Ripples

Welcome to the Autumn Edition

It has been a challenging start to the year for Australia, and the world. On the heels of the bushfires in parts of Australia, we are now working out how to live with the Coronavirus (COVID-19) and what this means for our workplaces, communities, and our families.

At the end of last year, the Executive indicated that we need to review what we mean by learning communities. We agreed on the definition below which reinforces the idea of place, partnerships and the value of learning across every sector.

> A learning community is one that address its own learning needs through **partnership**. It uses the strengths of individual, social and institutional relationships across sectors to bring about cultural shifts in the perceptions of the value of learning. Learning communities explicitly use **learning** to enhance social, economic, cultural and environmental conditions on a sustainable, inclusive basis.

Similar to the UNESCO Learning City, it is a people-centred, learning focussed approach that provides a collaborative, action-oriented framework for working on diverse challenges.

In this newsletter, I have included a summary of a recent Smart Cities Forum; a thank you to our former Hon. Chair Jim Saleeba; some news from our networks and items that may be useful regarding dealing with Coronavirus (Covid-19).

Please let me know about stories about innovative ideas or events you can share with other network members. Stay safe and healthy.

Leone Wheeler

Smart Learning Cities Forum

The Smart Learning Cities Forum was well attended on 26 February. It was a partnership event with Adult Learning Australia, RMIT and the Australian Learning Cities Network - 26 February 2020. The forum examined Smart City developments and linkages with Learning City approaches.

The biggest challenge was that we did not have time to debate the questions posed and the ideas presented. However, we have provided links for background information and copies of all the presentations here.

Thank you, Jim.

The Executive and members who attended the Smart Learning Cities seminar got to thank Jim Saleeba in person for his years of dedication as Hon. Chair of the ALCN. We have all enjoyed his informative newsletters. He founded the ALCN in 2001 and most of us remember well informative regional forums on learning communities and many other activities, including representing ALCN internationally.

Save the Date for the AGM

The AGM will be a **teleconference meeting** and will be held on **May 12 at 2pm**. Email me if you wish to attend, or have an item to add to the agenda, and I will send out the documents a week beforehand, with details of how to call in.

As well as receiving the financial statements and a report from the Chair, it is also your opportunity to say what you want from the network. I am aiming to make this Network more sustainable and build partnerships with organisations such as ALA and the PASCAL International Observatory.

UNESCO Global Network of Learning Cities (UNESCO GNLC)

From 1 March to 30 April 2020, cities from around the world are invited to apply for membership in the UNESCO Global Network of Learning Cities. Australia now has three members, the City of Melton, and the City of Wyndham in Victoria and Circular Heads in Tasmania.

Read more: or read the attached pamphlet from UNESCO UIL.

UNESCO Learning Cities and COVID 19 – outcomes of Webinar on 24 March

Read about how learning cities such as Beijing (People's Republic of China), Shanghai (People's Republic of China), Fermo (Italy), Kashan (Iran) and Manizales (Colombia) (Webinar 20 March), and Osan (Republic of Korea), Wuhan (People's Republic of China), Turin (Italy) and São Paulo (Brazil) (Webinar 24 March) are responding to COVID-19.

PASCAL International Observatory

PASCAL International Observatory have a weekly newsletter about place, learning regions and social capital. You can subscribe to the newsletter at http://pascalobservatory.org/pascalnow. During the year PASCAL will be running Webinars about different aspects of Learning Cities and Learning Communities. Dates to be confirmed. PASCAL is also proposing to start a network related to Regional and Remote communities. If you want to take part please let me know.

Stories from Around the Network

Libraries and Learning Communities

Libraries are a very important part of any learning community and as with other parts of the community have had to close services temporarily because of the COVID-19, but are also quickly adapting. The following stories are some examples of innovative ideas that can be replicated.

Brimbank Libraries are offering a "To Your Door" service for the residents of Brimbank. Staff will deliver to a resident's home practicing safe social distancing measures. Residents can also access resources online. Brimbank are running Storytime via YouTube and a Virtual Book Group. Read more.

Central Coast Council Learning Community Department has a dynamic Environmental Education Team that have produced a number of iBooks to raise awareness of Australia's amazing wetlands,

Tuggerah Lakes Estuary, and Australia's Eucalypt forest. The books contain beautiful photography, videos and interactive activities. To download and find out more go to the following links:

- iBooks link: https://books.apple.com/au/author/central-coast-council/id1244087689
- App link: https://apps.apple.com/no/app/tuggerah-lakes-estuary-explore/id1476229187 for Apple or https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.centralcoast.tle&hl=en for Goggle Play.

Gwydir Learning Region is located in **Gwydir Shire**, 9,122 square kilometres in size, has a population of 5516 people and is north of Tamworth Regional Council and continues to the Queensland border. Gwydir Libraries provides resources for everyone no matter where they live. Any Shire resident who has joined the library can reserve books online and get them delivered to anywhere in the Shire. There is also access to a range of online resources. Read more: https://gwydirshire.com/gwydir-libraries-2/

Last year **Wyndham Learning Community,** building on the Ted Talks idea, ran a **WynTalk** which is now available online**.** Professor Kathy Mills shares her research on *The life-changing magic of multimodality. Stories from Culturally Diverse Classrooms.* Read more.

Other innovative examples that members have sent in for a post-COVID-19 world:
Carlton Kitchen Library has opened its doors to lend appliances and build community. People who live in Carlton, an inner-city suburb of Melbourne, can now borrow kitchen appliances for up to two weeks. Read more.

Adult Learning Australia reported that the **first Human Library** in Australia – where you can borrow people instead of books – is flourishing in Lismore, New South Wales. Read the story at https://ala.asn.au/stories/human-library/ . It is a great idea for social connections and utilising the skills and talent of people you have in the community.

Social Entrepreneurship
Our member Jan Simmons has promoted and ran social entrepreneurship programs for a number of years. She writes about her latest venture.

COOKING UP JOBS in BALLARAT

The Ballarat Work and Learning Centre identified that a new approach was needed to meet the needs of long-term unemployed people. The Work and Learning Centre is located within the Ballarat Neighbourhood centre in the grounds of the Phoenix Secondary College. Having observed, studied and worked with social enterprise and seen the positive results of this approach for unemployed and marginalised people it was decided to proceed with the development a project that utilised social enterprise principles that would meet a social need while using business applications. Additionally, the college facility had a commercial kitchen that was largely unutilised. So, the hospitality program – *Cooking up Jobs* was created.

The 16-week x 2-day program has provided a connection to real work which includes punctuality, teamwork, responding positively to diversity, the

ability to follow and interpret instructions, staying power, management of self and problem solving. What has been observed in most cases is a fast change within the participants from introverted and anxious to a positive and engaged person. This outcome includes participants with autism, mental illness and people from multi-cultural backgrounds.

As participants in the program engage in kitchen operations, they face the challenges that go with a commercial kitchen when meeting the requirements of catering and food service. Throughout their time in the program there is a strong emphasis on employability skills which enhances their work readiness.

A strength of this program is the support for each participant from their Work and Learning Advisor who supports the preparation for work and provides encouragement when the participants hits a wall.

Participants who have completed the program have gone on to work in commercial kitchens or have gained apprenticeships. Some have moved into Certificate training. For some clients this program has provided the experience and prompt that takes them not into food and hospitality but into other work and training situations.

Labour market data demonstrates that 20% of the population are under-employed/unemployed. Over 60% of clients who present at the Work and Learning Centre are not job ready. The menu of skills experienced through this project provides a solid basis for participants to understand the world of work while building confidence, and a sense of connectedness that will contribute to their active participation both socially and economically.

International Social Entrepreneurship Example: UNESCO Learning City of Swansea
Read how Swansea is building an entrepreneurial learning culture for all ages. One of the city's most successful learning city projects is the Enterprise Challenge, an annual event that aims to increase young people's awareness and understanding of business, enterprise and entrepreneurship. [Read more](#)

Learning Communities and Coronavirus virus (Covid-19)
This is a challenging time for learning communities around Australia and internationally. If you have good ideas about staying connected to help build resilience and reduce social isolation in your community please let us know so we can share ideas.

The following resources provide useful messages regarding Coronaviris (COVID-19), some of which were published by our partner Adult Learning Australia. As this is fast changing, please consult the official Australian Government website for the latest Coronavirus news, updates and advice. [Read more](#).

Health Impact
The Australian Government Department of Health provides the latest information about the current status in Australia. Useful information on how to protect yourself and your family, most importantly for learning communities, how to help the most vulnerable in our communities, our elderly and remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

ALA's advice in terms of health policy is to align yourself with state or territory government advice. [Read more:](#)

Economic Impact

The Australian Government is providing a range of measures to support Australian businesses to manage cash flow and help retain employees. Read more:

David Answorth: How to work remotely in times of coronavirus

This is something more people are not going to have to get used to. Have you got the right hardware and software? What about the right cultures and ways of working? Establishing virtual teams; setting up regular contact. Making sure staff are cared for. Read more:

Social Impact

Mental Health

The Australian Government Department of Health has a number of resources and further links for Mental Health and Covid-19: Read more.

Free Virtual Field Trips:

Freedom Home-schooling Virtual Field Trips. The resources on this site is for people of all ages, but aimed to also provide resources for young people. Take a virtual tour of The British Museum, The Great Wall of China, The Louvre Museum, Yosemite National Park or Zoo Tours. Read more:

Four Tips to Help the Elderly stay Connected:

The World Economic Forum has produced advice on how to keep the elderly connected to their community. Tips include (1) learning new technology, for example, Facetime, Zoom, Skype to stay connected with family. (2) stay active from home in your community, for example, volunteering to connect with members of your community, faith or political group you belong to. Three, go on a news diet, that is, don't listen to the news all the time, for example, listen to your favourite music. Four, reach out to family and friends by creating such things as buddy systems.

Read more:

To follow this up the Australian Government Department of Social Services has ideas on improving digital literacy for Older Australians. Go to **Be Connected – improving digital literacy for Older Australians -** Read more:

I look forward to hearing more ideas from our members about innovative programs; and funding opportunities; events you would like to share with the network.

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