, meaning and satisfaction in their family and community life. Storytelling is a hugely effective way to inspire change.

Our boards and management need the courage to say that this is a mainstream issue in the world and that these issues matter. And then after that, it needs to be horses for courses. What would a local farmer respond to? Build an education course around that!

It needs to be fun. We need to provide good and interesting educational experiences for people.

You are currently taking the first steps towards initiating a national Greenskills Education Network. What is your ideal picture of what this network will look like?

Basically a supportive group of critical friends who share information, ideas, mentoring and common ground. I’d
like to see really good, dynamic communication and, to achieve this, I think active facilitation is absolutely important.

It needs to involve like-minded people; ongoing debate about the science is a distraction and is not conducive to action. We need trust if we want honesty and disclosure. I’d like to think we could be supportive about each other’s lives and work, creating change in our organisations—sometimes against resistance. It also great to share the small and big wins.

It’s important to work closely with others on issues of sustainability, and not be a silo. Ideally, the network would be a mix of community organisations and local government and we’d have a balance of online and face-to-face contact. Professional development opportunities would also support this process.

Another dimension is thinking and acting holistically—greening up our campuses, our VET and non-VET training, as well as the cultures we build in our organisations. Currently, there is only limited support for greening up VET teaching.

I’d like to see us thinking about an issue that is difficult and confusing and then creating a project to drive it forward: taking the tough stuff and turning it into good sustainability projects.

The sustainability webinar series recordings can be found on the Adult Learning Australia website under webinars. https://ala.asn.au/webinars/recorded-sessions/
The Certificate III in ESL Employment: English for Bilingual Health and Community Work is delivered at the Collingwood campus of NMIT within the Vocational Pathways Department of the Faculty of Further Education. From its beginnings in 2004/2005 as an ESL certificate with a community work focus, it has developed into a dual certificate course aiming to provide an introduction to the community services sector for ESL students. These students are looking for a career or further study where they can utilise their languages and cultural knowledge in an Australian workplace. Now NMIT delivers the Certificate III in ESL (Employment) alongside the Certificate II in Community Services Work from the Community Services Training Package in a year-long programme.

Student aims
Course participants are all assessed as intermediate level ESL learners. However, this encompasses varying levels of formal education and a wide range of literacy skills in English and their own languages. Students come from a range of cultural backgrounds and some come from highly oral cultures. Their motivation to undertake the course is driven by their interest in the subject matter of community services, the opportunity for real workplace experience in the work placement component of the course, and the attraction of continuing to improve their English language and literacy skills in a vocational area. Many see the course as a first step from ESL courses into mainstream study at TAFE or university level.

Course objectives
The course aims to induct students into the language and literacy practices of the Australian workplace in general and the community services industry in particular. Street (as cited in Nicholas and Williams 2003) distinguishes between the autonomous dimensions of literacy, which include the ability to recognise and produce sounds, letters, words and written texts; and the ideological or cultural dimensions including the attitudes towards and practices with written texts, for example, in how much detail and by who meeting minutes are written, what their status is, and who reads them.

As Nicholas and Williams (2003) describe, this distinction applies equally to spoken texts, which carry information about social relationships and attitudes as well as the literal meaning of the words spoken. Our learners need to develop their skills and understanding in both the autonomous and ideological dimensions of written and spoken texts commonly used in the community services industry—many of which are common across a range of Australian workplaces—in order to successfully take their place in it. For students from highly oral cultures with limited formal education, there is particular learning to do about highly literate societies in which texts are constructed in particular ways because less of life is shared (NCVER, 2007).

Challenges
In developing and teaching the course, there are challenges in addressing both the cultural and the mechanical aspects of the language of community services. Many of the attitudes and underlying values of the community sector, the Australian workplace and a literate society may be new to students, and there can be a tendency for us as teachers to underestimate the learning involved. This can leave the students overwhelmed and they may struggle to grasp the key issues of course topics. Additionally, while students may want this, too much focus on the mechanics of language can obscure the ideological or cultural meanings. We therefore try to provide a gradual exposure to the language and literacy required to operate effectively in the community field, through careful selection and presentation of topics and texts.
Content-based instruction

In designing the programme, we use a framework of content-based instruction (CBI) or content-based language teaching (CBLT) in which ‘language is contextualised in an area of knowledge that is significant to learners’ (Williams 2004). The community services curriculum provides the content through which the English language and literacy skills of the students are developed. Thus we focus on real world tasks and texts that expose students to the knowledge, skills, language and culture of the community services sector. This differs from other models of CBI where ESL teaching supports the learning of students in a mainstream class—in this approach the ESL teaching would be an adjunct to the content and would focus on language needs arising from the demands of the mainstream curriculum such as vocabulary or academic study skills.

In our teaching we also draw on the topic approach of Cleland and Evans (cited in Williams 2004), where a topic is explored in four stages using authentic visual material as a starting point. The four stages are:

- visual presentation
- building a reading passage
- analysing and extending the reading passage
- creating a passage

In the topic ‘Introduction to community work’ we use brochures produced by community organisations as our authentic visual material. In ‘Australia’s diversity’ we present information related to diversity in Australia (for example census data, policies and procedures related to discrimination). In both topics the source material is used to generate discussion using new vocabulary and relevant sentence structure. Students are exposed to both ideologi-cal and mechanical language knowledge and move from discussion, through guided reading and writing, to more independent production. They gain an awareness of the culture from which the texts arise and the underlying assumptions related to their production. For example, a discussion about why and how government makes use of the data it collects from its citizens could generate a better understanding of the Australian political culture.

Action learning

As well as working through various topics of relevance to new entrants to the community service industry, and the texts associated with them, we include two or three action learning projects in the course. Each of these involves students working in groups to plan and carry out a typical workplace project for a bilingual community worker. This allows students to participate directly in the practices around the spoken and written texts they are required to create and understand, to learn by doing.

One example is students planning and organising an event for other students on campus. Bilingual community workers commonly organise events such as community meetings, information sessions or focus groups for their communities as part of their roles. Our students have organised a Biggest Morning Tea fundraiser, as well as an information session about community services in the City of Yarra for students from Dandenong who were also studying to be bilingual community workers.

To plan and organise these events, students divide into groups and focus on one aspect such as catering, publicity or venue. With support and modelling from teachers, each group has to develop a plan to guide their work and divide the tasks between students, liaise as needed with other staff and students at NMIT both face-to-face and by email, create any necessary documents such as flyers or lists, hold meetings to communicate with each other about their progress, and keep meeting notes. Afterwards, they evaluate both the success of the event, and their own contributions to its organisation.

Language and text deconstruction

In all of the work detailed above, spoken and written texts are used and created in a meaningful context, along with the opportunity to dissect how and why they are used and created in particular ways. With explicit modelling, students develop plans that they will follow and monitor during the project. We talk about the purpose of plans, why we write them down in a structured format, and what sort of language we use to write them. Students discuss
what they need to ask or tell other staff and students, how they will do this, and why they might use email in some instances rather than face-to-face communication. They create lists through thinking about what they need, or talking about who will bring what. They make flyers based on models after deciding on and finding out all the necessary information, participate in semi-formal meetings and write meeting notes in a form which is modelled and discussed.

In this way, students are participating in both the practices that surround spoken and written texts, and the development of the texts themselves, with guidance in using and understanding the appropriate conventions, structures and language features that reflect cultural values and expected relationships. Discussing and practising all these things is a powerful source of learning for all students about the culture they are learning to navigate, and also of particular importance to learners from highly oral cultures where the practices surrounding both oral and written texts may be quite different.

Course evaluation
An important aspect of the course is the ongoing redesign and development of the programme as we learn from each student group. When skills and education levels vary widely we need to revisit the complexity of texts and tasks and adapt our materials accordingly. In our most recent course we are focusing more on developing individualised tasks to extend the very different levels of literacy skills within the group while using common source materials. The programme is always a work in progress where we as teachers are learning from our students’ experience of the content and their engagement with its language and literacy requirements in all their dimensions.

We would like to acknowledge the work of Nancy Sugarman in the early development of the programme.

Rachel Wilson has been working in the ACE and TAFE sectors for about fifteen years. She has taught ESL and adult literacy programs, managed an ACE centre, and delivered community training programs. In the last four years, she has been working at NMIT, developing and delivering community services training in conjunction with ESL.

Gilly Robson has been developing and delivering vocationally focussed ESL courses at NMIT in the community services and children's services areas for six years. Prior to this she worked internationally and in Australia in English language training and overseas development programs.

References:
To copy, or not to copy

By Jacinta Agostinelli

If you have ever been confused about what constitutes a breach of copyright, you are not alone. In this article Jacinta Agostinelli discusses some of the dos and don’ts for the teacher at the photocopier.

Teaching resources are expensive yet most teachers understand the value of protecting the creativity of others—creators need to be recognised and remunerated for their work to provide them with an income and to encourage them to continue creating new material. The Australian Copyright Council states that ‘Copyright law creates incentives for people to invest their time, talent and other resources in creating new material—particularly cultural and educational material—which benefits society.’

Teachers in smaller community and training organisations are often confused about what constitutes infringement of copyright. As a teacher I carried around the vision of the copyright police accosting my students as soon as they had left the learning centre, demanding to see their folders to check for illegal copies of pages from *Even More True Stories* or exercises from *Ship or Sheep* (my students looked neither like sailors nor farmers so that would have confused copyright police!). Even though I was worried about incurring a fine for breaching copyright, I was more concerned about the moral infringement of depriving an author of income and the motivation to create further resources. Besides, I myself had once laboured for hours writing a set of readers for adult learners so I appreciated the effort and poor fiscal return associated with writing material for adult learners.

Idea versus form

Copyright in Australia is free and is automatically applied to new, original works. The copyright symbol © is optional in Australia, so works are protected with or without the symbol. Only the material forms of works can be protected. Ideas, information, methods, concepts, styles are not protected by copyright (these may be protected by other law). The Copyright Act protects an idea once it is originally expressed in a material form, such as a book, paper, journal, film, broadcast, artwork, or website.

Infringement

Many larger educational institutions buy a license that exempts them from copyright restrictions, but smaller institutions don’t usually invest in this service. It is worth noting that by nature, non-profit organisations do not automatically receive special provisions exempting them from copyright law.

Basically, Copyright Law is infringed when you reproduce a creative work that is protected by copyright. Unless an exception applies, permission needs to be sought before using another person’s creative work. Making changes to a text does not necessarily avoid copyright contravention, and neither does only using a small part of a text.

The law explained

Significance

If a teacher wants to use a part of a text the main consideration is the significance or importance of the part. A popular, and not always accurate, guide when copying text for class is the 10% rule. It is commonly believed that reproducing up to 10% of the body of the text, or one chapter, will not infringe copyright. A much better guide however, is what portion of the text is copied. Teachers are infringing the law if they copy a substantial part of the text, but be careful how you interpret substantial. A substantial part of a body of work does not necessarily mean a large part. Substantial refers more to how important, distinctive, essential or significant the reproduced part is to the whole text. Note also that copying 10% of a text one week and another 10% the next week is infringing copyright law. (Australian Copyright Council Information Sheet G103v3 When Do I Need Permission? Pages 6–7 provide guidelines on the meaning of substantial)

Fair dealing

The concept of fair dealing is comforting for teachers. Fair dealing allows a certain amount of reproduction of original works in certain circumstances. One could argue that the concept of copyright creates a monopoly, and that materials that are beneficial to the community ought to be available and not hampered by the law. Fair dealing arose as a way of balancing the rights of the
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creator and the rights of the community to benefit from the creativity and talents of its members. Fair dealing means that if material is being used for certain purposes it can be reproduced without infringement, provided the material is used fairly. The purposes outlined in the legislation are:

- research or study
- criticism or review
- reporting news
- professional advice by a lawyer
- parody or satire.

(Australian Copyright Council, Information Sheet G087v02 Access to Copyright Material in Australia & the US)

In relation to research or study, fair dealing is tested by five factors applied in each situation. These are:

- the purpose and character of the dealing
- the nature of the work
- the possibility of obtaining the work within a reasonable time at an ordinary commercial price
- the effect of the dealing on the potential market for, or value of, the work
- in a case where part only of the work is copied, the amount and substantiality of the part copied in relation to the whole work

(Australian Copyright Council, Information Sheet G087v02 Access to Copyright Material in Australia & the US).

The concept of fair dealing, like the concept of substantial, is open to interpretation. In the United States there is even a conference to debate just what the concept of fair dealing, or fair use as it is referred to in America, means! To minimize time spent researching issues around copyright, providers could establish internal procedures (and these will be procedures only, not law) to determine what these terms amount to and when other exceptions apply.

Expires

Once copyright has expired the work is said to be in the public domain and copyright legislation no longer applies. There are two useful tables on the website of the Australian Copyright Council that outline rules around expiry, however a rule of thumb is that copyright expires seventy years from the end of the year in which the creator died.

Internet and copyright

Copyright protection also applies to websites and other material on the Internet. You cannot assume that everything on the Internet can be downloaded, reproduced or saved to your hard drive. Some sites allow copying; others have copyright indicated on them. Fair dealing applies to the Internet in the same way that it applies to hard materials.

Some Internet sites have express permission allowing you to save or download from their site. For example it may give you instructions on how to download for personal use. Others have implied permission. That is they have a printable version button. In these case permission is not needed.

Teachers can stream YouTube in their classrooms provided it is for educational purposes. There are a number of conditions that you can apply to your situation to minimize the risk of infringement:

- Don’t use content that is likely to be an infringing copy.
- Only use YouTube videos for the purpose of teaching. There should be no commercial benefit.
- Only use what you need.
- Check that you can’t purchase or readily license the content that you need from another source.
- Don’t expose the content to further copying or communication, such as giving students access to an electronic file that they could copy.

Blogs and websites

When creating a blog or website the same copyright rules apply as with print-based text. When using works and images from another website you will need permission, or you may rely on the exceptions provided by fair dealing. Quotes can be used on your blog or website as long as they are not a substantial part of the original work. Short
words, titles and slogans are usually insubstantial enough and can be used.

Copyright only protects the expression and material form of an idea, fact or style and not the fact or idea itself, so facts and ideas can be discussed and listed on blogs and websites.

If you are including links to external sites on your blog or site ensure the site has not breached copyright. It is your responsibility to check the legality of sites you are linking to.

I did it!
By Lesley Wilkins

Probably the best three words I have heard during my career as a mathematics and numeracy teacher have been, ‘I did it’

I worked for a couple of years in England, providing one-to-one or small group maths/numeracy learning support at Milton Keynes College, which offered a variety of vocational and degree courses. One of my students there was Karen (not her real name). She was about twenty-five, had a history degree but wished to study primary teaching. Before she could enter the teaching degree, she was required to gain a C grade in maths in the General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE). As well, before she could be registered as a teacher, she was required to pass rigorous tests in literacy, computer skills and numeracy.

When Karen presented for learning support she was obviously extremely nervous. It soon became clear that she had difficulty performing even the simplest of numerical calculations: 8 + 7 was a significant challenge. Yet she had the history degree, was a fluent reader and speaker and had passed the rigorous tests in literacy and computer skills with ease. I realised I was teaching a student with dyscalculia (a term referring to a wide range of life-long learning disabilities involving maths). But Karen had a definite goal and would hopefully soon be teaching mathematics to young children. I realised this with some concern!

As the weeks flew by, Karen exhibited her characteristics: she was extremely conscientious and she had great determination, persistence, and the ability to competently use these strengths together with her own learning strategies. She also had valuable family support. Together we developed learning procedures that worked for her. Her study skills included creating large charts of mathematical information, which she hung around her room, as well as carrying copies with her to which she would often refer.

Karen was rewarded by obtaining the required pass in her GCSE, and gained entry to the teaching degree.

The rigorous test was quite a different matter! The procedure itself was difficult as the candidate was required to take a supervised computerised test consisting of a set of written problems each requiring reading, comprehension, solving and typing an answer. Each question was timed and the computer immediately proceeded to the next question. Inevitably there was no time to check, often time ran out before the question was completed so the time factor was critical. I myself performed the test once and was quite disheartened (and ashamed) so I could imagine how destroying it must have been to someone like Karen.

I got to know Karen and her family quite well. One Sunday afternoon there was a knock on the door and it

References
http://www.copyright.com.au
http://www.smartcopying.edu.au
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was Karen and her father. Those three words, ‘I did it!’ rang out proudly!

Reflecting on her progress, I have re-thought how Karen would perform as a primary school teacher in numeracy. I am sure she is competent; she knows from experience what some children go through and is able to diagnose

their weaknesses. She can help those children develop their own strategies to build up their mathematical skills. In fact the last time I saw her she confessed to enjoying Maths!

Lesley Wilkins teaches in maths support at Wollongong University.

Online numeracy resources

Compiled by Libby Rowswell from Swinburne TAFE for the ACAL conference, hosted this year by VALBEC.

The born numeracy
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=olwE5mZJ-Fk

A YouTube video showing how maths is connected to the real world.

BBC Skillwise
http://www.bbc.co.uk/skillswise/maths

This is a printable and interactive resource. Activities involving money may be limited due to currency differences.

Department of Education, Science and Training

A printable resource mainly for vocational purposes and covering skills development. It has multipage notes that explain concepts followed by application generally in the format of single page questions posed in a work context. Answers are supplied.

This site also contains a generic numeracy section with eight contextualised sections tailored to specific industries.

Please note: the dest.gov.au site is a previous government website and is in the process of being decommissioned. DEERW is currently working on a solution of where to move all relevant publications/reports before this occurs.

Notifications should become available on the website when this takes effect.

Skillworkshop
http://www.skillworkshop.org/numeracy
http://www.skillworkshop.org/resources/loop-card-generator

Teachers have contributed these printable PDF exercises and handouts, which have been categorised according to the skills and UK education level.

The exercise generator (second site above) contains many possibilities for making your own cards. This is another UK site.

Mathplayground.com
http://www.mathplayground.com/alienangles.html

Although this site is aimed at school kids, if you choose carefully and give learners the direct link to avoid all the kiddie pictures, there are some real gems here. It has maths videos to explain some of the processes. The given examples help learners estimate angles and learn how to use a protractor. For developing problem solving reasoning in algebra go to http://www.mathplayground.com/algebraic_reasoning.html
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Victorian Applied Learning Association (VCAL)
http://www.safe-t1.net.au/

This is a resource page for VCAL. The OHS Safe-T1 resource has some cooperative logic problems on youth and workplace injuries.

Kids Zone—Create a graph
http://nces.ed.gov/nceskids/createagraph/default.aspx

A good site for those who cannot use Excel, where learners can type in data and the graph can be generated then printed.

Interactives
http://www.learner.org/interactives/dailymath/index.html

This site is suitable for CGEA II and III and has two and three dimensional shapes with nets of prisms and pyramids that fold interactively. A ‘Maths in daily life’ gives some good ideas and explanations and scenarios around buying a car, cooking, decorating etc. This is an American site.

Libby Rowswell has taught both Adult Numeracy and Computer applications with the CGEA since 1994. She has a strong commitment to e-Learning and uses online resources a tool to assist with multi-level classes, and to share activities, ideas and resources with colleagues.
Technology Matters

Regional voices crying out to be heard

By Jo Hart

Jo Hart reports how Western Australia Elluminated the National Foundation Skills Strategy consultation process to give their educators in remote areas a voice. Jo delivered an Elluminate session at the ACAL conference in Melbourne, from her base in Western Australia, using Elluminate. Technologies such as Elluminate have huge potential for communication and must be taken up by anyone interested in the future of education and training.

In April this year I was part of a unique event in Western Australia. The Federal Government, through the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR), is in the throes of developing a National Foundation Skills Strategy. Part of the public consultation process for this was a series of focus groups around the country in major cities and some (not Western Australia) regional centres. These were run on a world café model with participants in small groups re-mixed several times.

Regional participation is problematic in Western Australia because of vast distances. Staff from the Western Australia Department of Training and Workforce Development suggested a variation to the process, and decided to use the Elluminate virtual room. I teach CGEA online, using Elluminate (Blackboard Collaborate (BbC)) as a major component of my blend. Our state literacy experts knew of my Elluminate experience and asked me to advise on the best way to do this and to be the primary moderator for the process. We also had four experienced moderators who managed discussion rooms.

Consultant requirements

The requirements were:

- a place for everyone to be together for a briefing and for the final activities in the process
- four to five tables depending on number of participants
- the capacity for groups to remix two to three times

The first reaction from most people would probably be to use breakout rooms (separate sub-rooms within the main Elluminate room) however that was definitely not my first thought! I have used them, they are excellent if you want to use one or two. With two lecturers online with our students we have a breakout room where one of us can work with a single student. However there are some disadvantages with breakout rooms including the following:

- time consuming to access and move between
- events in breakout rooms are not recorded
- potentially heavier in terms of bandwidth—greater dropout and lag experienced when breakout rooms are in use—particularly with slow connections

The last of these is particularly significant in regional Western Australia. We regularly experience poor connection speed/low bandwidth even with broadband. Although Elluminate generally works very well in these conditions we try to avoid the higher bandwidth options where possible.

Having instantly dismissed breakout rooms for the above reasons the obvious and logical option seemed to be several separate Elluminate rooms. This in itself inevitably posed logistical issues in ensuring that people moved to the correct rooms to remix and balance numbers at each change.

Planning

The final configuration was several rooms. One was the briefing room where everyone would come together before moving to the other rooms and also reconvene at the end for the supplementary questions. Four other rooms were designated as discussion tables each facilitated by a moderator. The participants would then move and remix between the discussion tables as necessary. See figure 1.

Planning progressed with the initial idea of pre-arranging groups and sending the links to each participant in an email. Even as I was saying this, my previous experience was telling me ‘No! No! This will be a disaster!’ I have
found that sending people more than one Elluminate link in an e-mail or even successive e-mails involves a high risk that ten to twenty percent will click on the wrong one at some point. The solution was to have whiteboards in the rooms at each group remix/changeover point. These would have participant names grouped with a live link for them to use to move to their next room. There was an additional advantage in this as it enabled us to rearrange groups at the last moment to compensate for non-attendees. See figure 2.

The next challenge to the Elluminate environment was the final activities. In final activities in real time, or face-to-face meetings, there are eight questions posted around the physical room with participants moving around the questions adding short responses/comments/ideas on post-it notes. Our virtual solution was to use whiteboard roaming. This feature allows participants to move freely between whiteboards so that everyone is able to add their responses to questions in their own time. The discussion table moderators monitored two questions each, organising the contributions and adding extra whiteboards as needed.

Once the structure of the event was finalised and agreed to by the consultants I produced a timetable and briefing sheet for moderators describing the process. There was a meeting in the briefing room on the evening before the event. This was the only opportunity for the consultants to trial Elluminate and confirm the process to be used. In this session one of the moderators was suffering from a very poor connection and was unable to hear most of the conversation due to audio lag and drop-out giving rise to some concern for the consultation itself.

Risks and contingencies
We tried to risk manage and plan for contingencies, the most likely being connection issues for myself as I had five rooms open. Other possible problems included equipment or logistical issues. We put in place strategies to mitigate these issues should they arise:

- I planned to remain in the briefing room throughout
  - all participants had that link and so could easily return there if they had a problem
  - moderators were asked to keep their briefing room link live throughout and text me there if necessary
  - moderators alerted me by email or tweet if they couldn’t contact me via the briefing room

- monitoring arrival in rooms enabling me to:
  - remove participants who had inadvertently remained in their previous room
  - alert and provide the correct link for anyone who went to the wrong room

- monitoring all rooms myself enabling me to:
  - join and help more quickly if any issues arose
  - take over if a moderator lost connection
  - remind moderators when session changes were due

- giving table moderators a fairly detailed timetable with an overview briefing prior to the virtual briefing session
  - converting all the slides to whiteboards beforehand for quick and easy loading into the relevant rooms.

The event
The event passed very smoothly. We had a couple of minor issues that were overcome thanks to the contingency planning. One participant was unable to access her next room from her current one by clicking the link on the whiteboard (probable bandwidth issue). This was solved by copying the link and leaving the room before joining the next room. Another participant accidentally went to the wrong room but moved quickly to the correct one.
Once given the link in text. One room moderator had a microphone failure and had to get a new headset. My connection held up and I had no problems maintaining all rooms. See figure 3.

Having five rooms open to monitor simultaneously was logistically interesting. I don’t think it would have been possible without two screens. I managed the multi room scenario as follows:

- opened the briefing room and loaded slides
- opened the four table rooms successively, and for each room, loaded slides, moved speaker slider to minimum and put myself to away before moving on to open the next room and do the same there
- used unlocked windows enabling me to change window sizes at needed
- managed the rooms, by resizing Elluminate window widths rather than the docking options enabling me to quickly see the current whiteboard in any room by widening the window
- lined up the table rooms from one to four, left to right on my secondary (left hand) screen and used the full primary (right hand screen) for the briefing room
- got online early reminding participants as they logged in to check their audio and also chatted to break the ice and provide a relaxed environment
- remained in the briefing room throughout
- used private messaging, in room text chat to communicate with room moderators as needed, such as reminders to initiate room changes.

At the end of the two focus sessions everyone was asked to return to the briefing room where we used whiteboard roaming for them to visit and contribute to the supplementary question boards in their own time.

After a few final words from the consultants the session was closed.

Data capture

With numerous whiteboards, and text input as well as the recorded discussions on audio from each table, the amount of data gathered is very large. Using these multiple inputs has given the data a high degree of richness as everything was captured and made available to the consultants. This is in contrast to the usual face-to-face situation where discussion around a physical table is usually recorded sparsely through outcome notes.

Figure 3

On paper. Another advantage of the online environment for this type of consultation is that there may be several discussions going on around the same table using the different media so more ideas can be exchanged in the same time period. See figure 4.

The answers to the supplementary questions collected via whiteboard roaming were also very high quality and gathered in a minimum of time. See figure 5.

Successes

I would say the whole event was a success! Some aspects I was apprehensive about, however, far exceeded my hopes:

- five separate rooms instead of breakout rooms gave an outstandingly better experience for everyone
- room change arrangements worked exceptionally well, a single whiteboard for each change with participant names associated in a group with a live link was far more successful than trying to send out links in advance
- participant roaming through the whiteboards for the final post-it note activity seemed to mimic the face to face scenario far better than I had anticipated
- five live rooms open simultaneously was far less problematic than I had feared.

Improvements

An important part of using any innovative strategy is to identify how it could be done better next time. These are areas for improvement:

- set up room timers with a name—I had four live timers on my screen at times and couldn’t tell which one belonged to which room
- ensure that participants know that the room name is at the top of the window on the frame to help them navigate rooms
- add to the moderator briefing that primary moderator is to remind about room change just beforehand
- better organise my own list of links adding space and labels to ensure I can quickly find the correct one.
Aftermath
We had many positive comments from participants and consultants. The consultants were pleased with the richness of the data. This is the first time that Elluminate has been used in this way in Western Australia or indeed, we believe, Australia wide, and possibly globally. For those of us in regional Australia this has to be a way to help overcome the tyranny of distance. I found the process and the event incredibly exciting and can’t wait for the next opportunity to be involved in a complex Elluminate situation.

Jo Hart is a CGEA lecturer at C.Y. O’Connor Institute, a TAFE college in the Wheatbelt region in Western Australia. She teaches CGEA online to remote mature age and youth at risk students. She uses virtual classroom (Elluminate) and various other e-stuff. She was Elluminate adviser and primary moderator for Western Australia’s online regional consultation on the National Foundation Skills Strategy.
Tell us a little about Wingate Avenue Community Centre.
Wingate Avenue Community Centre (WACC) was established in 1985 and is a not for profit organization located on the Ascot Vale Housing Estate, a northwest suburb of metropolitan Melbourne. The centre promotes an open and welcoming environment offering a wide variety of services, projects, programs and activities catering to the needs of the Ascot Vale housing estate community and the broader community of Moonee Valley. This includes eight separate English classes engaging over one hundred and fifty ESL students.

What is your role?
My main role is education and awareness around the environment with a major focus on recycling and correct recycling practices.

Not many community centres have a specific position dedicated to environmental education. How did it come about at Wingate Avenue Community Centre?
Although many community centres have interest and actions in relation to the environment, WACC is fortunate enough to have a specific role dedicated to the environment. The reason for this is a response to community needs and concerns. In 2009 WACC received a grant from Moonee Valley City Council (MVCC) to run an environmental project, entitled Seed. Seed focused on raising resident awareness and fostering behavioural change around environmental issues relating to water, energy and recycling. Through surveys and workshops, it became clear that sections of the estate population had not heard of climate change or global warming, and had limited knowledge about the importance of recycling and the positive impacts recycling can have on the environment. Residents were ready to participate in household recycling but were not provided with the infrastructure or collections to participate in an activity offered to the rest of the Moonee Valley residents.

Following the success of the Seed project the Household Recycling scheme on the Ascot Vale estate project was developed by Wingate Avenue Community Centre in partnership with Moonee Valley City Council, Ascot Vale Office of Housing, Metropolitan Waste Management Group and Sustainability Victoria. The project received funding from round four of the Sustainability Fund managed by Sustainability Victoria. It’s through this funding that the role of the environmental project worker began.

What award did Wingate Avenue Community Centre win?
As part of raising awareness of the project WACC applied for the sustainable cities award Towards Zero Waste. In recognition of this success WACC in partnership with MVCC won the award. The award reflects the hard work of the community and everyone involved in the project, and importantly the positive impact this has made on the environment.

What led to you apply for this award?
The Household recycling scheme on the Ascot Vale estate is a great success. The project has a broad environmental focus that revolves around recycling and recycling practices. The community has embraced the opportunity to learn about the environment and recycling, engaging on many platforms through a variety of avenues. One such avenue is the engagement of ESL students by teachers and the environmental project worker. This engagement has utilized a variety of activities including presentations, workshops and excursions all themed around the involvement and impact we have on our environment. The engagement and learning has been positive and fun and has seen practices such as recycling change for the better. Learning has also included knowledge sharing about the environment between students, teachers and workers.
We applied for the award to celebrate our success and hard work and share it with the broader community. This award recognises the importance of our achievement, not just to the participants themselves, but to the broader community as well.

Paul Collins has been working at Wingate Avenue Community Centre since March 2011. His background is in environmental and social justice, as well as community development. He has worked in several areas over the last ten years ranging from the successful 2001 West Australian Forest campaign to a school holiday program on Palm Island Queensland in 2010. He enjoys working with people for positive change.
What's Out There

A Fuller Sense of Self by Tricia Bowen

Review by Linno Rhodes

Tricia Bowen, who has taught adult literacy since 1993 and has worked in both ACE and TAFE, has written stories about six adult literacy students. The stories tell us what it was like before, what happened to instigate change, and what it is like now, for adult literacy students across Melbourne and regional Victoria.

In the book, A Fuller Sense of Self there are many powerful insights into what literacy really means for people who have limited access to the literate world. Importantly, the stories capture the diversity of the adult literacy experience in both ACE and larger adult learning settings and in the city and country. Their differences are outlined—some grew up knowing extremes of poverty, while yet another was an international traveller as a pre-schooler. One student spoke of being sent to a special school because she was diagnosed as being partially blind.

There are certainly differences among the students but what draws these stories together are the similarities: the masks used to get through difficult times and ordering the same thing time and again at a restaurant. One student describes: ‘So I explained that I didn’t read the menu. I just copied what he was having.’ And another says, ‘After all, everybody knows most menus have a chicken parmigiana. But now I have a choice.’ Others spoke of not voting until recently, and of the loneliness and anxiety that comes with having to hide what is commonly perceived as a social stigma.

I am excited about using A Fuller Sense of Self in my ALBE class. I strongly believe in the transformative power of the narrative and can see how valuable this text will be. It reflects the real challenges that face adults living with literacy issues and outlines the strength of character and resilience involved in learning to read and write as adults. These adult learners have succeeded in changing their lives through becoming engaged more fully with the world around them through their newly acquired literacy skills—’Previously, I could not even read the newspaper. Now I can’t wait to get it…I can be a bit of an ogre if I’m interrupted while I’m reading the newspaper.’

It is important that we keep hearing the stories from adult literacy learners and this collection will be a valuable addition to any adult literacy education provider.

Linno Rhodes teaches literacy and is the volunteer tutor coordinator at Carlton Neighbourhood Learning Centre in Melbourne, Victoria. She is also on the VALBEC committee.

Books for Blokes compiled and published by Adult Learning Support, New Zealand.

Review by Lindee Conway

In September 2010 I attended VALBEC’s launch of the student writing edition of Fine Print. By far the best part of the evening was when the published learners read their pieces to the audience and talked a little bit about the process. A group of men from On Track Employment and Training in Bendigo attended, with their wonderful teacher, Deb Sonenberg. They were nervous about reading but elated to be there. Listening to their readings was delightful. Without exaggeration, it was a magical evening highlighting both the importance of teachers’ work and of creative writer performance.
If you are teaching blokes, trying to encourage reading outside your classroom, or teaching creative writing to foundation skills learners, these books will be a boon to you. *Caught in the Act—Short stories to escape with* and *Rough Justice—Fast food for hungry minds* are short story collections published from entries in a competition, Books for Blokes, run by Adult Learning Support in New Zealand. Not all of the short stories are written by blokes (it’s about a seventy-thirty gender split of authors), but almost all of the titles will appeal to the men in your classes, for example, *A Fishy Story, The Shed, The Toolbox*. These are not only stories for blokes though—so don’t be turned off by the *b*-word.

The stories are all short—five pages maximum, often shorter, and the vocabulary is highly accessible. The stories in *Caught in the Act* are slightly shorter and a little less complex than those in *Rough Justice*, but there’s not much between them. They sit around Level 2 of the Australian Core Skills Framework and will provide your learners with a wide variety of genres. There’s a huge range of topics: gardening—*Max had two passions—electronics and growing vegetables; helping out in an emergency—Slipped. Dropped the axe. Gashed the leg bad; and wild behaviour—Cory Mac’s 21st ‘...My Mum can roar. What the hell have you boys been up to?’*

The breadth of topics in the stories will help to inspire you to encourage your students that whatever has happened to them, can become a piece of writing. I was particularly intrigued by a story from Robyn Beckingsale called *Steve, the Man Who Made Moons*, which is not a romance, although it is about ‘man meets woman at pub’. *Bernie’s Inspiration* is also an unusual topic, with a twist.

I strongly suggest that you collect these books for your workplace resource cupboard. You might occasionally wince—‘Don’t be such an old woman!’ says one male character to his male mate, in *Rugby Rollover*, but the stories are very engaging, mostly funny, and accessible. And they will give your class much to discuss or role-play. I hope that reading such slice of life stories will encourage your learners to write and perform their own works.

The books are available for $17.50 each from the Bookery in Melbourne, [www.bookery.com.au](http://www.bookery.com.au). They are also available from New Zealand [www.adultlearning.co.nz](http://www.adultlearning.co.nz).

Lindee Conway is currently the honorary secretary for Australian Council for Adult Learning (ACAL). She manages Foundation Skills programs for Community West in Melbourne’s western suburbs. She cares a lot about good teaching, which leads to confident learners.

### An Experimental Work in Progress
*By Hazel Davidson*

Dorothy Court and I have each spent some thirty years teaching adult immigrants, many of them refugees with no previous formal education and very little experience of a cash economy, let alone the complexities and pitfalls of a modern western financial system. We have watched in frustration as these students struggle with the problems of handling money in Australia, where they are bombarded with tantalising offers of consumer goods which everyone else appears to own, where housing comes with rent, electricity bills and sometimes dire consequences for those who do not pay on time.

As part of our response to this particular set of numeracy and social problems, we are currently engaged in writing a package of materials around money problems, for newly arrived people with low literacy and numeracy levels. This numeracy focus is new, experimental territory for us and, as far as we have been able to ascertain, there is little if any material on the topic at the very low level we normally work at.
The student reading texts will cover the basic concepts of how Australians and the Australian Government acquire money, where to keep money safe, use of credit, consideration of necessary expenses and plans for discretionary purchases. The texts will be written at three levels of difficulty (ISLPR approximately 0+, 1- and 1+) within the one volume. This three-tiered approach we have used successfully in previous publications to provide students with reassurance and confidence to attack more challenging texts than they would otherwise attempt. By starting at students’ comfort level, teachers can use what becomes a familiar topic as a basis for progress to a linguistically more complex text with a corresponding small increase in content. Teachers with mixed-level classes can also use the graded texts to allow students to work at different levels, while giving the appearance of all studying the same book. For examples of this approach please go to www.sugarbagondamper.com.

The reading texts will be accompanied by a workbook with:
- teachers’ notes
- linguistically very simple, brief fact sheets on issues of signing documents, renting, shopping, credit, debt
- charts and worksheets on extremely basic numeracy for those who come from societies where numbers are largely irrelevant in everyday life. This section will include:
  1. counting, as opposed to reciting the English names of numbers
  2. subitising, instant recognition of number value of small groups of items without counting, which has been shown to be a prerequisite to mastering basic arithmetic concepts
  3. place value
  4. addition, subtraction, multiplication and division
  5. simple percentages, which are crucial for understanding interest payments and discounts
- worksheets at the three levels corresponding to the reading texts, to revise the contents and language of the texts, using all four macro skills.

Teachers who would like to be notified when the resource becomes available for general use can contact Hazel at hazeldavidson@email.com

Hazel Davidson is a recently retired ESL teacher. She worked for eighteen years at TAFE Qld and before that at Hedland College, the TAFE equivalent in WA. Currently, with colleague Dorothy Court, she writes low-level spelling and reading materials suitable for very beginner adult learners.
Learn Local Awards

Congratulations to the 2011 winners of the Learn Local Awards announced in September by the Minister for Higher Education and Skills, the Hon. Peter Hall MLC. The Learn Local Awards are supported by the Adult, Community and Further Education (ACFE) Board.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Award Category</th>
<th>Award Winner</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Outstanding learner</td>
<td>Jessica McKenzie from Diamond Valley Learning Centre</td>
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<tr>
<td>Outstanding practitioner</td>
<td>Amy Baillie from Meadow Heights Learning Shop</td>
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<tr>
<td>Outstanding organisation</td>
<td>Wyndham Community and Education Centre</td>
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<td>Outstanding Koorie achievement</td>
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<td>Outstanding pre-accredited program</td>
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<td>Innovation in learning</td>
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