



2014 NSW Adult Literacy and Numeracy Council Conference

What's in a name?

From ABE to
Foundation Skills
—and beyond?



Presented in partnership with the
Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences,
University of Technology, Sydney

2014 NSW Adult Literacy and Numeracy Council Conference

What's in a name? from ABE to Foundation Skills ... and beyond?

The NSWALNC

The NSW Adult Literacy & Numeracy Council is the peak professional body representing teachers, workers and others interested in the field of adult literacy and numeracy in NSW. It was established in the late 1970s and is affiliated with the Australian Council of Adult Literacy (ACAL). Our membership includes representatives from ACE, TAFE, community organisations, NSW AMES, Corrective Services, SEE providers, workplace programs, youth programs, libraries and universities. Membership is made up of practitioners, policy makers, program makers, researchers and academics across the adult literacy and numeracy field.

The Council's role is to promote awareness, understanding and cooperation amongst providers in the field of adult literacy, numeracy and adult learning by:

- promoting research
- lobbying government
- conducting professional development workshops

Aerial Function Centre
University of Technology, Sydney

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Acknowledgements

Acknowledgement of Country

We are holding this conference on the land of the Gadigal people of the Eora nation who are the traditional owners and custodians of this land.

The NSW Adult Literacy and Numeracy Council recognises Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the first people of this continent. The Council acknowledges and respects the history and knowledge developed over many thousands of years by Indigenous Australian people.

Program organising committee

This conference has been organised by the Executive Committee of the Council:

*Ros Bauer
Wilfredo Buitrago
Stewart Burkitt
Praveen Chand
Jude Cooke
Polly Craig
Helen Daly
Therese Douglas
Janet Dyne
Zoe Humphreys
Amanda Josling
Pamela Osmond
Susan Roy
Keiko Yasukawa*

and Renata Atkins, Executive Officer

Partner, sponsors and friends

The NSW Adult Literacy and Numeracy Council expresses its sincere thanks to the *Faculty of Arts & Social Sciences at the University of Technology, Sydney* in partnering with us in the organisation of this conference.

Comics for Cause has donated a large number of comic books for adult basic education practitioners and providers to use in creative ways to promote their learners' literacy development. The Council expresses its thanks for its contributions and partnership with us.

Thanks are due to *NSW AMES publications, Bridge Bookshop* and *Boyer Educational Resources* for their book displays.

Conference logo

The conference logo was designed by our colleague Brian Kogler and his daughter Hesta. Thanks to both of them for sharing their creative talents with us.

Welcome

2014 NSW Adult Literacy & Numeracy Council Conference: *What's in a name? From ABE to Foundation Skills – and beyond?*

As adult education providers in NSW prepare for the implementation of the new Smart and Skilled policy environment, and experience the impact of the National Foundation Skills Strategy for Adults, many of us are increasingly asking: what about our 'second chance' learners we have had in our classrooms for many years; where will they go; will their needs be met? What has happened to Adult Basic Education?

Much history, passion, commitment to social justice and importantly a belief in the power of education is vested in the name 'Adult Basic Education' which many of us identify as our 'field'. But even in the last two decades, we have assumed other identities – adult literacy/ numeracy, language, literacy and numeracy (LLN), learner support, tutorial support, foundation education/ studies/ skills, workplace language and literacy teachers, practitioners, and sometimes trainers. What do these shifts in identity mean for the field, for practitioners and for learners? Are we simply being nostalgic in contemplating our identities, or is there something fundamental that we do not want to lose? If so, what are some new spaces and places where we can continue to be part of realising our learners' dreams and aspirations? This conference invites participants to critically examine the transformations in our field of Adult Basic Education, and what the future holds for learners seeking a second chance in education.

While it is difficult to feel overly optimistic and enthusiastic at a time when much of what the field has achieved looks as if it is about to be dismantled, the coming together at this conference affords us with the opportunity to collectively re-imagine how we do what practitioners in the field have done so well – perhaps in different spaces and ways, with new partners within our own institutions and in our communities.

We can look forward to our keynote speakers helping us to reflect on our past and articulate the core of what we stand for, suggest new ways to connect with our learners in their communities, their classrooms and through the work they produce. Through solidarity, we will find ways to ensure that there will continue to be a second, third or fourth chance in education for those who seek it.

On behalf of the Council, I would like to thank all of the speakers and workshop presenters who have agreed to contribute to the day. Thanks are due to all the Council members who have supported the work of the Council in a range of capacities over the year. We appreciate the support given by UTS in 'housing' the Council in the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, and partnering with us in the organisation of this conference. My personal thanks are due to the Council Committee members who volunteered their time to organise Council activities including this conference. We have been supported this year by Renata Atkins, our Executive Officer without whom this conference would not have happened!

Finally, thanks to all of you who are here today. We hope you enjoy the conference!

Keiko Yasukawa

President, NSW Adult Literacy & Numeracy Council

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Program overview

8.30	Registration		
9.00	Welcome & introduction	Acknowledgement of Country Welcome from Professor Peter Aubusson, Head of School of Education, UTS Welcome from the NSW Adult Literacy & Numeracy Council Conference overview	
9.15	Plenary speaker - Pamela Osmond	What's in a name? What can we learn from the names that have characterised our field in its 40 year history?	
10.00	Plenary speakers – Jude Cooke & Julie Magri	Forging ahead with Smart & Skilled: Demystifying policy in communities	
10.30	Morning tea		
11.15	Plenary speaker - Dr Liz Atkins	'There must be things I can do, there must be doors it can open' : The reality of undertaking Foundation Level programs post-16	
12.00	Plenary speaker – Dr Julie Choi	Creativity in the multi-literacy classroom	
12.45	Lunch		
	Workshops 1 <i>Harris</i>	Workshops 2 <i>Jones</i>	Workshops 3 <i>Broadway</i>
1.45	WORKSHOP 1.1 Improving Health Literacy: The Being Healthy, Staying Healthy Program <i>Kirsten McCaffery, Suzanne Morony, Mary Johnston, Sandra Lawrence</i>	WORKSHOP 2.1 Weighing the Pigs: Looking at Online LLN assessment <i>Jill Finch</i>	WORKSHOP 3.1 Aboriginal women's poetry writing <i>Estelle Rozinski Gail Murphy Penny Morris</i>
2.45	WORKSHOP 1.2 Public Libraries and Literacy Education: Please take your partners <i>Pamela Davies, Chris Jones, Maureen Henninger</i>	WORKSHOP 2.2 Using the Numeracy Units in the FSK Training Package Environment <i>Liz Agars</i>	WORKSHOP 3.2 Getting serious with comics <i>Amanda Josling Zoe Humphries</i>
3.45	Afternoon tea		
4.00	Conference close		

Keynote speakers

Pamela Osmond

What's in a name? What can we learn from the names that have characterised our field in its 40 year history?

This presentation will trace some key periods in the history of the adult basic education field which have influenced the context in which we are operating today. The names by which a field is known can be seen as code for the discourses that influence it. The various names that have been used to characterise the field of adult basic education in NSW over its 40 year history, will be used to trace the discourses that have shaped it, from its liberal, humanistic beginnings to the present economic driven discourse. I will argue that only by understanding the influences that have shaped our practice in the past can we understand our present context and begin to consider how we might respond to it.

Pamela Osmond has worked in the field of Adult Basic Education since the 1970s. She has taught in a range of Adult Basic Education contexts and occupied a number of management roles in TAFE NSW. She is the author of a wide range of teaching / learning resources, including *So You Want to Teach an Adult to Read...?* and *Literacy Face to Face*. Pamela's present role is as teacher educator at the University of Technology Sydney and at TAFE NSW. She is currently researching a history of the adult basic education field in NSW.



Jude Cooke & Julie Magri

Forging ahead with Smart & Skilled: Demystifying policy in the communities

The NSW government reform 'Smart and Skilled' changes the landscape we work in dramatically. The cessation of special access programs that are currently fee exempt, amidst a raft of matrices defining eligibility, entitlements, concessions and exemptions, alongside questions about skills lists, targeted priorities and more are just one round of hurdles. As TAFE Outreach Coordinators we have worked with teachers and community partners, to analyse available information and reformat them to be more coherent for our students and stakeholders.

There is enormous demand for TAFE Outreach programs in Western Sydney. These changes are compelling us into intense interrogation of the new system in order to optimise opportunities for prospective students in 2015.

Jude Cooke is a TAFE Outreach Coordinator at Mt Druitt. She has worked in TAFE Outreach for almost two decades. Julie Magri has worked in TAFE Outreach across Western Sydney Institute of TAFE for 10 years. They are both graduates of UTS Adult Education. For almost four decades TAFE Outreach programs have ensured NSW education is accessible to people who face barriers to learning. TAFE Outreach programs across the state deliver a wide range of educational opportunities to all equity groups including the homeless and those at risk of homelessness, people with drug and alcohol issues, ex- offenders, refugees and women in supported accommodation.



Dr Liz Atkins



'There must be things I can do, there must be doors it can open' : The reality of undertaking Foundation Level programs post-16

This presentation explores notions of 'employability' in the context of the experiences of those young people who leave the education system at 16+ with few or no academic credentials. The paper contests the conflation of 'foundation skills' with 'inclusion' in policy discourse, arguing that the real impact of such programmes is to inculcate attitudes and behaviours consistent with low pay, low skill work in already marginalised young people. It draws on empirical evidence, illustrated as narratives, from two UK studies which suggest that what young people really want are real, practical skills which are directly transferable to the world of work and which would fulfil the promise of high pay, high skill work in a knowledge economy. The paper concludes that in a world where many young people are increasingly marginalised in terms of both education and employment, only an education which provides the skills the young people aspire to, and which has real exchange value in the labour market place can confer any real advantage to them. Current approaches to foundation skills education, far from achieving this, are little more than an exercise in social control resulting in new forms of class and labour (re)production as already marginalised young people are socialised into particular forms of casual and low pay, low skill employment.

Liz Atkins is a Senior Lecturer in VET at Federation University Australia, and a Visiting Research Fellow at the University of Huddersfield, UK. She has taught extensively in both VET and higher education in both the UK and Australia. Liz's research interests are concerned with social justice, inclusion and in/equalities in education, particularly amongst young people on low level vocational and employability programs such as VETiS and foundation programs. Liz first explored these issues in her book *Invisible Students, Impossible Dreams: experiencing vocational education 14-19* (based on her doctoral thesis) and has since developed them in a range of publications and research studies. Liz also has related interests in other aspects of marginalisation and inequality in education, specifically race and disability.



Dr Julie Choi

Creativity in the Multi-literacy Classroom

In this presentation I reflect on multilingual students' collaborative artworks, captions, and the processes of their production from a three-week intensive exchange program in a university in Sydney that consisted of Japanese and Chinese undergraduate students. By closely examining their texts, I illuminate how certain dimensions of their 'creative criticality' (Li, 2011) have challenged me to re-think some of my core ideas on what counts as 'language' and begin to recognize the valuable role of oral interaction in the collaborative creation of multimodal texts using a number of linguistic resources. These shifting realizations have led me to think more broadly about the kinds of knowledge and skills that are fundamental for teachers teaching in increasingly multi-modal, heterogeneous, and fluid teaching spaces. The aim here is two-fold; I hope to bring awareness to teachers of the importance of learning to engage with the creative textual worlds of our learners and in doing so, provoke teachers to critically reflect on what ideologies and assumptions sit at the core of their own understandings in their particular subject areas and teaching practices. Willingness to engage, become aware and critically self-reflect are, as I will argue here, stepping stones towards the co-creation of productive and personally meaningful new spaces between teachers and learners.

Julie Choi teaches in the School of Education at the University of Technology, Sydney. Her research and teaching interests are in the areas of multilingual identity development, sociolinguistics, narrative inquiry, reflective/reflexive academic writing using (auto) ethnographic approaches, and language teacher education. She is the co-editor of the book *Language and Culture: Reflective Narratives and the Emergence of Identity* and has published in the *Journal of Language, Identity and Education*. From January 2015, she will be teaching at the University of Melbourne as Lecturer in Education (Additional Languages).

Workshop presenters and abstracts

Workshop 1.1

Improving Health Literacy: The Being Healthy, Staying Healthy Program

Low health literacy has a profound impact on a range of poor health outcomes including lower levels of health knowledge, higher rates of medication errors and use of emergency services, lower adherence and poorer self-care, and - crucially - higher rates of morbidity and mortality from chronic disease. Adults with low health literacy also receive less information, ask fewer questions, and are less satisfied with doctor-patient communication. We developed a program to integrate health literacy into TAFE adult basic education programs. A unique feature was the involvement of NSW Health Community Health Workers to assist with program delivery, and to localise some content.

We developed an 18 week (one semester) health literacy training program for adults enrolled in ACSF level 2 courses. The program was piloted in 2 TAFE colleges in NSW in 2012 (n=24) and is currently being evaluated in a randomized controlled trial (n=300) in TAFE institutes across NSW. The primary outcome is functional health literacy assessed by objective measures of health skills (e.g. understanding medicine labels, using a thermometer); with measures of self-efficacy, communication and Shared Decision Making skills as secondary outcomes.

The program has the potential to increase health literacy as well as language literacy and numeracy skills among disadvantaged adults and may be delivered by an established network of adult educators. The challenges and benefits of implementing health programs through the education sector will be discussed.

Associate Professor Kirsten McCaffery – University of Sydney

Kirsten McCaffery is a health psychologist and international expert in health literacy and the development of tools, such as decision aids and question prompt lists, addressed at patients with low health literacy levels. She led the development of the international guidelines for health literacy and patient decision aids (2011-2013) and established (and is now academic lead of) the International Health Literacy Network, a research network with over 200 members worldwide. She has published over 30 peer reviewed articles in international journals on the topic of health literacy.

Dr Suzanne Morony – Research Associate, University of Sydney

Suzanne Morony trained in organisational psychology before moving to Amsterdam and later Singapore to manage large international research projects in education. She has been project-managing the TAFE health literacy project at Sydney University since 2013, and also volunteers as an English-language tutor in refugee communities in Sydney. She has also worked in technical (instruction) writing, consulting and sales.

Mary Johnston - Cultural Competence and Health Literacy trainer Sydney Local Health District

Mary Johnston has worked as an ESL teacher in western Sydney high schools, Intensive English Centres, for TAFE and for the Adult Migrant English Service NSW. After studying Health Promotion at Sydney University she moved into the Health Sector and has worked for the Multicultural Health Service in Sydney (and other) Local Health Districts, as a cultural competence trainer, in health promotion and as a development worker.

Sandra Lawrence – Liverpool college, NSW TAFE, South Western Institute

Sandra Lawrence is a teacher at Liverpool TAFE, with 20 years experience in LLN and ESOL. She participated in the 2012 health literacy pilot study, and has been teaching the Being Healthy Staying Healthy program since then. She has also extended the program with new activities and content.

Workshop 1.2

Public Libraries and Literacy Education: Please, take your partners....

Public Libraries are there for every person at every age and stage of their life. This creates challenges in both meeting the varied needs of every member of the population and making sure everyone knows about the services and resources we provide. The Literacy Working Group was formed to assist Public Libraries in meeting the challenges of providing resources and services to support the literacy needs of Library clients and their community. The way forward for Libraries lies in the partnerships we can develop to support the needs of the community.

This presentation will look at

- The range of programs you will find in most Public Libraries to support literacy
- Case study 1 – “English Conversation Classes” - Auburn Library

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- Case Study 2 – “Better Reading, Better Communities” – Great Lakes Library Service
- Looking into the future – government information literacy

Pamela Davies – Client Services Coordinator, Auburn City Library Service

Pamela Davies has worked in a variety of roles across eight Public Library Services in NSW. She has been the Client Services Coordinator at Auburn City Library Service since 2006 and is currently the chairperson of the Literacy Working Group. Auburn City is the most culturally diverse LGA in Australia. Pamela is passionate about literacy and the power it can bring to people's lives and exploring partnership opportunities to deliver Library services to the community.

Chris Jones – Manager Library Services, Great Lakes Library Service

Chris Jones began his library career as an assistant at Parramatta City Library, back in 1987. During the past 27 years he has worked at all levels and for four different library services, metropolitan and country. He has been the Manager of Library Services at Great Lakes since 1998. Chris believes that as libraries move from book places to people spaces there is a natural parallel progression in moving from the written word to the reading experience. In 2013 the Great Lakes Library secured funding to train literacy volunteers. This project has been very successful and the Library now has a pool of dedicated volunteers to draw from. The project has also led to the establishment of a literacy collection, the creation of a literacy team amongst the library staff and the establishment of the Better Reading Better Communities group, which draws from organisations across the community and now has its own brand.

Maureen Henninger – Senior Lecturer, University of Technology Sydney

Maureen Henninger has a Masters degree in Information Science and a Graduate Diploma in Information Management (Librarianship) and is currently a Senior Lecturer in Information and Knowledge Management at the University of Technology, Sydney. She has had extensive academic and professional experience in the storing and retrieval of digital information, particularly database design, and in information design. Maureen consults widely in industry, government and for non-government organizations in these areas and has been invited to speak at many conferences on digital information retrieval in wide range of topics. She has been the coordinator of both the undergraduate and postgraduate program in information and media and information and knowledge management, and is active in the education committee of the Australian Library and Information Association. Maureen's research activities include Web retrieval processes, digital libraries and data curation. She is the author of books about digital information retrieval, the latest of which is a second edition of *The Hidden Web*. Maureen is keen to explore ways of adult literacy practitioners partnering with librarians to design and support 'government information literacy' programs in public libraries.

Workshop 2.1

Weighing the Pigs: Looking at online LLN assessment

The proverb says that just weighing a pig doesn't fatten it. Lately, many RTOs are bringing in standardised online LLN assessment for all their vocational students. Is this a good thing or a bad thing?

There are lots of issues... educational, ethical and pragmatic. Is it good for students and teachers, or just for management? This session will explore some issues raised during a short project looking at online LLN tools such as BKSB/ RUPReady and the ACER CSPA.

Jill Finch – NSW TAFE

Jill Finch has taught adult numeracy and literacy for 30 years in TAFE including lots of LLN support in vocational courses. She was Head Teacher at TAFE Ultimo, and is a past President of NSWALNC. She is now a humble casual teacher again, working on a WELL project and teacher training programs including the Grad Dip Adult LLN Practice.

Workshop 2.2

Training numeracy teachers for the new FSK Training Package environment

This workshop will look at the need for numeracy teachers in the VET environment. It will explore the numeracy teacher within the FSK TP environment and look at the resources and support available in vocational contexts. The workshop will explore why there is such a shortage of numeracy professionals and what can be done to overcome this. There will be activities that can be used to build confidence and capability in adult educators.

Liz Agars – NSW TAFE, Western Sydney Institute

Liz Agars has been working in adult education in Western Sydney for 24 years. She started as a numeracy teacher working with groups and then in vocational contexts as a team teacher. Liz developed and delivered WELL programs with many workplaces and was an early Adult Literacy Officer working in community and workplaces. Completing a variety of projects, secondments and management roles, Liz has significantly contributed to the field of adult literacy and numeracy.

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Workshop 3.1

Aboriginal women's poetry writing

'Flash funding' arrived one day in May 2014 and landed on the doorstep of Ngala Nanga Mai pARenT group with the promise of riches: 2 teachers, childcare, good feeds and a bus to get everyone there for 10 weeks of writing.

Mother Sista Friend, an anthology of poems by the women of Ngala Nanga Mai is the product of that journey.

This workshop addresses the importance of poetry in giving voice to the struggles, thoughts and feelings of all communities, but in particular the Aboriginal communities of Australia where their own languages have been stilled and their voices still struggle to be heard.

Estelle Rozinski – Adult Basic Education, Randwick college, Sydney TAFE

Estelle Rozinski has worked in Adult Literacy since 1987, initially working as a RAWFA teacher then as an ALO, adjusting and adapting over the years to the changing roles in Adult Basic Education. In 1994 Estelle completed a degree in Fine Arts at COFA. As part of that undergraduate degree she did a small project on the Boomalli Aboriginal Artists Collective and made a promise to the artists present to give back to the community for their assistance. Estelle has made it her business to do just that. She now has the privilege of working with the Ngala Nanga Mai pARenT group in both the visual arts and writing.

Gail Murphy – artist, writer and workshop participant

Gail Murphy has always loved music and has been writing songs since she was about 13 years old. Gail's grandmother, Shirley Murphy is a well known identity in the La Perouse community is Gail's role model and inspiration, "She'd write about anything and everything, she'd write about the war, about growing up, where ever we were she'd get a blast of inspiration and be recording it on the back of a napkin!"

Penny Morris– artist, writer and workshop participant

Penny Morris leads a creative life in the La Perouse Area. She has been writing a journal for as long as she can remember and is now a passionate writer.

Workshop 3.2

Getting Serious with Comics

NSWALNC were invited to have a stall at Supernova, a comics and graphic arts expo, by Comics for a Cause and Amanda and Zoe volunteered. They were both enthusiastic about the possibility of collecting comics & graphic novels for literacy students because they have both worked in a range of settings with people who have become disengaged from learning. Graphic texts provide a range of opportunities for reading, story-telling and understanding text construction.

Amanda Josling – Corrective Services NSW

Zoe Humphreys – Ability Links worker, St. Vincent de Paul

Zoe Humphreys and Amanda Josling volunteered to work with Comics for Cause when the organisation approached the NSWALNC about their charity. They began to collaborate on the issue of using graphic texts as a means to engage disadvantaged and disengaged learners. They both have teaching histories that focus on approaching literacy from a different perspective and capture opportunities to engage with disadvantaged and disengaged people.

Zoe currently works teaching living skills with disabled people and Amanda currently teaches a legal program at Corrective Services.