

Victorian Adult Literacy and Basic Education Council



Annual Report 2021-2

From the President:

20 May, 2022

First, I'd like to acknowledge the people of the Woi wurrung and Boon wurrung language groups of the eastern Kulin Nation on whose unceded lands I conduct the work of VALBEC. I respectfully acknowledge their Ancestors and Elders, past and present and acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the lands and waters where our meeting is taking place, and pay my respects to Elders past, present and emerging and extend my respect to all Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander and First Nations Peoples.

Thank you all

I'd like to acknowledge my heart-felt appreciation of VALBEC's Committee of Management; Treasurer John Radalj, and current General Committee Members, Manjit Bhamral, Liam Frost-Camilleri, Pam Mahlis, Shruti Malavde, Deborah Mullan, Denise Reynolds, Chris Tully, and recently coopted member Tanja Cuka who joined in January and immediately got to work and breathed even more fresh life into our group. I also acknowledge the valuable contributions of Linno Rhodes, Parris Frangie, Kerrie Tomkins and Di Buckley who, for various reasons, have stepped away from committee service for the time being. To them, and all former committee members, I'd like to say, 'VALBEC's door is always open'. It is inspiring to work with you all.

Committee membership is extremely satisfying. There's nothing like collaborating with creative professionals with each bringing their own special brilliance and unique perspectives to the many tasks. But there are costs as well. I would like to acknowledge the sacrifices that committee members make (and their families' tolerance of their extra work as well), as they take time away from their own personal interests to work voluntarily for VALBEC. Being the President of VALBEC has been an exciting experience. I'll be stepping down from that role this year and look forward to working with the next VALBEC Executive Team in 2022.

Which brings me to the VALBEC members. A big thank you to you all, each and every last one of you! You make VALBEC what it is, and for that we are extremely grateful. Thank you for coming to our events, thank you for your feedback, and thank you for your ideas and enthusiasm. For the VALBEC Committee, you, members, are like sunshine on a cloudy day.

2021 saw a strengthening in VALBEC's presence in the Victorian adult literacy and numeracy educators' professional development landscape. In response to the extended lockdowns and restricted networking opportunities for educators, VALBEC established a lively Facebook Group for practitioners and members of the general public interested in Language, Literacy and Numeracy (LLN) issues. The Group hosted weekly 'Live' conversations between VALBEC Committee members, researchers and leaders in the world of LLN, not only in Victoria but around Australia.

In September, SBS TV broadcast the ground-breaking series Lost for Words, a program about the challenges of literacy learning for adults. VALBEC's close connections (via the Australian Council of Adult Literacy) with participants in the SBS program, enabled us to offer discussion forums on its Facebook Group and a Professional Learning Forum 'studios' to a wide range of people interested in adult literacy and numeracy. Through VALBEC's dynamic

program of formal and informal discussions and webinars throughout the year, we have increased memberships by more than 30%.

The year culminated with a very successful conference reaching more than 200 practitioners and receiving an overall rating of 98.55% of either Very Good (39.13%) or Excellent (59.42%) responses. VALBEC Committee members are very proud of the achievement and growth of the organisation in 2021 despite living and working in situations of constant uncertainty and stress due to the global pandemic. Judging by the many positive comments received through surveys and conversations through the year, VALBEC was a valued and valuable entity for LLN practitioners in 2021.

Improved networking and communication strategies

- Sustaining a lively digital media presence across platforms crucial to VALBEC audiences in order to maintain its status as the preferred professional development provider and community of practice for Victorian adult LLN educators. This labour is performed daily by individuals of VALBEC's volunteer committee of management who engage with VALBEC constituents and the broader education field on issues important to adult LLND.
- Creating a new website to update membership payment systems and make it easier for members to keep track of their VALBEC professional learning activities and membership accounts and also enabling VALBEC save on conference and other event set-up fees. This website was launched in January 2022.
- Inviting novice and experienced practitioners to submit professional learning proposals for conference and monthly PL Forums via an online form connected to the website, thus broadening VALBEC's connection to new professional learning communities.

Conference and Professional Learning Forums

- **VALBEC2021 A Passage in Time: Changes in Learning and Teaching Practices** (Thursday and Friday 25-26 November, 2021). Key details:
 - Two key-note speakers, creativity & innovation specialists Daniel Teitelbaum and Sally Smith; 136 practitioners attended the two-day event. Recordings were made available for viewing by more than >200 registrants.
 - Pro-bono contributions from 25 LLN managers, practitioners and resource producers; John Radalj, Manjit Bhamral, Di Buckley, Liam Frost-Camilleri, Pam Mahlis, Shruti Malavde, Deborah Mullan, Denise Reynolds, Kerrie Tomkins, Chris Tully, Rakesh Saha, Tom Gaffney, Tina Berghella, Dave Tout, Kirsty Macafee, Tanja Cuka, Marie Alafaci, Jelena Petronijevic, Teresa Lidonnici-Giovine, Ruth Ryan, and resource writers; Bernard Miles, Clare Harris, Chris Malakar, Sharon Duff, and Carmel Davies.
 - VALBEC2021 was a significant contribution to the professional learning of the Victorian Adult Literacy and Basic Education workforce. VALBEC is proud to

have convened this team of talented and generous professionals and added significant value to the Adult Community and Further Education community of practice in Victoria.

- **A conversation with Jo Medlin, Adam Nobilia, Liam Frost-Camilleri and colleagues about the SBS documentary 'Lost for Words'** in which Valbec and the teachers behind 'Lost for Words' invited participants to join a free, BYO 'drinks & nibblies' discussion about documentary making and literacy learning
- **Unpacking numeracy in a pandemic** with independent VET consultant Tina Berghella who discussed how updates of COVID19 data, restrictions and risk advice is rich in mathematical information, helped participants support learners to make sense of the numeracy demands embedded in public health texts
- **Neurodiversity in Adult Learning** with presenter Linno Rhodes who talked about how dyslexia, dyscalculia, dyspraxia and dysgraphia and guided participants through manifestations of these learning differences and strategies to expand their teaching toolbox.
- **Teaching Literacy to Adults with a Mild Intellectual Disability** with Christina Evans who covered some useful activities, resources, teaching methods and strategies.
- **English language learners: what works for traumatised students, and everyone else too!** with Victoria Wilson who presented the latest research about trauma-informed English language teaching of adults and how trauma affects learning, and outline trauma-informed principles backed by both neuroscience and social psychiatry.
- **An evening with author of the highly acclaimed historical novel The Dictionary of Lost Words Pip Williams** 2020 AGM presentation, April 24th, 2021

Finally, thank you ACFE Board for your support and advocacy

We would like to acknowledge the support of the ACFE Board and the partnership with ACFE that allows VALBEC to continue to play a vital role in the Adult Literacy and Numeracy field. We are fortunate that the Victorian state government values and supports adult literacy and numeracy education with its financial commitment to ACFE. In turn the ACFE board, chaired by Maria Peters, sets the direction of its funding programs, and prioritizes professional learning for adult literacy and numeracy educators through its support for VALBEC and the Learn Local sector. The sector's achievements were revealed at the Learn Local Awards Gala Luncheon in December last year. VALBEC President and Fine Print Editor were privileged to attend the event.

The VALBEC Committee for the 2021 year was appointed at the AGM in April 2021.

2021 Committee

President – Elizabeth Gunn

Treasurer – John Radalj

Public Officer – Pariss Frangie (resigned)

General members (sharing the role of minutes note-takers) – Manjit Bhamral, Liam Frost-Camilleri, Pam Mahlis, Shruti Malavde, Deborah Mullan, Denise Reynolds, Chris Tully, Kerrie Tomkins (resigned), Linno Rhodes (resigned),

Co-opted member Tanja Cuka (Digital Marketing specialist)

Committee members represent VALBEC in other steering committees and advocacy groups. Members attend and contribute on behalf of VALBEC and report on current issues as well as providing expertise on matters pertaining to adult literacy and numeracy provision.

Committee members attended and contributed to:

VicTESOL Adult Learners Community of Practice – Manjit Bhamral

Reading & Writing Hotline Steering Committee – Linno Rhodes

CGEA Champions group – Chris Tully

EAL Curriculum Advisory Group – Denise Reynolds

Fine Print Editorial Committee – Elizabeth Gunn

ACAL Committee – Deborah Mullan

eVALBEC – all committee members; compiled by Pam Mahlis

Administration support provided by Leanne Wu (via Adult Learning Australia foundation Learning for Life) May 2020 – ongoing.

eVALBEC

The eVALBEC mailing list is an important channel of communication to members and non-members of VALBEC. This vital network is maintained by VALBEC administrative officer Leanne Wu and is of critical help in disseminating information about VALBEC's annual conference, professional development for adult LLND educators, up-coming conferences across a range of relevant fields, and other professional learning resources. eVALBEC updates practitioners about teaching resources and information on digital literacy developments.

More than 11 editions of e-VALBEC are written per year.

Elizabeth Gunn

President

VALBEC

VALBEC Treasurer's Report

The VALBEC Committee ensures that the financial status of VALBEC remains in a sound position. The report provides an overview of VALBEC's financial position and includes income and expenditure for the 2021 financial year. In response to Covid-19, the committee ran all professional development free for members and at a very low fee or free for non-members.

Again in 2021 the main sources of income were membership fees, the annual conference and the ACFE grant. The main expenses were the VALBEC Conference, statewide professional development, the production of the 'Fine Print' journal, and the administration and management of the association, including the compilation of the monthly newsletter, e-VALBEC. While expenditure for professional development activities and Fine Print was \$63,682, administration costs for 2021 incurred considerable expense with an additional \$63,994 (running total as at 1 December).

Please refer to the attached, audited financial statements for the detailed breakdown of expenditure.

John Radalj
Treasurer

2021 VALBEC Conference:

VALBEC2021 A Passage in Time: Changes in Learning and Teaching Practices

State-wide Professional Development Conference

Thursday and Friday 25-26 November, 2021

VALBEC was very proud of the 2021 Conference. As mentioned, 136 practitioners attended the two-day conference. Recordings were made available for viewing by more than >200 registrants.

The conference brought together pro-bono contributions amounting to a combined total of roughly 500 hours from 25 LLN managers, practitioners and resource producers; Elizabeth Gunn, John Radalj, Manjit Bhamral, Di Buckley, Liam Frost-Camilleri, Pam Mahlis, Shruti Malavde, Deborah Mullan, Denise Reynolds, Kerrie Tomkins, Chris Tully, Rakesh Saha, Tom Gaffney, Tina Berghella, Dave Tout, Kirsty Macafee, Tanja Cuka, Marie Alafaci, Jelena Petronijevic, Teresa Lidonnici-Giovine, Ruth Ryan, and resource makers; Bernard Miles, Clare Harris, Chris Malakar, Sharon Duff, and Carmel Davies.

While it's difficult to calculate the dollar value of the contribution, it was a significant contribution to the professional learning of the Victorian Adult Literacy and Basic Education workforce. VALBEC is proud to have convened this team of talented and generous professionals and added significant value to the Adult Community and Further Education community of practice in Victoria.

Two key-note speakers, creativity & innovation specialists Daniel Teitelbaum and Sally Smith, were also remunerated for their input. Conference organiser was Conference Online.

Unfortunately, this company shouldered very little of the workload which mostly fell to the conference organising committee;

Highlights of survey feedback results (n=72)

Quantitative and qualitative results backed up anecdotal accounts of positive sentiment and goodwill towards VALBEC conferences within the LLN practitioner community.

Conference promotion

86% would promote (i.e. 9/10 or 10/10 likelihood of recommending) VALBEC conferences to other educators and colleagues.

Overall rating

98.55% rate VALBEC2021 conference as Very Good (39.13%) or Excellent (59.42%)

Helpfulness of content

97.1% rated VALBEC2021 conference content as Extremely helpful (46.38%) and Very helpful (50.72%)

Likelihood of attending future VALBEC conferences

100% would be either Extremely likely (70%) or Very likely (30%) to attend future VALBEC conferences.

Location of delegates

Of the survey respondents, 65% are in Victoria and 35% outside; NSW the largest group beyond Victoria (24%). We have further data on participants' location which we can analyse in the new year.

Work contexts

86.11% participants work in TAFE (62.5%) or Learn Local (23.61%).

'Other' contexts (11.5%) included 'RTO and Facilitator'; 'Industry-based LLN support'; 'Higher Ed'; 'Resource writing'; 'Community work'

Sample of comments

"The conference had a very personal atmosphere, professional sessions, done with 'heart' and knowledge"

"Congratulations to the organisers and presenters for an excellent conference"

"A relaxed, enjoyable vibe - thank you. Enough breaks between the session and great that it was free for members. Thank you."

"Wasn't able to attend all sessions due to competing priorities. Normally in this situation, I just wouldn't be able to attend, but because it was digital I was at least able to attend some of the sessions. What I saw and experienced was great. I think Liz and the team do a great job in this space. Thank you for the opportunity"

"This was my first VALBEC conference. I am looking for hard-nosed solutions to engaging and helping VET students (predominantly electrical trades), who must be thoroughly trained to handle their jobs. I came away with a higher energy level and am inspired to finish this year's classes with dignity and effort, so thanks to the VALBEC team."

"Would love to be part of this again in 2022 via Zoom as I am remote"

"I am looking forward to accessing the other presentations via recordings. A very valuable conference and wonderful to meet more educators working with CALD learners."

"I was grateful that the conference was run via Zoom and that I could then attend both days, as it can be difficult to get time off at this time of year. Thanks VALBEC."

"Fantastic 2 day event. Keep up the good work! Really appreciate it."

"Some quizzes are designed for VIC only where some participants are from NSW :(I think we need to think more 'big picture' now - globalisation :) Overall it was an excellent seminar."

Fine Print Report 2020

Fine Print: The 2021 editorial committee had 6 members; Lini Kane, Linno Rhodes, Liane Hughes, Sarah Deasey, Di Buckley and Elizabeth Gunn. Editorial committee members work in a range of contexts including TAFE, Adult Community Education organisations and other literacy and foundation education perspectives. Deryn Mansell continues into her fifth year as editor.

As in previous years, writing for Fine Print provides an invaluable opportunity for LLN Practitioner to build professionalism, learning and reflection about the work of teaching adult learners. The journal is another important way that practitioners participate in a community of practice, supporting each other and developing confidence through the reading and writing of a range of different articles, from reviews and ideas for trying new teaching methods, to sharing ideas from around the world and engaging with global researchers and leaders in the field of adult literacy, numeracy and language education.

The three editions of 2021 covered the following topics:

3. Critique of learning styles; VET teachers' accounts of difficult teaching situations and how learning theories explain them; Language and power; Teaching literacy to adults with mild intellectual disability; Immersive Reader assistive technology; A practical guide to starting a podcast; How to limit syntactic ambiguity in plain English; Professional development delivery in the midst of a pandemic; Reviews of Pam Osmond's 'Developing social equity in Australian

adult education' and the Victorian Department of Education's Languages and Multicultural Education Resource Centre (LMERC).

2. The avoidable barrier of shame in adult learning; thinking outside the wall in prison education; Community creation in adult classrooms; The ALNPP: a fresh approach to professional development; Screen-casting for effective remote learning; Professional collaboration in social media groups; An adult literacy teacher's career; Reviews of 'What the English podcast'; Sharing Our Stories ASRC; Mind over Math, review of a now unpublished maths resource

3. Rethinking foundation skills, advice from Arch Nelson; Tasmania Literacy Service; Soft skills and mindset in plumbing apprentices; Enacted virtual tours as a language booster in Italy; Reaching Writing Hotline research; Adult Migrant English Program during COVID-19, by LWA; Adult Literacy Connect, libraries and community education working together; Reflection on teaching; Solving the digital puzzle interview with Micharel Burville; Teaching and learning in the first year of the pandemic reflection; Review: Because Internet by Gretchen McCulloch