

Ripples



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Summer Edition

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Welcome to the Summer Edition

Dear Colleagues

I wish you all happiness and good health for Christmas and the New Year. I am immensely proud of the stories of innovation and resilience that we have published about our learning communities this year, including the organisation of an amazing Global Learning Festival (GLF).

This edition features stories about entrepreneurship and innovation that come mainly from the ALCN Roundtable that was held in November. Take the time to read about the work of our imaginative communities - your feedback is welcome.

Congratulations to Adult Learning Australia (ALA) on their 60th Anniversary. Diane Tabbagh and I were honoured to write about that journey taken by Wyndham to become a UNESCO Learning City which was published in the Special Edition of the Journal of Adult Learning. The stories about the history of Adult Education in Australia and New Zealand in this edition are a must read.

Thank you for sharing your work and I look forward to building on this in 2021.

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Contents

The Australian Learning Communities Virtual roundtable.....	2
What is happening round the Networks?.....	3
Evaluation of Online Global Learning Festival 1-4 September.....	8
ALCN Story Template.....	9
Articles of Interest.....	10
ALCN Web Site and Facebook site.....	11
Funding opportunities.....	11
Tools for Learning Communities and Cities.....	11

ALCN acknowledges the Traditional Custodians, and their Ancestors and Elders, past and present, of the lands and waters across Australia where we conduct our business.

Wyndham, Melton, Townsville, Gwydir all demonstrated the role of the role of Council as an enabler/facilitator of innovation. For example, Melton City Council's Hot House project is designed to help an emerging entrepreneurs accelerate the process of developing a business idea into a sustainable model. The project is now in its third season and will no doubt be part of the Learning for Earning Strategy - a focus area of Melton's new 10-year Learning Community Plan. The Townsville Library Entrepreneurship in Residence programme, in partnership with local entrepreneurs – Green Apple, is a pioneering project, and many other Libraries around the country want to learn more. It is good to see the plan to have participants as trainers in the future. Also, the story of growing a revenue base at Sudbury Community House, while at the same time engaging the over 50 age group, and the work of Hume Learning Community's Enable Australia are equally inspiring.

Feedback from the audience included: one is never too young or too old to learn a new skill. This concurs with the UNESCO Education Strategy 2014-2021 of 'every person, at every stage of their life should have lifelong learning opportunities to acquire the knowledge and skills they need to fulfill their aspirations and contribute to their societies.'

From the discussions from the presenters, it was evident that that it was of great benefit when there is commitment from the leadership of the city to support learning, when the local government, learning cities, learning institutions, and communities come together.

Other topics that the speakers touched on; Mentoring of entrepreneurs; getting out of the box/comfort zones to connect the dots; creating a new norm by dealing with change; disruption is the new norm.

This Virtual Roundtable was a taster of the variety of work done by our wonderful learning communities. We did ask the audience about topics for 2021 and ideas included: more on the digital divide, indigenous knowledge, cross-generational learning, inclusive education, inclusion, upskill training, and age friendly learning.

The presentation can be viewed [here](#):

What is happening round the Networks?

The main information for this section is sourced mainly from the presentations provided by network members at our Virtual Roundtable.

Gwydir Learning Region

Max Eastcott, CEO of Gwydir Shire Council, prepared an engaging presentation on the development of Gwydir Learning Region (GLR) from the early days in 2004 when the Gwydir Shire Council was formed until the present day. The focus was on how GLR helps young people seek employment through learning.

Gwydir Learning Region is a rural member of ALCN located in the North West of Northern New South Wales. It has just under 10,000 sq kilometres of land and has just over 5,000 people, but the population is increasing. Like other rural communities Gwydir has faced challenges, for example, the recent drought.

Max discussed why the GLR was formed. The correlation between below household income and the relatively poor level of past educational achievement. The Council's policy response was the formation of the Gwydir Learning Region. The council saw the potential to encourage people into lifelong learning to lift their skill levels and thus create opportunities for employment and improve their household income.

Max was quick to dispel the myth that rural communities are uninviting places to live:

“Gwydir Shire is a vibrant and resilient community with access to cultural activities on a weekly basis and its residents demonstrate good country hospitality.”

Like other learning communities, GLR’s success is based on collaboration of key partners who have shared goals and visions. Sophisticated concepts such as innovation, creativity, lifelong learning, social capital, social justice, ecological and sustainable rural development underpin GLR (Mitchell, 2006). Another evaluation undertaken by Wheeler & Wong et al (2013) highlighted the innovative ways of delivering training to this rural community, everything from projects such as the Living Classroom to Trade Training Centres such as the Roxy Theatre’s hospitality courses.

The presentation outlined the broad objectives of GLR:

1. Improve participation and achievement in education and training;
2. Provide better links between schools, universities, TAFES, business and communities
3. Expand opportunities for training and learning.

The GLR Mission is to do what is necessary to ensure high quality education and training is available, accessible, affordable, adaptable and acceptable for people of all ages and all stages of life who live in or are associated with Gwydir Shire.

Many examples were given: 1) a champion career teacher that did not give up on advising on a career path for a young person and also for their parents; 2) creating a learning organisation at Gwydir Shire Council 3) annual scholarship programmes for TAFE and University students; 4) three trade training centres – automotive, hospitality and primary industry, and 5) a range of School-Based Apprenticeship (SBT) positions at Council, depending on the need. For example, this year, due to the imminent closure of the local newspaper, Gwydir Shire decided to buy the newspaper – mainly as access to news for elderly residents. Consequently, Gwydir has a position for a School Based Trainee (SBT) Journalist and an Editor.

The presentation concludes with the quote from George Bernard Shaw “Some see things and ask why? Others dream things that never were and ask why not?” The main point is that ***Rural and Regional Australia must turn their dreams into reality because no one else will.*** Gwydir community and staff dare to dream.

View the full presentation [here](#):

Further References:

Mitchell, J. (2006). The Gwydir Learning Region Model. An independent evaluation, John Mitchell & Associates. Retrieved from <http://www.bingara.com.au/about-bingara/community/education/gwydir-learning-region/>

Wheeler, L., et al. (2013). Gwydir Learning Region. Learning as a Driver for Change. L. Wheeler, S. Wong, J. Farrell and I. Wong. Sydney, Australian Centre of Excellence for Local Government University of Technology. **2020**: 26-33. Retrieved from <https://opus.lib.uts.edu.au/handle/10453/42056>

Hume Learning Community – Enable Australia

Julie McKay, Managing Director of Enable Australia, spoke of the challenges and opportunities of running a Social Enterprise. The organisation commenced in 2014 with a work and learning focus. The critical issue is the digital divide and social inclusion which has been made worse by COVID-19. The immediate need is for affordable tech for unemployed, low income, 65+ age group, people with disabilities, mobile-only users (people who are often homeless).

Julie talked about the impact of the organisation pre-COVID : 32,000 program hours, 850+ participants, 15 employment pathway outcomes, 185+ tonnes tech diverted from landfill (repair, re-use and recycle). Enable was the winner of the Victorian Premier’s Sustainability Awards in 2019

Julie said regarding Enable’s response to COVID-19 that the vision of the organisation for “connected communities without disadvantage” took on a whole new meaning. There was a bigger need for affordable tech to ensure the disadvantaged were connected to family, friends, schools and community, health, employment services.

Read more about Enable at <https://www.enableaustralia.org.au/>

Reference: Australian Digital Inclusion Index: <https://digitalinclusionindex.org.au/>

City of Melton – Hot House Project

Christine Sita, Acting Coordinator in the Economic Development Team at Melton City Council spoke about a new business start-up programme, the Hot House Project, that commenced in 2019. This arose because there were several inquiries from community members about new business ideas, but little knowledge about how to start a business in Australia. Now in their third season the project features:

- Nine weeks of intensive training
- The opportunity to test an idea before launching to the market
- Mentoring of budding entrepreneurs, particularly in partnership with Victoria University
- Ongoing support and development by the Council.

The project is very ‘hands-on’ and is for anyone who has an entrepreneurial mindset - age, experience and cultural background are no barriers to joining this project. Participants might be on a career change journey and have identified a gap in the market. There are two streams – the Start Club and a Grow Club starting in 2021. Find out more about the project, including a short video [here](#).

Cassandra Connelly, Lifelong Learning Projects Officer, Melton City Council, reported that one of the focus areas for the new 10 Year Learning Community Strategy will be entrepreneurship and business growth through the theme Learning for Earning. We look forward to hearing more about this in 2021.

City of Melton Lifelong Learning Festival 2020

The City of Melton hosted its 2020 Lifelong Learning Festival 19-22 November. In line with all things 2020, the festival went virtual bringing with it a new range of participants with it.

The festival featured over 50 events with special guests including Tim Bone hosting a YouTube livestream cooking class, Gold Medallist martial artist Nadine Champion giving a key note workshop on resilience and a virtual film screening and directors talk of *Happy Sad Man* by award winning Melbourne director Genevieve Bailey.

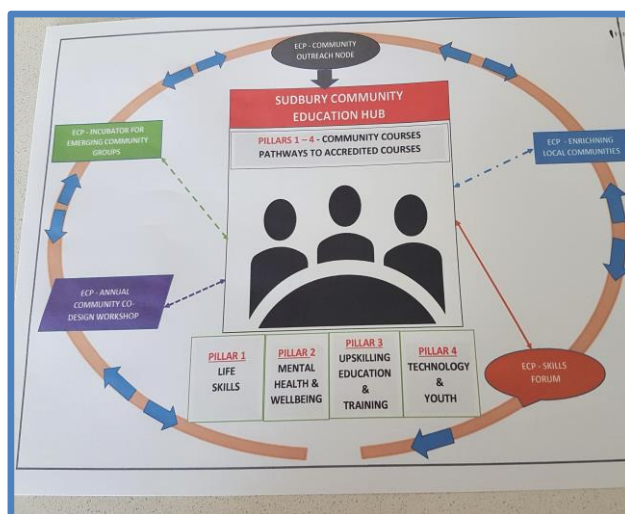
Sessions engaged a range of participants aged from 6 months to 70+ years with many commenting on how much more accessible the online platform is for people with diverse abilities. The City of Melton look forward to taking their experiences of 2020 in the online space and reaching new heights for the community with the City of Melton Lifelong Learning Festival in September 2021.



Sudbury Community House, Western Australia

Viti Simmons (WA), former General Manager Strategy, Policy and Projects discussed the challenges such as COVID-19 and an under-utilised learning Centre that was not sustainable. Various strategies were employed including targeting the over 50 age group for a funded Technology Literacy programme.

Viti, channelling Paul Kelly, said that from small things big things grow, and the Centre has introduced fee for service, secured social enterprise funding and is better utilising capacity at the centre. This of course enables more staff to be employed.



Townsville Entrepreneurs in Residence program

The Entrepreneurs in Residence program is run by Townsville City Library and Townsville City Council and funded by the Queensland Government and the State Library of Queensland. The goals of the program are:

- To increase awareness of the library's role as a business resource
- To increase the delivery of programs supporting entrepreneurship and small business in Townsville
- Raise awareness in the community of the value of entrepreneurship to the local economy
- Train library staff to assist with business with business inquiries, and
- Provide suitable mentoring to local entrepreneurs.

The library is delighted to assist in the development of entrepreneurship opportunities, especially following the floods last year and COVID-19. Business partners include Green Apple Marketing, Smart Precinct NQ, Co-Habit Co-Working Space and Towards Better.

Over 100 people have learnt about grant writing, goal setting and business development, health and wellness, marketing, and staff training.

This is an emerging role for libraries in supporting business and entrepreneurs and other libraries are extremely interested to learn more. Libraries have resources that can support small businesses (teaching computer skills, providing computers, scanners, copiers and reading resources). Please watch the video of enthusiastic participants [here](#).

Wyndham Learning City

A Recipe for Empathy Partnerships

Jac Torres-Gomez, Learning Communities Officer, Wyndham City Council was mentored by Peter Kearns, AO, and PASCAL Board Member, to reflect on the successful ingredients of empathic partnerships in the development of learning communities. Jac's work entitled - **A Recipe for Empathy Partnerships** – has been published on the prestigious Qatar Foundation's WISE site.

A key point is that it has been **'proven time and again that by working in partnership rather than in isolation learning and educational professionals can enhance our impact in communities through the leveraging of resources, expertise and competencies.'**

Read more [here](#):

Publication about Wyndham Learning City in a Special Edition of the Australian Journal of Adult Learning

Tracing the interesting journey taken by Wyndham to become a UNESCO Learning City, co-authored by Diane Tabbagh (WCC) and Dr Leone Wheeler (ALCN) this article has been published in Adult Learning Australia's Special Edition of the Australian Journal of Adult Learning.

Wheeler, L and D. Tabbagh (2020). "Wyndham City: A tale of steady progress towards a sustainable learning community." Australian Journal of Adult Learning **60**(3): 492-514.

Read more [here](#).

Work Integrated Learning Student – Hellen Kibowen

The ALCN and RMIT University, provided an opportunity for RMIT International Development student to work with Wyndham City Council on research and evaluation of key projects. These include the Global Learning Festival (GLF) and the Wyndham Learning Festival.

We are lucky to work with Hellen Kibowen from an indigenous community in Kenya. Hellen studies a Masters in International Development at RMIT University and works part time as a project officer with the Burnett Institute. Hellen is very enthusiastic and with assistance from the Wyndham and Melton Learning Community teams, among other duties, developed questionnaires and wrote stories using the Most Significant Change Technique. You can see her work in the final GLF report (especially the story of Fatima).

We look forward to Hellen's reflections about her experience at the first ALCN Executive meeting on 9 February at 2 pm (AEDT).



Hellen and Jac meeting in person after COVID-19 restrictions lifted!

Wyndham Learning Festival

The Wyndham Learning Festival took place between 23-30 November 2020 and offered more than 150 free online classes, talks and workshops led by over 78 different providers. The festival was led by Wyndham Community and Education Centre and supported by Wyndham City Council and sponsored by Victoria University (VU) Polytechnic. This year's theme was 'Healthy Learning, Healthy Lives,' with activities relating to this theme and more offered for all interests and ages, including Chinese lantern making, Brazilian drumming, karate classes for beginners, dance grooves from West Africa, lessons of global cooking skills, Ancient Egyptian Hieroglyphs, and the Matsunaga Institute in Hawaii shared stories of resilience, peace, and conflict resolution. The Festival sought to reinforce the message that any learning is healthy for the mind and body, and to encourage the community to try new things, regardless of age.

Moving from running the festival as previously planned from 1-8 September 2020 as a live event, a fully virtual experience running from 23-30 November 2020 meant that the team had to be proactive in maintaining partnerships and engagement, innovative in their thinking around the festival delivery

and open-hearted to challenges facing everyone involved including event providers, sponsors, community partners and other working group members. The 2020 Wyndham Learning Festival presented a unique opportunity to respond to the isolation felt by many due to the COVID-19 crisis.



Two winning artists - Mandi and Tahlia – with their incredible artworks printed for the Wyndham Learning Festival Bags which were distributed widely during the Festival

As the festival went virtual this year, in response to the pandemic, the working group took the opportunity to bring the world to Wyndham and Wyndham to the world and attendees and events came in from across the globe. This spotlight on Wyndham has created some dynamic and fortuitous new partnerships and networks to enhance and profile the work and leadership of Wyndham as a Learning City.

We sought to deepen engagement with quality and responsible programming during the COVID-19 environment, while continuing to nurture its growing and popular reach within Wyndham and beyond. A high profile and optimistic project was at the heart of our vision fostering local and international collaboration. We ran a Roundtable with the ALCN as a key event, highlighting the important work learning cities are doing across Australia. Our signature event featuring Clare Bowditch, provided an optimistic yet realistic take on life and how our inner voices shape our experiences. A new series of forums deepened the festival’s engagement with current debates in healthy learning, healthy lives including recovery post-COVID-19.

Evaluation of Online Global Learning Festival 1-4 September

From 1-4 September the City of Melton and the City of Wyndham co-led the inaugural Global Learning Festival (GLF) with other 20 other partners including the ALCN and PASCAL International Observatory. The report is attached. The achievements are spectacular – over 110 events, with many different countries and continents. Over 8,500 people either ‘attended’ events or logged in to view the recordings.



Please read the attached report, particularly, the Most Significant Change Story – ‘Creating Hope by Going Global’ – Fatima’s story. Very inspirational.

Congratulations to all involved.

ALCN Story Template

It was agreed at our last Executive meeting that the ALCN would develop a story template to enable the collection of stories about learning communities and learning cities in Australia. It builds on the recommendations of Gabrielle Power, International Research student (2018) supervised by Professor Bruce Wilson. The results of her DELPHI research method with members of the ALCN and the Hume Learning Community on stories of how learning are best represented in a publication proposed by the ALCN. The main points show that members wanted:

- a way for members of learning communities to share their stories and gain support for their programs
- a resource which will equip the ALCN with examples of best practice
- an opportunity for the ALCN to gain clarity on learning communities.

The main target audience are practitioners, but these stories could have the ability to influence policy as well.

Stories that we will be looking for are personal stories, opinion pieces, learning community/programme case studies as policy initiatives, learning city case studies and a range of other topics that highlight good practice.

The stories will be published in ALCN newsletters (Ripples), on the ALCN website (alcn.com.au) and PASCAL International Observatory.

The good news is that members of the Hume Learning Community have agreed to trial the template and we will start in February with the story of social enterprise Enable Australia.

A copy of the story template is available on request by emailing Leone – alcn@bigpond.com.

Catching up on International Online Webinars about Learning Cities

If you missed out on the PASCAL and UNESCO UIL Webinar series “Learning Cities’ COVID-19 recovery: from research to practice” do not worry as you can catch up with the following and a range of other UNESCO UIL Webinars at <https://www.youtube.com/user/uilger/videos>

1. PASCAL International Observatory and UNESCO UIL (17 June 2020). Webinar 1: The challenge of inclusion in learning cities.
2. PASCAL International Observatory and UNESCO UIL (8 July 2020). Webinar 2: The challenge of measurement, planning and evaluation in learning cities.
3. PASCAL International Observatory and UNESCO UIL (16 September 2020). Webinar 3: The challenge of developing the role of TVET, business learning, and entrepreneurship in learning cities.
4. PASCAL International Observatory and UNESCO UIL (21 October 2020). *Webinar 4: The challenge of Education for Sustainable Development.*
5. PASCAL International Observatory and UNESCO UIL (18 November 2020). *Webinar 5: Community-Based Participatory Research and Learning Cities.*

Articles of Interest

This is an area of the newsletter where I include articles that have been brought to my attention and should be of interest to members.

The World of Work in a Time of Disruption and Change.

Dewan, S. and E. Ekkehard (December, 2020). Rethinking: The pandemic is accelerating a shift towards more informal and precarious work. International Monetary Fund. Retrieved from <https://www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/fandd/2020/12/rethinking-the-world-of-work-dewan.htm>.

Shifting demographics and changing technology such as automation and robotics have been causing upheaval in labour markets and COVID-19 has accelerated the pace of change in the Global Workplace. Last time I reported that the Foundation for Young Australians (2020) have also reported that young people are disproportionately represented in flexible and precarious work. See Foundation for Young Australians (2020). The New Work Standard: How Young People are Engaging with Flexible Work. *New Work Order Report Series*, The Foundation for Young Australians. Retrieved from

Connecting-up in a World of Turbulent Change

Kearns, P. and D. Reghenzani-Kearns, Eds. (November 2020). Connecting up in a World of Turbulent Change - Report of the PASCAL EcCoWell Community Recovery Program. _PASCAL International Observatory. Retrieved from http://pascalobservatory.org/sites/default/files/connecting_up_in_a_world_of_turbulent_change2020.pdf

The PASCAL EcCoWell Community Recovery Program was conducted from March to October 2020 to test whether EcCoWell ideas on integration and partnership would have value in supporting community recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic. Five learning cities, two learning neighbourhoods, and two universities participated in the program.

Participants, including Wolverhampton Learning Communities, Learning Limerick, Wyndham Learning Community, Cork Learning City, the City of Cotonou, Benin, Datong – Taipei and the City Seminary of New York produced short reports on the following themes.

1. Supporting individual well-being in adjusting to on-going change.
2. Building resilient communities with social cohesion.
3. Promoting consciousness of global interdependence.
4. Harnessing technology to serve human purposes.
5. Implications for learning cities. 6. Connecting up for the further development of the EcCoWell concept

The Impact of Social Enterprises

Farmer, J et al (2020). Mapping the impact of social enterprise on disadvantaged individuals and communities in Australia's regional cities, Swinburne Institute of Technology. Retrieved from: <https://apo.org.au/node/303490>

This report aims to explore how social enterprises realise wellbeing. It is aimed at practitioners and provides useful tools for understanding wellbeing in social enterprise contexts. Results are derived from four case studies of social enterprises in two regional cities in Australia.

Building Capability and Quality in VET Teaching: Opportunities and Challenges

Misko, J. (2020). Building capability and quality in VET teaching: opportunities and challenges. Adelaide, NCVET. Retrieved from <https://www.ncver.edu.au/research-and-statistics/publications/all-publications/building-capability-and-quality-in-vet-teaching-opportunities-and-challenges>

This research examines the form and content of existing teacher capability frameworks and professional standards, with the aim of identifying approaches that could enhance teaching quality in the vocational education and training (VET) sector.

ALCN Web Site and Facebook site

The ALCN website is www.alcn.com.au.

Like us on Facebook – search for [facebook@aus.alcn](https://www.facebook.com/aus.alcn)

Funding opportunities

Community Grants Hub

To ensure you are up-to-date on Community Grants that may be available make sure you subscribe to the Commonwealth Governments Community Grants hub for notification of upcoming grants <https://www.communitygrants.gov.au/>. This site provides updates on grants available across a range of Commonwealth departments.

Additional Tools

Tools for Learning Communities and Cities

I was asked about examples of Return on Investment for Learning Cities and Learning Communities. I thought other practitioners might also be interested so I include the following references:

1. Schueler, J. and P. Loveder (2020). Understanding the return on investment from TVET: A practical guide, UNESCO and NCVER. Retrieve from https://www.ncver.edu.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0050/9659777/ROI-TVET-Practical-Guide.pdf

This guide is designed to improve our understanding of the return on investment (ROI) from technical and vocational education and training (TVET). It presents a guiding framework to better understand ROI, present key ROI indicators and demonstrate how to prepare a plan and implement a data collection process. The guide presents key examples that break down ROI in terms of key stakeholder groups, namely, from an individual, employer and wider society perspective, and from a range of dimensions including the economic and social. Some of the snapshot examples could be replicated for learning community projects, for example, a workplace literacy program and Implementing a Social Return on Investment Model for employment creating social enterprises

2. Hume Learning Community (2015). Demonstrating the Impact of Projects and Programmes. Retrieved from <http://pascalobservatory.org/pascalnow/blogentry/measuring-impact-community-development-programs-city-hume>

Hume Learning Community has designed a local ROI model for learning communities. For three years prior to 2015 Hume Learning Community, City of Hume, Melbourne, Victoria, worked Community of Practice to trial a cost/benefit analysis approach to measure the impact of individual learning city programs. This approach is adapted from the Robin Hood Foundation in New York.

This report includes examples from Adult Education Centres and a template for practitioners to use on their own mode.

3. UNESCO/PASCAL Observatory Webinar 'Learning Cities' COVID-19 recovery: from research to practice - The challenge of measurement, planning and evaluation' (2020)
Retrieved from <https://uil.unesco.org/lifelong-learning/learning-cities/unescopascal-observatory-webinar-learning-cities-covid-19-0>

This is an international UNESCO/PASCL webinar on evaluation and measurement. The challenges of planning learning initiatives, measuring their effectiveness, and evaluating learning outcomes is addressed. Of particular interest for me was the address by Mr Lee Jae-Jun, Mayor of UNESCO GNLC member Goyang City, Republic of Korea, who presented Goyang's roadmap to becoming a learning society. [Read more:](#)