



The ACE Sector in Australia

Sally Thompson
Adult Learning Australia Inc
VTA Conference, May 4 2011

Lifelong and Lifewide Learning for All Australians

Adult and Community Education is...

“all education and training activity (including vocational / non-vocational and accredited / non-accredited) which is delivered by not-for-profit community based or community managed organisations that provide learning opportunities for adults;

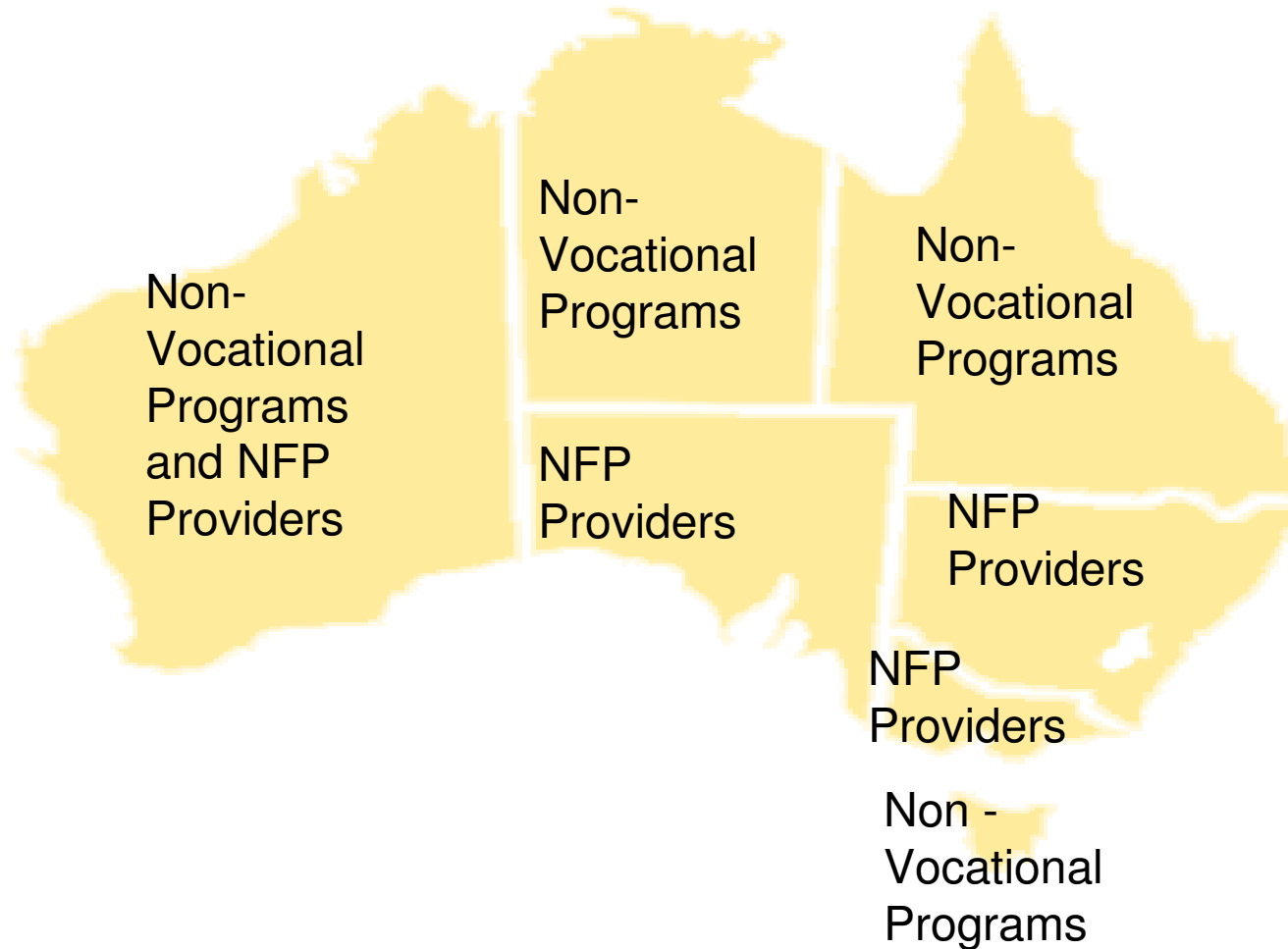
and

non-vocational (accredited / non-accredited) education and training activities which are delivery by TAFE institutes and other private Commercial RTOs.”

2008 Review of the 2002 Ministerial Declaration on ACE

Lifelong and Lifewide Learning for All Australians

Programs and Providers



Modern ACE Organisations have grown out of the vestiges of one of the following:

- Mechanics Institutes, Schools of Mines, Schools of Arts and Circulating Libraries (second half of the 1800's)
- Workers Education Associations (just prior to WW1)
- CAE in Melbourne and regional branches, Community Colleges in NSW, (post world war 2)
- Neighborhood House Movement (1970's early 80's)
- Skillshares (early 90's)
- former Sheltered Employment Services now Social Enterprises (late 90's)

Lifelong and Lifewide Learning for All Australians

ACE Tradition	VET Tradition
All learning inherently valuable	Focused on skills that are of value to industry (and individuals by extension)
Lifelong (including into the senior years)	“Working Life” long
Lifewide: skills for wellbeing and civic participation	Generic Employability Skills
Values Continuing Education as well as Pathway Education	Invests heavily at the beginning of the learning journey

Lifelong and Lifewide Learning for All Australians

From Policy Cinderellas to Boundary Riders



Senate (1991) Come in Cinderella: The emergence of adult and community education. A Report to the Senate Standing Committee on employment, education and training.

Senate (1997) Beyond Cinderella: Towards a Learning Society. A Report to the Senate Standing Committee on employment, education and training.

2002 and 2008 MCEETYA Ministerial Declaration on ACE

Lifelong and Lifewide Learning for All Australians

ACE and VET

ACE = Lifelong and Lifewide for Entire Populations

VET = Strategic investments in particular skills for particular parts of the population

ACE / VET Boundary = Pathway Education, Generic Skills, Workforce Participation

2004 – 2008 Longitudinal Study of Victorian ACE learners found:

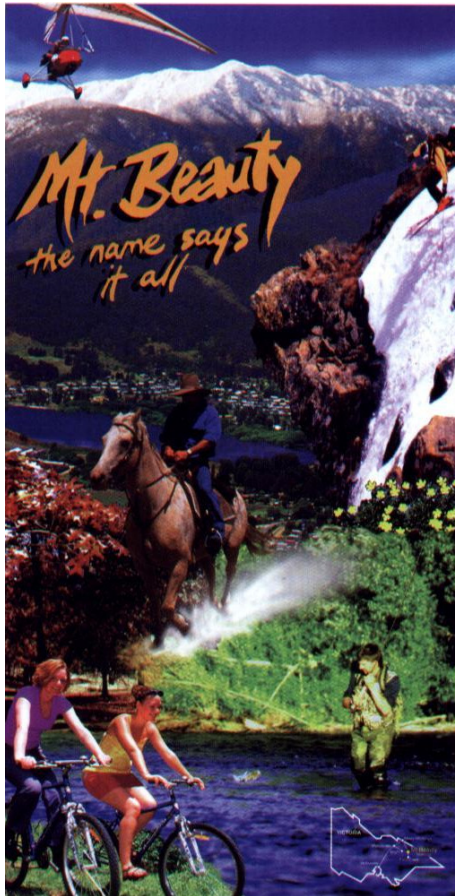
- The unemployment rate declined to one-third from 24 percent in 2004 to only 8 percent in 2006.
- Proportion of workers employed full-time more than doubled from 13 percent in 2004 to 28 percent in 2006.

but also that

- Overall the main motivations for those studying (an ACE course) were to “improve well being and confidence” (93% agreement) and to “meet new people and share a learning activity” (89% agreement) and to “develop new interest or activity” (82% agreement)

(Volkoff et al 2008, acfe.vic.gov.au)

Mt Beauty



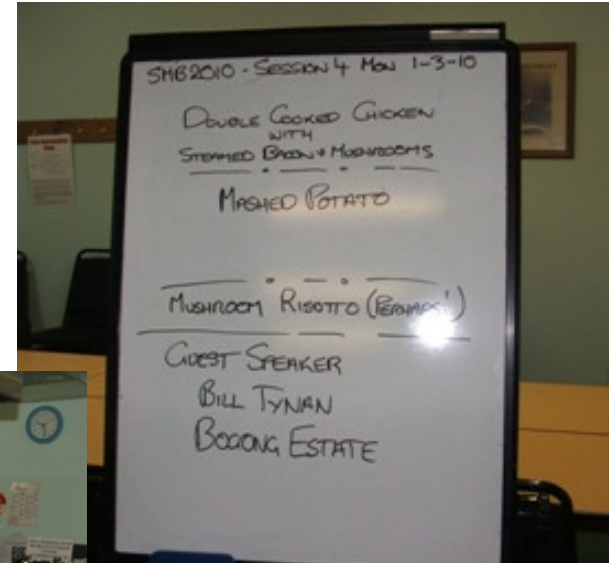
In 2006:

- 60% of households earned less than \$500 per week.
- well above average level of one parent families and of persons living alone.
- Above average unemployment.
- Noticeably above average level of self-reported disability

Alpine Shire Council,
www.alpinewshire.vic.gov.au, 2010

Secret Men's Business

- Draws on research about older men's learning (eg Golding, Brown, Mark etc)
- Run for and by men
- Teacher is a local chef
- Cert 2 in Hospitality



Albany, WA

Population: 33600

290 km south east of
Perth

Major Industries: Tourism,
Fishing and Agriculture



Mum's The Word

OUR **AWARD** WINNING PROGRAM MUM'S THE WORD

- 15- 25 Year Old Mums
- Combines Parenting, Community Service and VET
- CGEA or
- Certificate 2 in Business Administration



Lifelong and Lifewide Learning for All Australians

ALA's believes that the key features that define ACE providers is:

- Not for Profit
- Place based community development amongst their core aims
- Providing non-formal learning programs and informal learning opportunities in addition to formal VET programs.”

(Submission to NVEAC, 2010)

Why Informal Learning Matters



The overwhelming body of research about adult literacy suggests that it is largely a social process developed **through** participation, not as a prerequisite to it.

“Literacy is socially situated, culturally constituted and actively mediated by the local everyday demands of work and life. Like it or not, uses of literacy and numeracy cannot be generalised across cultures, nor taught as isolated technical skills (even though they can be taught as distinctive routines or procedures). Meanings depend upon the social context in which they are embedded.”

Sue Shore, University of South Australia, Jean Searle, Griffith University Literacy and lifeskills in Australia: implications for policy activism, 2010 Paper to AVETRA Conference

Why Non- formal Learning Matters



Literate people take part in large amounts of non-formal learning usually through the workplace.

“For both prose and document literacy, 58% of people who had participated in learning in the 12 months prior to the survey achieved scores at Level 3 or above. In comparison, for people who had not participated in any form of learning in the 12 months prior to the survey, 19% and 18% achieved scores at Level 3 or above for prose and document literacy respectively.” ABS Adult Literacy and Lifeskills Survey, 2006

Adults will not “enter” the workforce once. They will enter, leave and re-enter many times. ¹

University of Sydney. Workplace Research Centre

**1 (a). Analysis: Understanding flows of learning and labour,
Example: unemployment in the last recession**

<u>Static account (%)</u>	<u>Dynamic account (%)</u>
Unemployment rate 9	Looking for work during the year 23
Incidence of long term unemployment 33	Job search periods lasting more than a year 46
Casualisation rate 25	Working in jobs that were not permanent 39

Source: Static from ABS Labour Force Surveys (except for marginally attached which comes from unpublished ABS Survey of Training and Education 1993). Dynamic from ABS (1997c) *Australian's Employment and Unemployment Patterns 1994-1996*, Cat. no. 6286.0, p. 4.. .”



Even though we are living longer, we are not working longer. In fact, men in particular, are retiring earlier than ever before.

“From 1973 - 1993, the proportion of men aged 55 to 59 who were not in the full-time labour force rose from 14% to 36%. For men aged 60 - 64 the rise is from 28% to 61%. So, for a variety of reasons, the majority of men retire well before age 65”

Wesley Mission, Face of Ageing Report,
<http://www.wesleymission.org.au/publications/ageing/impact.htm>

The Way Forward

- Enable partnerships between practitioners from different traditions
- Recognise the interrelationship between non-formal, informal and formal learning
- Advocate for a whole of government “lifelong learning policy”.
- Fight for the role of ACE providers to be fairly funded to support Lifelong and Lifewide Learning for entire communities.

Learning that allows adults:

- to build families and communities,
- to move in and out of employment, unemployment, underemployment and active retirement,
- to maintain health and wellbeing,
- to be active participants in a vibrant democracy,

is not Basket Weaving!

