Ripples

Australian Learning Communities Network Inc

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Helping local schools turn green

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Shining a light on Interpersonal skills in technical occupations

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The world's most improbable Libraries

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Who should go to a University?

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Why Local Government Matters?

The research aims to better understand how and why the activities of local governments and their roles in society are valued by communities.

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Poverty in entrenched Communities

Dropping off the Edge 2015, produced by Jesuit Social Services and Catholic Social Services Australia, shows that although social support structures work for many people and communities, there are a small but significant number of communities that we are failing.

Read more

Australia's Digital Pulse

Digital technologies is one of the fastest growing parts of Australia's economy with its economic contribution growing from $50 billion in 2011 to $79 billion in 2013-14.

Read more

Feedback and share your news

Our network is quite diverse: from Universities to Neighbour houses. Let us know if the material is appropriate. We would love to hear news of activities, developments, new approaches etc. All in the Network will benefit. This can often be achieved by a simple cut and paste.
Forward to alcn@tpg.com.au

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Membership Changes

The following members have moved on and we thank them for their generous contribution over the years.

Maureen Breckell (Lithgow); Michele Burton (Willoughby); Mairead O'Sullivan (Brimbank)

In Memorial
We pay tribute to Adrian Marron CEO (Canberra CIT) who lost his life after a long struggle with cancer and for his longstanding support

We welcome our newer members
Terry O'Keefe (Lithgow); Angela Casey(Willoughby); Nina Photakis (Brimbank)

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Building age and culture friendly learning communities and cities for inclusion

Report on the learning forum held in Townsville, Queensland in May 2015

Posted June 22, 2015 - 07:27

In May 2015, the library hosted a Learning Forum in Townsville. About 40 government, business and community sector participants attended the forum. The theme of the forum was social inclusion and participants reflected on the topic

Building age and culture friendly learning communities and cities for inclusion.

The program moved from the global perspective with a keynote presentation by Peter Kearns OAM, known nationally and internationally for his thought-provoking research and writing on lifelong learning and learning communities, to the local with a presentation by Executive Manager Library Services, Susan Coker on the challenges faced by public libraries in becoming inclusive spaces that address social exclusion.

After morning tea, forum participants had the opportunity to hear from panellists from the State Library of Queensland, local government and local community organisations on the how each addresses the issue of social exclusion in their field of service delivery. This was an insightful session which demonstrated the need to be agile and responsive to changes that occur in our community as rapid urbanisation and changing society fosters social exclusion. Following lunch participants workshopped the challenges of building resilient citizens in a time of high unemployment.

Keynote presentations – From the global to the local.

Peter Kearns OAM *Learning Cities Global and Local*

Peter Kearns provided an overview of the work of PASCAL (Place and Social Capital and Learning) a global alliance of lifelong learning practitioners who are working to extend the development of learning communities. PASCAL helps decision makers design and implement regional development strategies that balance economic growth, social equity and environmental sustainability. He spoke about the First International Conference on learning cities held in Beijing in October 2013 where discussions focused on the stages of development necessary to turn cities into learning cities and communities that nurture active citizenship, promote economic and cultural prosperity and lay the foundation for sustainable development. Some implications of international developments for the Townsville learning community were outlined including a current initiative in Taipei and Cork to localise learning city development to widen opportunities for all and enhance quality of life and well-being.

Peter identified the impact of rapid urbanisation as one of the challenges faced by local communities and provided examples of how this has been done in Australia and overseas by empowering and energising the community. For example, Hume Global Learning Village and Sydney's urban villages, the New York model. He outlined the place of libraries as hubs for negotiating partnerships with local organisations and responding to community learning and addressing disadvantage and exclusion at a neighbourhood level.

Susan Coker *Public Libraries: Gateways to an inclusive community or an exclusive club for members*

Susan Coker began her presentation by with reference to Professor Gillian Triggs, President of the Australian Human Rights Commission definition of social inclusion and its corresponding impact of social exclusion. Susan provided a statistical overview of CityLibraries Townsville. She noted that library membership tended to be located within the catchment of the static branches and that an overlay of the 2011 Australian Bureau of Statistics census data suggested that CityLibraries has a largely middle class membership with lots of families. There was an under-representation in the more remote areas, lower

socio-economic areas and where older residents lived. Thus that while the library considered itself socially inclusive its membership was low in those demographics who were disadvantaged and excluded. Susan provided information on the library's strategic direction which envisioned the library as a place where people could make connections for life; where the library was working with our community to connect people, information, learning and lifestyle. She then outlined some of the challenges for public libraries. These were:

- Community perception of public libraries – antiquated, quiet spaces?
- How to market public libraries to the community and others?
- How to build connections with the community?
- How to build sustainable partnerships that are mutually beneficial?
- What public libraries do dependent on funding?

Panel Discussion

The panel discussion that formed part of the day's activities was centred on the theme of *Building age and culture friendly learning communities and cities for inclusion.* Panellists included Colin Crosbie, Manager, Social Inclusion, State Library of Queensland; Meg Davis Program Manager, Townsville Multicultural Support Group; Kim Corrie, Director, Corporate Services, Townsville City Council; Fiona Sanders, Community Development Worker, Inclusion Works and Penelope Sullivan community member of the Learning Communities Leadership Group.

Each panellist talked about how social inclusion could be achieved in their sector. Colin Crosbie gave an overview of how State Library works with public libraries in the state to provide access to programs and services. He talked about the Indigenous Knowledge Centres, support for rural libraries and how they work with the independent libraries to identify and address barriers to access including print and digital literacy issues, cultural, language and social barriers and geographic and technological barriers.

Meg Davis provided insight into refugee resettlement in Townsville. She provided statistics that showed the increase in the numbers of refugees resettled in Townsville in recent years and the inspiration and greater understanding we can develop from the personal stories of refugees. Meg mentioned some of the practical responses that the community had taken to foster social inclusion for migrants and refugees. These programs included those that the library had developed, for high school students from migrant and refugee backgrounds, multicultural storytime for pre-schoolers and English classes for adults.

Kim Corrie talked about Townsville City Council's Human Resources Strategy and strategic workforce planning that ensures council's workforce has the skills and capability to meet the needs of the community and is aligned to community demographics. Of particular interest was council's Diversity and Equity Strategy developed to build council's relationship with the community, enhance the contribution of its employees and improve the quality of its services. Kim stressed that council was committed to embedding the principles of diversity in the culture and management systems of the organisation and had established programs to make it meaningful. Council was building a constructive, supportive culture where everyone is included and the contributions of people of difference backgrounds, experiences and perspectives were valued. For example, council's Reconciliation Strategy demonstrates council's commitment to providing a supportive and culturally inclusive work environment for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees, where all staff demonstrate cultural awareness and competencies and where racism and discriminatory behaviour is eliminated. Kim mentioned that these principles had been incorporated into council's recruitment processes by enhancing our ability to employ Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people through innovative attraction and recruitment processes and building individual capacity through mentoring, training and career development. Through adopting these standards council can retain employees who can able to contribute and enhance service delivery.

Fiona Sanders provided an on-the-ground perspective of someone working with people with disabilities and how Inclusion Works used asset-based community development to foster inclusion for people with disabilities. She mentioned the range of disabilities they worked with in particular she highlighted the increase in clients who had mental health disabilities including depression and post-traumatic stress disorder. They were receiving an increased number of youth referrals from schools as youth perceived no future for themselves due to lack of funding or further education opportunities. Their program was based on planning, connecting and exiting; they worked with the schools and young people to identify the gifts, passions and talents of young people, then find opportunities for the young people to gain work experience. The program was achieving some success. Their work had foundations in building strong partnerships with other community based organisations and their programs were aimed at getting people out of their homes to make connects with others. Fiona recognized that there were places in local Townsville neighbourhoods where people were connecting with each other including the Warrina Shopping Centre where people from all walks of life, different cultural and ability backgrounds were employed and engaging with each other.

Penelope Sullivan talked from personal experience how she had developed her passion for lifelong learning. She highlighted the role of public libraries as community hubs and her appreciation of diversity and the life experiences that engagement with diversity provided.   She outlined how ongoing lifelong learning had provided opportunities for her in her professional life. Penelope talked about some of the challenges for making lifelong

learning accessible to everyone. This included how to keep pace with rapidly changing technology and that now we have five generations in our workforce. She considers that communication is the key to engaging those who are excluded in lifelong learning and also the provision of tools and resources to support self-directed learning. Penelope considers that a way to engage people in learning is through learning neighbourhoods, that is, building community capacity to learn in their local neighbourhoods.

Questions from the audience emphasised the role of residents in fostering social inclusion, in particular how local neighbourhoods could encourage social inclusion. It was observed that society had moved from the community to the individualistic – people used to connect with their neighbours in their front yards, young people used to play in the street but now we have high fences and a lot of activities are undertaken inside or at the back of the house. One of the challenges was how to revive community.

Peter Kearns summed up discussions by suggesting the establishment of learning neighbourhoods would foster a more community oriented neighbourhood and learning can be progressed. He stressed the need to think establishing sustainable partnership to work together and address the barriers that block their establishment.

Workshop – How do we build a learning city that includes the long-term unemployed as active participants in the community?

After lunch participants moved into groups to discuss the challenging issue of unemployment in the Townsville region with the question: *How do we build a learning city that includes the long-term unemployed as active participants in the community?* Recurring themes were evident in the discussion that evolved. These included

- **Systems and processes.** Understanding the Townsville context and the systems and processes currently in place locally, state and federal
- **Attitude.** Consider the individual. What are their barriers to employment? What are their strengths? How can we build those? The glass half full approach.
- **Pathways** to employment through mentoring, volunteering, role models. But not just a pathway to employment but also to community cohesion.
- **Connections.** Building community collaborations with a common outcome, connecting with peer groups
- **Enterprise.** Consider innovative pathways to employment and responsible citizenship, create own job, build social enterprise
- **Health and wellbeing** build community resilience to cope with unemployment through support, information and understanding.

The workshop has provided ideas that will be used to develop a comprehensive program for the unemployed that will be held in Townsville later in 2015 and will also inform Townsville's paper at the PASCAL International Conference to be held at the University of Glasgow on 3-5 June 2016.

Conclusion

From feedback and conversations with participants, the Learning Forum and workshop in Townsville was successful. While delegates differed on which session they found the most useful, all participants appeared to gain something from the day. Many offered suggestions for future topics. The day was stimulating and there was great discussion commenced that could lead on to the next rolling social inclusion workshop.

Dr Judith Jensen
Coordinator, Lifelong Learning
City Libraries, Townsville
Townsville City Council

Building social cohesion in our communities: an online resource for local government

Australian Human Rights Commission
24 June 2015
Source:
Australian Centre of Excellence for Local Government
Owning Institution:
University of Technology, Sydney

This new online resource from the Australian Centre of Excellence for Local Government (ACELG) at the University of Technology Sydney (UTS) provides local government with a practical approach to develop strong, socially cohesive communities.

Developed for the Australian Human Rights Commission under the National Anti-Racism Strategy, **Building Social Cohesion in our Communities** will help local governments to build social cohesion by taking effective local level actions aligned with long-term strategic directions, to prevent and respond to conflict which may arise between communities.

The online resource is highly interactive and is structured around five elements of building social cohesion, based on international and Australian best practice. It features case studies from local government, tips and templates for implementing good practice at the local level and links to further resources.

"This is the first sector-specific resource to focus on social cohesion, supported by a strong evidence-base of current, validated research and local government case studies. The Centre has greatly valued the opportunity to contribute to the social cohesion of local communities and the aims of the Australian Human Rights Commission," said Centre Director, Associate Professor Roberta Ryan.

"The resource is easy to navigate, with good case studies and the jigsaw pieces as a tool kit are easy to use and make common sense. I think it brings a clearer message and understanding about what is social cohesion and how to bring about change and lead your community," said Steve Crawcour, Chief Executive Officer, Strathbogie Shire Council, Victoria.

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Unlocking the potential of urban communities: Case studies of twelve learning cities

25 June 2015

The forthcoming publication showcases examples of cities from all over the world which use the learning city approach to enhance citizens' individual empowerment, social cohesion, economic development, cultural prosperity and sustainable development.

Melton (Australia), Sorocaba (Brazil), Beijing (China), Bahir Dar (Ethiopia), Espoo (Finland), Cork (Ireland), Amman (Jordan), Mexico City (Mexico), Ybycuí (Paraguay), Balanga (Philippines), Namyangju (Republic of Korea) and Swansea (United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland)

Having solicited input from twelve learning cities, the Coordination Team of the UNESCO Global Network of Learning Cities (GNLC) at the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning (UIL) has compiled twelve case studies which are about to be published with generous support from the National Institute for Lifelong Education of the Republic of Korea (NILE). The publication will be launched and presented at the 2nd International Conference on Learning Cities (ICLC) in Mexico City in September 2015. It showcases

examples of cities from all over the world which use the learning city approach to enhance citizens' individual empowerment, social cohesion, economic development, cultural prosperity and sustainable development.

The case studies feature good practice from and lessons learned in the following learning cities: Melton (Australia), Sorocaba (Brazil), Beijing (China), Bahir Dar (Ethiopia), Espoo (Finland), Cork (Ireland), Amman (Jordan), Mexico City (Mexico), Ybycuí (Paraguay), Balanga (Philippines), Namyangju (Republic of Korea) and Swansea (United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland). They also reflect on specific challenges tackled in the process of building a learning city. The purpose of this publication is to provide tried and tested guidance on how to promote, implement and monitor the learning city concept.

While motivations for and approaches to building a learning city may differ based on individual cities' significantly different contexts, they do also share a few common factors. Most cities recognise education and community as interacting elements of city growth. All cities have strong and visionary aspirations for both their cities and their citizens, and all cities are creative and pioneering in their desire to respond to a changing world with new ideas. All learning cities have the vision to enhance lifelong learning for all for their city's future.

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Collective Impact

Mathew O'Hagan, a teacher at Roxburgh Park Primary School, recently finished a research project on collective impact for a Masters in Educational Management. IED found out all about it from the 2013 Teachers' Scholarship winner.

Can you tell us about your project on collective impact?
Collective impact is when a community identifies a point of need and aligns its resources around that need.
In my case I'm interested in education and in particular educational achievement, so what I was looking at was how two different communities, one in the US and one in New Zealand, have identified educational achievement as an area they wanted to improve. They have used a collective impact approach to achieving that. What that would look like is when all sectors of a society – including education, business, politics, volunteering − work together around a common purpose or goal.

How do you think collective impact can benefit Hume?
We need as a community to have a discussion about educational achievement within Hume. If education is really the key to moving Hume forward, then we need to be serious about what that might look like. I think collective impact might play a part, firstly by initiating conversations about what is important within education and how can we unite to ensure that our students receive the best education within this city. I don't think that's possible unless we all work together.

You were a Teachers' Scholarship winner in 2013. How has that helped your professional development?
Without winning, I wouldn't have been able to embark on this project the way I did. While I was in the US, I got to meet people from various organisations. On top of that I got to go to Canada to a collective impact summit, and I got to meet and learn from people from all over the world, including some of the most significant voices in collective impact. So in terms of how much I grew from that experience, it was incredible. There is no way I would have been able to go without the scholarship. It could be a transformative moment for me.

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Helping Homelessness

How pop up stores, origami shelters and bus stop bedrooms are helping tackle homelessness.

17 June 2015
Source: **Junkee**

Australian cities are not alone in playing uneasy host to people sleeping rough or experiencing other kinds of homelessness. Indeed, it would be rare to find a city where there are not people sleeping out without a permanent home, somewhere.

Which is why three groups of just-do-it types in Cape Town, Los Angeles and Melbourne have created some high-profile, street-level responses to the clothing, shelter and empowerment needs of the homeless, using the well-established language and signifiers of 'pop-up' retail and exhibition spaces.

These 'meanwhile' spaces which have previously been occupied by the 'flat white economy', characterised by small, niche bars and smaller, nicher cafes are now being put at the service of those experiencing 'primary homelessness', who might otherwise find themselves asked to move on.

Adult Learning Australia (ALA) Intergenerational Learning and Literacy Round Table

Recent Forum Update -Friday 1 May 2015 at University of Technology Sydney Building 10, Level 5, Room 5.580 235 Jones Street, Sydney

Debbie Best, Service Manager, Parramatta Library (Sydney) and **Michele Burton**, Library & Community Learning Services Manager Willoughby City (Sydney) represented the ALCN (Australian Learning Communities Network) at this stimulating forum held on the first Friday in May in Sydney.

A group of approx. 60 people from various sectors including advocates, researchers, educators, government, libraries and non-profit organizations attended to hear 4 guest speakers and to share ideas and experiences and engage in a small group discussion on the important issue of intergenerational learning and literacy.

Each speaker highlighted a different aspect from an international, indigenous Australian, workplace and Young people viewpoint.

. The program started with a welcome from the ALA President, **Cath Dunn** and was followed by speakers:-

- **Professor Alan Tuckett President**, International Council for Adult Education (ICAE)
  Professor Alan Tucket, President of the International Council was on loan from RMIT in Melbourne where he is a visiting fellow at the European Union Centre and he was able to give an international view.
  Alan Tuckett stated that parental support is critical for children's learning. Overall parents and grandparents experiences of learning have a profound impact on children's success in learning. Also it is not just parents & children, consider impact for aging population and the relationship of refugee to parent.
  Internationally – there has been some interesting work on intergenerational learning being conducted in Mexico around museums.
  Turkey has a longitudinal study with positive results over a 20 year period and has been able to see gains. In the UK "*Story Book Dads*" have been successful.
  http://www.storybookdads.org.uk/program
  International research points to enjoyment and fun is essential for family learning. In addition, public spaces such as libraries provide literacy & language support to individuals.
  One of the problems in the area of Adult learning are the silos existing in that funding is often in one sector. Tuckett stated the challenge for government is to spend money on initiatives with benefit seen elsewhere down the track.

- **Jack Beetson** Executive Director, Literacy for Life Foundation. Adjunct Professor, University of New England

Professor Jack Beetson followed Alan with a discussion of the Wilcannia "Yes I can" Literacy program that he helped initiate.

The *"Yes I Can Campaign"* (Literacy Campaign) which originated in Cuba in 1961 and has been having great results in Australia. The Wilcannia program is based on citizen teaching citizen.
 http://www.lowitja.org.au/aboriginal-adult-literacy-campaign-australia-using-yes-i-can

For Indigenous Australians closing the gap is improving quality of life by addressing literacy levels or nothing will change. Generally there is a 'shame' factor about attending literacy classes which needs to be addressed and the key is to value learning, be involved in learning and to witness learning. Local people who can read can teach others in the community and this makes it sustainable. A program that leaves a community with skills is a good strategy he stated. An important point he made is that a person cannot become a more active citizen and community member by not being able to read.

- **The Hon Sharon Bird**, MP Shadow Minister for Vocational Education
Opportunities in the workplaces to address language and literacy by programs such as:
1. National Workforce Development Fund http://workforceplanningtools.com.au/ and
2. Workplace Language & Literacy Fund
http://www.industry.gov.au/skills/ProgrammesandAssistance/ClosedProgrammes/WorkplaceEnglishLanguageAndLiteracy/TrainingProjects/Documents/WELLTrainingGuidelines.pdf
Literacy in all forms (digital, financial, numerical & literature skills) is important for workplace and community participation.

- **Senator Lee Rhiannon**, Greens Spokesperson for Higher Education
The Senator addressed the forum sharing her own experiences of working with adults with low literacy as well as discussing the challenges for progressive politicians and advocates in furthering holistic approaches.
She spoke about the Young people out of work in huge numbers across Australia and especially in Indigenous areas where unemployment figures are high.

She also quoted 1 in 5 15-19 yr. olds were currently unemployed. This age group often is without support such as a school or an educational institution to guide and support. In addition, in the area of digital literacy some are being left behind and the divide is deeper. Other comments included that libraries were picking up slack as people squeezed out of TAFE and that libraries are often a haven for people scared of formal education.

Lifelong learning must be key feature of public policy.The session including questions and discussions from the diverse and highly experienced audience of delegates was a terrific insight into the challenges facing intergenerational learning, literacy and adult education. And of course, in conclusion, the informal learning from discussion, catch up and networking was a most valuable time.

Michele Burton Library & Community Learning Services Manager

Willoughby City May 2015

Live Green Teacher's Network

Helping local schools turn green

Hume City Council offers a range of programs to assist local schools and early childhood centres to engage students around sustainability and to create more sustainable learning environments.

Teachers Environment Network

If you are a teacher in Hume City and interested in the environment, join our Teachers' Environment Network. The network offers:

- Free professional development each term, providing teachers with new approaches to engage students on a range of sustainability topics
- A quarterly newsletter for teachers that includes case studies, information on grants, educational resources and professional development.
- A way to connect with other teachers and learn about local schools' environmental initiatives.

Financial support to assist schools to participate in ResourceSmart Schools.

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Shining a light on occupational inter-relationships

Ann Villiers
9 June 2015
Source:
Mental Nutrition

Download file

In this independent research paper four Canberra-based projects were examined to explore the significance of interpersonal skills in technical occupations. The importance of interpersonal skills and demands for teamwork, cooperation and collaboration during projects was confirmed. The implications of skill terminology, career practitioner advice, occupational information, and gendered career choices are explored. The research points to the need to shift thinking about skill distinctions to give greater recognition to interpersonal skills in technical occupations.

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The world's most improbable libraries

Thursday 21 May 2015 4:51PM**Alex McClintock**

Image: A library on Sydney's Bondi Beach created from simple flat pack bookshelves (Supplied)

English journalist Alex Johnson is the son of two librarians. Perhaps it's not surprising, then, that his latest book is a tribute to some of the world's most astonishing and unlikely libraries from converted telephone boxes to camel-borne book depositories.

If the traditional book is dying, nobody has bothered to tell the libraries of the world. From donkey-drawn libraries in Zimbabwe to subway libraries in Chile, communities are finding ever more inventive ways to lend and read books for free.

Miniature lending libraries will bring reading material to the masses at a level that far exceeds their size.

English journalist Alex Johnson has chronicled these improbable libraries in a book of the same name.

'I think a lot of the places covered in my book are very much based in the community,' he told *Late Night Live*. 'So while there are various economic and political ramblings over how general municipal libraries operate, these are often the work of one or two people

who are very keen to ensure that there are areas and places where people who are very keen to read still can.'

Image: A library on a bike in Tucson, Arizona. (Supplied)

Take Chile's network of subway libraries, first introduced in 1996. A commuter can pick up a book in one Santiago station and drop it off at another—it's effectively the South American nation's biggest public library.

A similarly mobile library system started in the Brazilian city of Sao Paulo, though it's based on taxis rather than trains. Books hang in sleeves on the back of the driver's seat and riders can sign them out using a note book before returning them to any other taxi in the scheme. The bookstore chain Saraiva has donated 80,000 books, and 50,000 taxis now participate in cities across Latin America.

That's nothing compared to the Mongolian solution, though. The Mongolian Children's Mobile Library carries books over vast distances to nomadic herding communities in

remote areas of the Gobi desert. The project also advises parents on how to encourage a love of reading in children. Tiny libraries, meanwhile, have grown in popularity in Europe and America; Johnson's book features converted phone booths, purpose-built kiosks, experimental art installations, and even one refrigerator. The idea is that these miniature lending libraries will bring reading material to the masses at a level that far exceeds their size

'Librarians have a long history of overcoming geographic, economic and political challenges to bring the written word to an eager audience,' writes Johnson.

'They continue to live up to that reputation, despite the rapid and sweeping changes in how we read and share books in the 21st century. The simple truth is that, like Roald Dahl's character Matilda, people like going to libraries.'
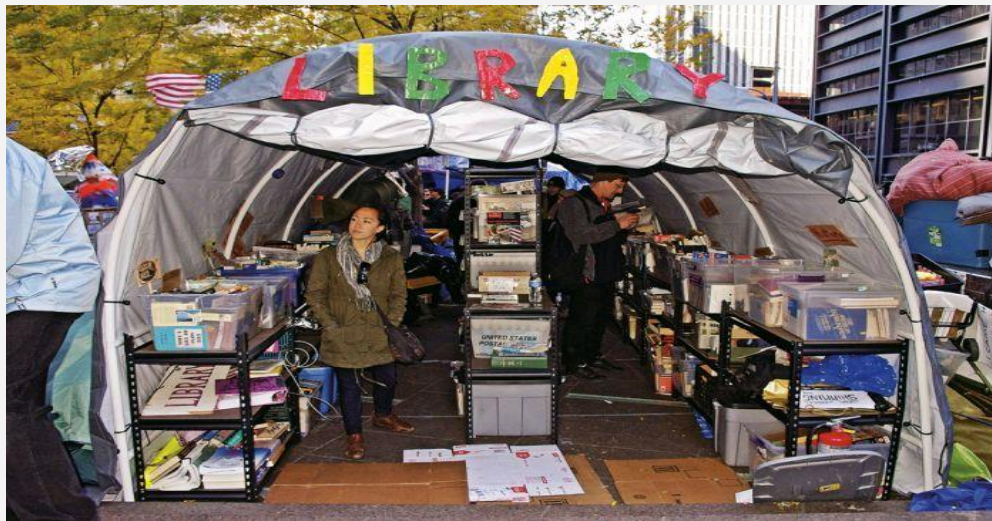

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Image: A spontaneous library at the Occupy Wall Street protest in New York City. (Photo David Shankbone/ Supplied)
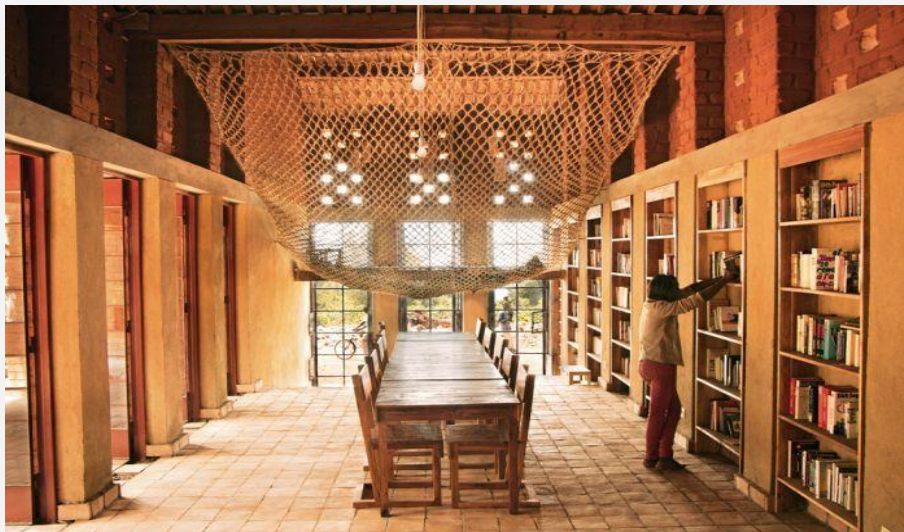

Image: The library in Muyinga, Burundi is part of a planned inclusive school for deaf children and made from locally sourced compressed earth blocks. (Carchitects and studies/ Supplied)

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Towards a super connected Australia

GenNBN: understanding Australia's most connected generation

Bernard Salt 26 April 2015
Source: **NBN Co**

There is one feature that has galvanised Australians across every generation since WWII and possibly longer and that is the irrepressible pursuit of lifestyle.

To most Australians the idea of lifestyle involves having the personal and economic freedom to live comfortably and to pursue interests, family/relationships and work. In the post-war era the Australian lifestyle was embodied in the suburban home and the traditional nuclear family; today the idea of lifestyle is more sophisticated, more international perhaps, but at its core it still involves having personal and economic freedoms.

From the time of the three-bedroom brick veneer and the barbeque area of the 1950s and the 1960s through to the sea-change shift of the late 1990s, and into the new century with the rise of the inner-city hipster, it's always been about and probably always will be about, lifestyle. That's what Australia is famous for and when you look at the way we Aussies live, the reason for our lifestyle fixation is really quite simple. Australia is a resource rich continent that naturally affords its inhabitants a good quality of life and a high standard of living.

If my central proposition is correct, Australians are now, and in the past have been, fixated with lifestyle then this trend will continue to be at the core of our values. New technologies in communication, new housing styles, new forms of transportation, the arrival of new cultural influences, even changes to the way we work, have all been leveraged in one way or another by the Australian people to enhance their quality of life and their lifestyle.

This report looks at the themes and the technologies that have been central to the making of the modern Australia lifestyle, from the time of Federation right through to today and beyond. It also investigates how the introduction of fast broadband could be the catalyst for a new generation, Australia's most connected generation, 'GenNBN'.

Who should go to University?

IRU Executive Director, Conor King confronts the issue of 'who goes to university?' showing the split between supporters of open opportunity and the protectionists who wish to exclude people from higher education. These positions drive responses to the higher education funding trilemma.

IRU Executive Director Comment 01/2015

Who should go to university, only the select or all who want to? It is the question that ran through the 2015 Universities Australia Conference (10-11 March 2015). It is lurking behind the contentious funding and fees debate that has wracked higher education for the past year. It is the issue that determines how well higher education supports Australia's future.

Gary Banks, former Productivity Commissioner, best illustrated the question. He revealed the ambivalence between the economist in him and the romantic academic. The economist argues human capital theory – the importance of each individual developing their education and skills to the optimum to apply in future work and life. The academic worries about the flood of people on campus, too many of whom do not meet the test of bright minds in pursuit of knowledge.

Professor Banks went further to target one key to the problem – the education achievement of school leavers. If school leavers have the knowledge and skills expected from study through to year 12 then the arguments for open access to university make sense. If they do not, then the instinctive desire of higher education protectionists has a stronger foundation. They can cloak their exclusionary preference in the garb of applicants' insufficient education development. The same challenge applies to the large number of non-school leaver applicants.

Senator Carr has rarely hidden his support for the protectionist argument. Labor is now at the point of walking away from one of the few unchallenged policies of the Rudd-Gillard Government and from the essence of the Hawke Government achievement in doubling school retention and expanding universities. It is the Gillard changes that have seen sustained growth in the number of science and technology students, and slowed growth in law students, despite his contrary assertion. Student demand is more attuned to employment potential and apparent future demand than the previous allocation system. Read the full comment here (2 pages).

For comment contact IRU Executive Director, Conor King M: 0434 601 691

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Why local government matters: full report 2015

Roberta Ryan, **Catherine Hastings**, **Ron Woods**, **Alex Lawrie**, **Bligh Grant** 17 June 2015
Source: **Australian Centre of Excellence for Local Government**
Owning Institution: **University of Technology, Sydney**

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The research aims to better understand how and why the activities of local governments and their roles in society are valued by communities.

Executive summary

The research investigates:
1. local government's role as a 'place shaper' and its importance in meeting the needs of citizens that drive their attachment to, and satisfaction with, the areas in which they live

2. the preferences of communities for how their services are delivered at the local level and the ability of local governments to offer flexible and community specific service delivery

3. theories of governance, particularly community beliefs about big versus small government and its role in the market, the appropriate role for the private sector in local service provision, the preferred extent of public participation in government decision making, and preferences for the realisation of public value

4. Community knowledge of local government, ranked importance of services which can be delivered by local government in different jurisdictions, and attitudes about amalgamation
5. the attributes of individuals which are theorised to interact with or influence their attitudes and beliefs about each of the areas above, including demographic factors, levels of community participation, person values and political leanings.

This report presents the main findings of the 2014 survey.

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Disadvantaged is entrenched and structural in poorest communities

Tuesday July 21, 2015

The Australian Council of Social Service today urged Australian governments to develop an effective jobs plan as part of a strategy to reduce poverty and inequality, following the release of a new report revealing disadvantage remains entrenched in a number of communities across Australia.

Dropping off the Edge 2015, produced by Jesuit Social Services and Catholic Social Services Australia, shows that although social support structures work for many people and communities, there are a small but significant number of communities that we are failing.

"These findings build on the picture that ACOSS has been documenting in our series of reports into poverty and inequality – a picture that is becoming bleaker and that demands a new approach," said ACOSS CEO Dr Cassandra Goldie.

"The evidence is mounting, across a range of independent sources that current policies are simply not working for communities experiencing structural disadvantage. These communities are dealing with multiple, complex barriers to individual wellbeing and community participation.

"A recurring feature is high unemployment which was found to be a significant issue in 23 out of 37 most disadvantaged communities around the country. Particularly concerning is the high level of youth disengagement in work or study, as well as low education and training levels.

"We must find ways to address growing long term unemployment which keeps people excluded. This requires a jobs strategy which assists people who are unemployed long-term and have significant barriers to getting paid work. It also requires improving services and transport in disadvantaged communities to link these communities to jobs.

"With one job available for every five people looking for paid work, the biggest cause of long term unemployment is lack of job opportunities.

"The report found these are communities battling unemployment, disabilities, lack of formal qualifications, low levels of education generally, low family incomes, domestic violence and mental health problems.

"It is unacceptable that after such a long period of unprecedented economic growth in our history, some groups and communities have been allowed to fall behind.

"This was highlighted in our recent report, *'Inequality in Australia: A nation divided'*, which showed a worrying long-term trend in terms of both income and wealth inequality.

"We found that over the last 20 years the share of income going to those at the top has risen, while the share flowing to those in the middle and at the bottom has declined. The same is true for wealth, with the bottom and middle losing ground to those at the top. The wealth of the top 20% wealth group increased by 28% over the period from 2004 to 2012, while the wealth of the bottom increased by just 3%.

"We must take steps to avoid the splintering of our social fabric and entrenching social, economic and spatial divisions in our community. Deep-seated disadvantage and inequality should not be seen as inevitable. With effective and equitable public policies we can reverse the trend.

"We call on our leaders to work with business, the community sector and in partnership with local communities themselves, to develop and implement tailored solutions to build better futures. We must remove the current barriers preventing some people and communities from participating and sharing in our nation's wealth.

"This is the only way to ensure all citizens are included and able to realise their potential, and the only way to guarantee our collective future prosperity," Dr Goldie said.

Media Contact: Fernando de Freitas 0419 626 155

For More Information:
Dropping off the Edge 2015 is supported by an interactive website at www.dote.org.au, allowing users to view colour-coded maps of five states and search for your location.

ACOSS Report: *'Inequality in Australia: A nation divided'.*

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Australia's digital pulse: Key changes for our nation

Digital skills, jobs and education

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Digital technologies is one of the fastest growing parts of Australia's economy with its economic contribution growing from $50 billion in 2011 to $79 billion in 2013-14.

Deloitte Access Economics and the Australian Computer Society Australia's have partnered to produce *Australia's Digital Pulse* which examines how digital disruption is dramatically changing industries and occupations across the economy.

The report found there has been 5% growth in the number of ICT professionals, with an increase to 600,000 ICT workers in 2014, and demand for a further 100,000 workers over the next six years. Despite the demand, the number of graduates with ICT qualifications has declined significantly since the early 2000s.

The report shows that Australia needs a workforce that is equipped with the ICT skills necessary to fuel its digitally-driven economic growth. This creates an enormous opportunity for students considering a career in ICT.

Key findings:

- Employment in the ICT sector is expected to grow by 2.5% per year over the next six years to 2020. Compared to employment for the economy as a whole, which is forecast to grow by 1.6%
- The gender pay gap in ICT stands at 20%, significantly lower than the workforce average of 34%
- 47% of all workers who studied ICT are now in other professions, such as advertising, marketing or accounting
- 43% of workers in ICT occupations studied courses other than ICT or engineering, such as commerce and management degrees
- 52% of ICT workers are in industries outside ICT itself including professional services, public administration and financial services
- The highest growth rate in demand for ICT qualifications is forecast for postgraduates, with demand forecast to grow at 4.2% annually over the six years to 2020.

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