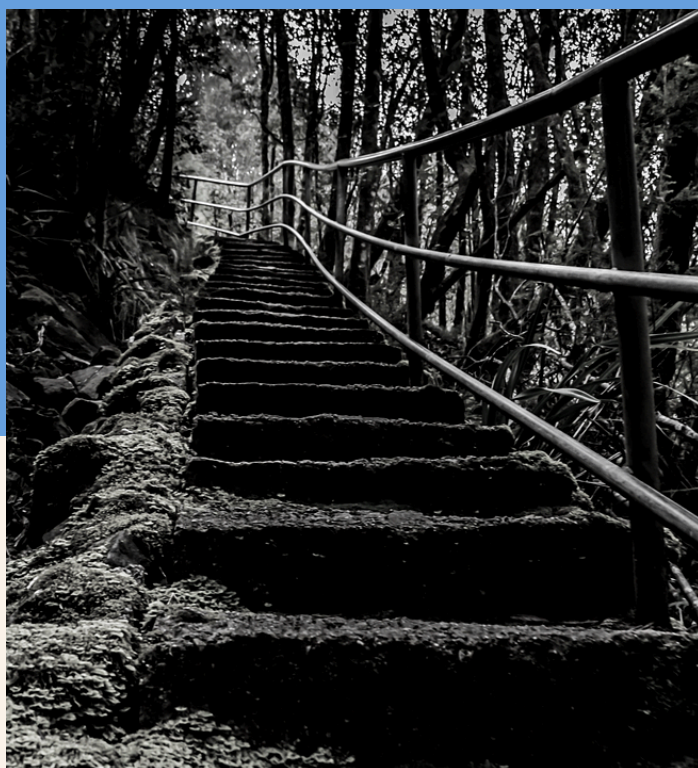


TASMANIAN COUNCIL FOR  
ADULT LITERACY



# PATHWAYS INTO PRACTICE



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# INTRODUCTION

26Ten is pleased to share the Practitioner Pathways Map developed by the Tasmanian Council for Adult Literacy (TCAL). The map identifies the qualifications available for employees and volunteers involved in delivering Language, Literacy and Numeracy (LLN) programs for adults. It provides an overview of the entry points for those seeking to join the Adult LLN workforce and the pathways for progression by practitioners.

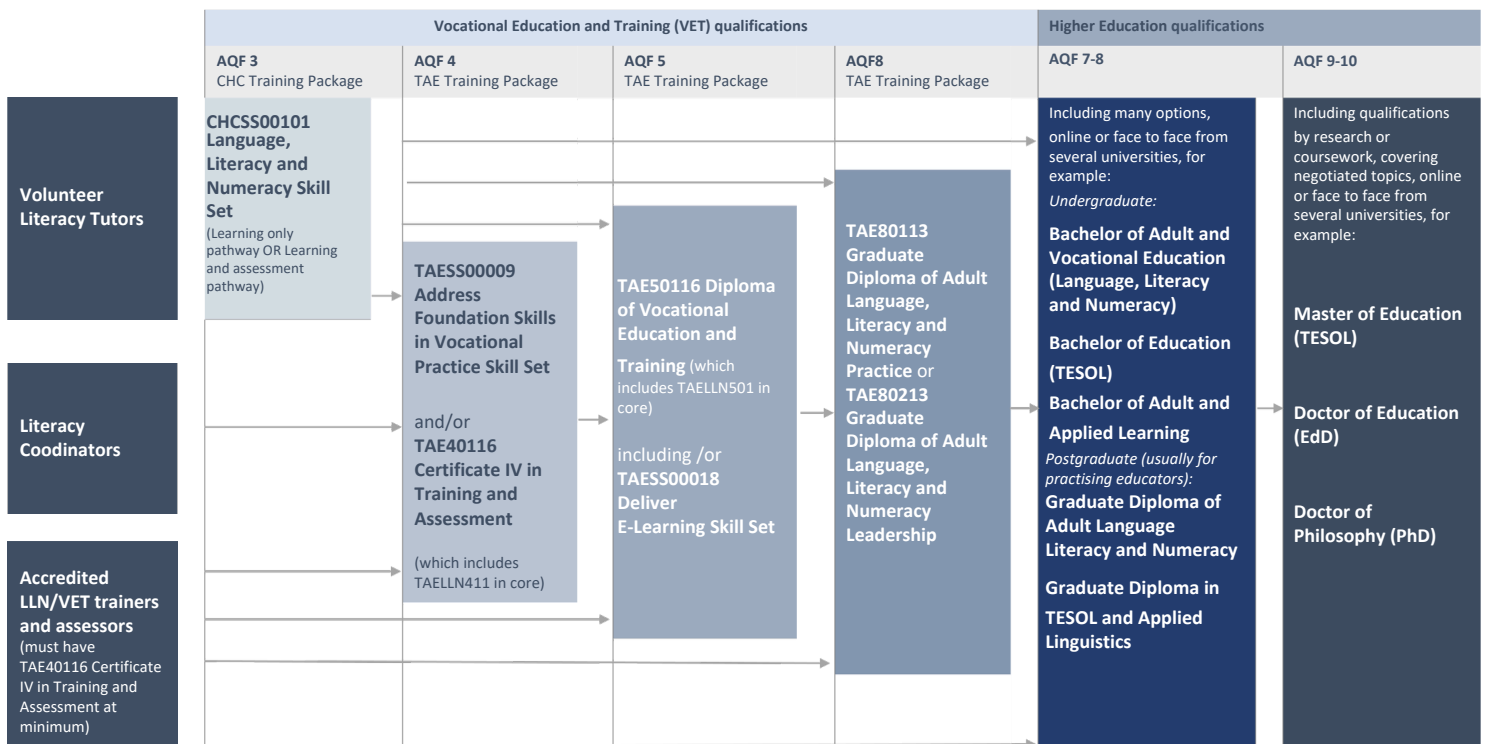
To accompany the Practitioner Pathways Map, TCAL conducted a series of interviews showcasing the work of six Tasmanian Adult LLN practitioners. Interviewees share how they came to work in the field, what experience and qualifications they have gained along the way, and a few key pieces of wisdom for others.

The series demonstrates that there is no one pathway to becoming an adult literacy practitioner. Practitioners come from diverse backgrounds, bringing varied life skills and experiences. As the series highlights, practitioners' backgrounds may include vocational education, community development, public libraries, English as an Additional Language (EAL) teaching, specialist dyslexia tutoring, secondary teaching, volunteer literacy tutoring, and workplace support.

While some practitioners may have formal adult literacy qualifications, others have undertaken extensive in house training and mentoring to equip them with the skills to become skilled practitioners. The critical attribute of an effective adult literacy practitioner is the willingness to keep abreast of the current and ever-expanding body of knowledge about how adults learn to read, and modify teaching strategies and approaches to reflect this knowledge.

Thank you to Sian Midgley for conducting the interviews and putting this booklet of interviews together.

# Practitioner Pathways Map for Adult LLN employees and volunteers



AQF = Australian Qualifications Framework, available at [www.aqf.edu.au](http://www.aqf.edu.au)

# ALLYSON EKIN

## How did you start your career in Language, Literacy and Numeracy (LLN)?

Allyson began working in libraries as a Library Technician in a part-time, contract position in the Huonville Library in 2002. She initially applied to work in the library through the casual employment pool, having previously studied a Bachelor of Arts (English Literature & Ancient Civilizations), and at the time had young children, so casual/part-time work was what she was after. To be eligible for a more permanent role, she went on to qualify as a Library Technician through TAFE. Later, Allyson did investigate librarianship, however, she decided that path was not for her, as she preferred working at the coal face with people. At that time there were seven Adult Literacy Coordinators across Tasmania already employed through the State Library for the previous two or three years. In 2005 at Huonville Library, which was then known as Huon LINC, Allyson was given an opportunity to step up from a Library Technician role into one of these Literacy Coordinator (LC) roles in an acting capacity for three months.

“Our organisation [Libraries Tasmania] has always been very good at giving people opportunities to try other roles”. To up-skill for this secondment, Allyson did “the relevant training with the support of the organisation”. In 2010, Premier David Bartlett announced the Tasmanian Adult Literacy Action Plan in response to the 2006 Program for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIACC) survey, highlighting the gaps in Tasmania’s adult literacy levels. This Action Plan funded an increased network of Coordinators across Tasmania (23 in total), who were to work with communities to increase levels of adult literacy. The 26Ten Strategy which followed in 2012 ramped up awareness and engagement by communities and businesses. Allyson was successful in gaining one of these new positions. Allyson began her first permanent coordinator position at (then) Bridgewater LINC, alongside Michael Christie. Allyson and Michael were the first Literacy Coordinators in the Bridgewater community. “We only had a little library there at that point...we had to forge community connections before the Bridgewater LINC (now Library) was even built, to establish the adult literacy service.” Allyson worked there for eight months before transferring to Kingston. She described the unique character of the role of Literacy Coordinator with its variety of responsibilities and tasks, including recruitment of volunteers and learners, as well as networking and liaising with stakeholders and other community organisations. “Initially teachers were not necessarily sought after...because the role required a comprehensive knowledge of the community...including the economic, social and literacy challenges that particular community faced.”



**LITERACY COORDINATOR**

RISDON PRISON

Allyson was well-placed to take on the Bridgewater role with good people skills and networking skills developed through her library role, and over time she increased her knowledge and ability to deliver a tailored approach to adult literacy and learning. At the time of this interview, she had been working in her current role at Risdon Prison for just over a year.

## How have you developed your professional skills and knowledge over time?

“It’s been a steep learning curve, to be honest.” Allyson detailed that she felt fortunate to be part of an organisation that has been very supportive in assisting the coordinator team to increase their knowledge and skills along the way. Initially, when this new and unique role was being explored, Hugh Fielding and Jane Forward were the two key people who “helped us develop the confidence and skills”. It was also important to try and work out how to engage the community in participation with the program. In terms of her work at this time, and as Allyson admitted, for about eight years, “It was certainly a baptism of fire for me and the other Literacy Coordinators who started in 2010...very few of whom had teaching experience.” It took several years for Allyson to gain confidence and see herself as a practitioner and as the service has grown and evolved Literacy Coordinators have become “more professional and targeted in our approach, and more selective with the resources that we use, in order to present an evidence-based program.”

Regarding qualifications and professional development, Allyson has:

- Undertaken the original equivalent of the current Tutor Adult Literacy Learners (TALL) training, and completed units from a Grad Dip in Adult Literacy and Numeracy Practice
- Attended workshops to gain a solid understanding of the Australian Core Skills Framework (ACSF) and the Big Six
- Attended online webinars through ACAL and ALA, and Smart Spelling
- Attended every PD through her organisation’s (Library Tasmania) literacy network (three times a year for the last 12 years), including presentations from Anne Bayetto, Lyn Stone and other reputable leading practitioners. These have focused on the nuts and bolts of adult literacy, including understanding the importance of phonics and phonological awareness gaps in many adults, and how to assess and explicitly teach them
- Allyson has also been on the TCAL committee and taken part in various community of practice groups to keep abreast of current thinking and what is available in the field
- She has read lots of papers on the topic of Adult Literacy and Numeracy!

During Hugh Fielding’s time with Libraries Tasmania, he organised for Coordinators to do the units of competency outlined on the Practitioner Pathways Map on page 3. “These focused on literacy and numeracy practice, designing and developing programs and facilitating adult learning and development. These were facilitated by Philippa McLean.”

**Literacy Coordinators have become “more professional and targeted in our approach, and more selective with the resources that we use, in order to present an evidence-based program”.**

## **Do you use the Australian Core Skills Framework (ACSF) in your work, and how is it important?**

Allyson uses the ACSF for initial and formative assessment and throughout a learner's time with the program. Allyson discussed how it is useful as a point of reference and to gauge and guide planning a student through their literacy journey. "It provides a very good understanding of a student's current levels and suggests tasks and skills they may work on to help them increase their levels based on their circumstances and goals. However, I will say that I used it more in my previous community role than in my current role in [the Tasmanian Prison Service]. I would also note that the ACSF is very focused on the workplace, with a broad brushstroke over community examples. It's also not very tailored to the migrant community – but it's hard to be everything to all people!"

## **Is there a main area of focus in your practice?**

### **If so, why?**

The different environments Allyson has worked in have meant working with "very different cohorts with very different learning needs." Because of the 'captive audience' in her current location at Risdon Prison, her focus is mainly on providing students with one-on-one support in basic underpinning foundational knowledge and skills in literacy which they have missed out on for whatever reason during their formative years. This includes "phonological awareness, phonics, reading and spelling strategies, knowledge of basic grammar and spelling. It also more broadly includes helping them to gain confidence with basic things like reading and writing letters, reading to their children, and preparation for stepping up into accredited learning." As with the library adult literacy service in other locations, people opt into weekly sessions, unless they also elect to join a spelling group which provides a second opportunity in a week for literacy learning. There are other incidental workshops, such as digital skills, poetry, writing and singing, that individuals can join. Allyson supports foundational level learning, and her sessions are "a stepping stone" to the other classes offered by TasTAFE, such as English, mathematics and other employment focussed courses.

## **Can you describe any key points in your career that have helped shape the way you work in delivering LLN or foundation skills?**

"To be honest, this role has continually shaped the way I work. Initially, I had mentors who were really instrumental in me becoming quite passionate about the social justice aspect, including Hugh Fielding, Glen McNeil, and Andrea McMahan." Working in Bridgewater was also a big learning curve for Allyson. It was during this time that she was introduced to the concept of 'Bridges out of Poverty' and undertook training aimed at developing an understanding of people who have experienced intergenerational poverty. "On a practical level, I've continually been forced to increase and hone my skills in delivering LLN. It has deepened my understanding of why we teach these things, and how important it is to be explicit, patient, and review and reinforce in order for things to really stay with the learner. But it's also important to apply learning to real-life contexts, so we don't get too caught up in the mechanics".



## Have you worked with accredited and non-accredited learners?

Having done the accredited Training and Assessment course, Allyson understands the VET system. However, her work has stayed in the community space teaching in the non-accredited community domain.

## How do you keep in touch with what is happening in your sector?

“Keep up the curiosity!” says Allyson. She explained that being involved in various community of practice groups, TESOL (Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages) and TCAL as well as keeping in touch with offerings from ALA (Adult Learning Australia) and ACEA (Australian Correctional Education Association) “There’s always new reading and connecting with current research, following relevant groups on social media, and talking and sharing with colleagues.” Allyson mentioned subscribing to relevant websites, such as ‘Exchange for Change’ (writing in prisons) and EBLI – a US-based organisation which promotes a phonics-based approach. It was clear speaking with Allyson that she has so many areas of her practice that she would love to investigate more, such as trauma informed practice and how to work best with people with acquired brain injuries.

**“Public attitude has changed to be more aware and understanding of literacy challenges people face.”**

## What have you seen change over the years?

“26Ten, Libraries Tasmania and TCAL have impacted society’s awareness of adult literacy and numeracy.” Allyson said, “There is something that draws me to the cohort of people in our community that are of English speaking background who missed out on schooling and as adults are dealing with low literacy.”

“Public attitude has changed to be more aware and understanding of literacy challenges people face, but also how professional Tasmania has become in our literacy programs. Adult Literacy in Tasmania has matured from using a broad, feel-good inclusive community approach that was probably less effectual in actually increasing skills, to adopting a more targeted, professional approach that is more knowledgeable and evidence-based.”

## What motivates you to work in this profession?

“The awareness that so many people have not had the opportunities, education and role-modelling I’ve had, and are ultimately not to blame for where they are at the moment.” It was clear that Allyson has considered this answer deeply, with social justice as her main driver. “I feel we as a society owe them the opportunity, albeit later in life, to get the support to improve their future and social well-being. Those learners who, for various reasons, have taken some time away to manage their lives are welcome back anytime, and some do come back. It’s not always a continuous uphill trajectory - adult lives can be complicated and that makes it hard. Some may engage for a while, then take a break. There is always the possibility that they will return at a later stage to take up learning again.” Allyson also expressed her gratitude for how she fell into the library work and how she has been valued and well supported by her organisation over her career.

## What would you say to someone interested in working in adult language, literacy and numeracy?

“Be prepared for a big learning curve. It depends on what your background is, but I think be prepared for two steps forward, one step back, but see everything as part of the learning.” This is an important point Allyson was keen to make when working with adults where “it involves complex lives, trajectories of learning are not linear and it is a completely different situation to working with children. There are a myriad of circumstances and priorities, and sometimes you have to accept that it may not be the right time for someone, even though you really want the best for them. But always celebrate the wins - however big or small, leave the door open, and end on a positive note!” In the community domain, having good rapport is important. “It is what brought me into this space - I love working face to face with learners, and helping them to achieve their goals.”



Allyson and Sue McKerracher, formerly Director, Libraries Tasmania

# JANE SHEPHERD

Jane is a teacher with TasTAFE's Vocational Preparation team located in Tasmania's north west. She is in the team that delivers the fully online course, CHCSS00101 Language, Literacy and Numeracy Tutor Skill Set, commonly called TALL (Tutor Adult Literacy Learners).

## How did you start your career in Language, Literacy and Numeracy (LLN)?

Jane began answering this first question by going back to before she was involved in adult literacy. After a comfortable working-class upbringing and going to university on the mainland, Jane accepted a community development job. With a degree in Human Movement, she moved to Tasmania, first to George Town and then Wynyard. Both locations were eye-opening to Jane. She saw the power of being a part of a community and how some people were excluded for a whole lot of reasons that seemed to be based on their learning experiences. Jane reflected upon her early career in community development, where she came face to face with the community she wanted to develop and felt a deep compassion for the issues and barriers that were a part of many people's lives.



### FOUNDATIONS SKILLS TEACHER

TASTAFE

While full time parenting, Jane became friends with someone tutoring adults in literacy and this sparked Jane's interest. Some years later she found herself drawn to one-to-one adult literacy tutoring and was a part of some of the initial tutor training in Tasmania. UNESCO's International Literacy Year in 1990 highlighted literacy as a basic human need. At this time there was money available for paid one-on-one and small group (initially non-accredited) tutoring which is what Jane became involved in shortly after her tutor training. This training was part of the Adult Literacy Basic Education (ALBE) program. It didn't take Jane long to get involved in the tutor training program itself and she reflected fondly on gatherings of tutors and the collegiality this created. Jane commenced work in this field at a time "when literacy was seen as relevant to the individual and their needs...[over time] the wheel turned and now funding has become connected with adults as workers, and I find this disturbing. If we are not prepared to teach people skills to live a healthy and fulfilling life, including work, I find it offensive that we think it is ok to just train them to work."

## How have you developed your professional skills and knowledge over time?

“Initially it was workshops, reading, and long conversations!” Then Jane undertook some formal training and she was supported (financially) to do Certificate II Workplace Training, as a vocational teacher and later she completed Certificate IV in Training and Assessment (which includes keeping this up to date). About ten years ago Jane completed a Graduate Certificate in Education with UTAS which brought her back to the academic space. “That was the formal stuff.”

For Jane, “the professional development (PD) nowadays is fantastic. Organisations, such as Adult Learning Australia (ALA), Australian Council for Adult Literacy (ACAL), Tasmanian Council for Adult Literacy (TCAL), VET Development Centre (VDC), and Velg Training offer great online sessions that can be tapped into anywhere, anytime.” Jane and her colleagues also have internal TasTAFE PD and have been invited to Libraries Tasmania sessions that have been “career-changing for me...pivotal sessions on the Big Six with Anne Bayetto have been fantastic. Being face to face with the literacy coordinators has given us some fabulous connections.” Jane follows some professional organisations on Facebook such as SPELD SA (Specific Learning Difficulties South Australia), Spelfabet, ACAL, and MindShift and gets “some cracking stuff” there. She also follows up on readings from PD sessions to go deeper into the theory and ideas. As there is so much information available, Jane says “it’s also finding what’s credible and immediately useful.”

Jane talked about how she shares and discusses information with colleagues “and enjoys when someone sends something on to me. When I talk about something, I remember it better and can explore my understanding and application with other people’s ideas. Adult literacy is often embedded in other research, such as school education, VET training or uni so I’m careful to spend my time wisely. More is coming out that is specific to us and encouraging; to be recognised as important.”

**“When I talk about something, I remember it better and can explore my understanding and application with other people’s ideas.”**

## Do you use the Australian Core Skills Framework (ACSF) in your work, and how is it important?

Jane mostly uses this document to outline its key features and purpose for tutors in the Tutor Adult Literacy Learners (TALL) course. However, it is a critical document that describes the skills we all need to learn at any level and how they interconnect with one another. When Jane first started tutoring/teaching she was “worried that I wasn’t covering everything.” The training packages give context and the ACSF describes specific skills across the levels from the very basic to the highly complex. “While it may have faults, it’s a very useful document and I’d like to get better at using it. It provides an excellent framework with explicit examples, especially to determine the initial level for someone beginning their learning with a tutor.”

In the TALL course, tutors are encouraged to have a go at TasTAFE’s Basic Key Skills Builder (BSKB), an online assessment tool for reading and numeracy skills according to ACSF levels. “It’s great learning for the tutors to experience the ‘testing’ environment, with the pressure a student may experience, and to identify their own level. We [also] discuss the validity of this assessment.”

## Is there a main area of focus in your practice? If so, why?

“My focus is literacy and learning. I look at literacy in a very broad sense...literacy is [made up of] the skills people need to make sense of their lives.” Jane’s approach sees literacy as relevant to the individual, couched in adult learning principles of learner-centred practice, and adapting to their needs right now. Jane understands that literacy is complex and includes numeracy, digital, oral and learning skills and using them to be a critical participant in the community, both local and global.

The Lonsdale and McCurry article, *Literacy in the New Millennium* (2004)<sup>1</sup> has had, and continues to have, such an impact on Jane. Jane spoke about how the importance of adult learning principles and multiliteracies is discussed, and that “adult literacy is about the individual...using what they already know in a context and level that is right for them.” Jane’s main work now is the TALL course, which is a fully online accredited skill set that is recognised as the starting point for work in the adult literacy sector. “It’s also key to supporting the 26TEN goals of everyone knowing about literacy and people having the skills to support others.” Being online, TALL is available to a much broader audience than when tutors were trained on campus. Jane finds this “so exciting as many iterations as a literacy/foundation skills teacher come into play as examples of why and how we do what we do. Everyone in the courses brings something different and their comments, questions and applications are really varied. This is what literacy is about-diversity and individuals within society.”

<sup>1</sup> [Lonsdale, M., McCurry, D. \(2004\) Literacy in the new millennium, NCVET](#)

## Can you describe any key points in your career that have helped shape the way you work in delivering LLN or foundation skills?

A key point for Jane was the hefty paper 'Literacy in the New Millenium' (Lonsdale & McCurry 2004). "They analysed literature on literacy to see if there was one definition, but found there are many components, not one definitive definition". Jane had not long been in the adult literacy field when she accepted an assignment to work with Hugh Fielding, who was at the time a Project Officer, "sometimes known as the father of literacy in Tasmania," to run community workshops on literacy. This was in the lead up to the initial Adult Literacy Action Plan. "Hugh could confidently prattle about anything with his wide experience while I was terrified of the content and of his expertise. I can remember driving from Burnie to Queenstown with Hugh and hammering him to explain his PowerPoint slides that I didn't understand that were all based on 'Literacy in the New Millennium'." This work took Hugh and Jane to and from Queenstown and they spoke the entire trip in detail about literacy in that article and "it was fantastic!". Jane still reads the introduction and key points of this article and often quotes it to reinforce the complexity of literacy and that it always starts with the learner and that we are all teachers of literacy.

Another critical time in her working life was when the TALL course moved completely into the online space. When Jane met TasTAFE teacher, Nic Duffy, they "simply clicked, as professionals as well as people...The first day we had a big piece of paper and sticky notes and some textas and it all came together...it was so exciting!" Jane had wanted the course to go online for many years and stated that, "some interstate participants in the TALL course wish for what we have in Tasmania. With 26TEN and the Adult Learning Strategy Tasmania is ahead of the game".

**“Literacy in the New Millenium’ (Lonsdale & McCurry 2004) analysed literature on literacy to see if there was one definition, but found there are many components, not one definitive definition.”**

\*Literacy in the new millennium, Lonsdale &McCurry (2004)

<https://www.ncver.edu.au/research-and-statistics/publications/all-publications/literacy-in-the-new-millennium>

## Have you worked with accredited and non-accredited learners?

“Yes, and they both have their place.” Accredited training describes the learning outcomes expected for a particular purpose or graduated training that builds in complexity, “This falls down when learners aren’t prepared, don’t have the skills or interest or are required to attend training for purposes that are external to them, such as to satisfy Centrelink or a job network provider, where the learning isn’t relevant.”

Jane explained non-accredited training is great for low literacy learners. This space leans into adult learning principles, focusing on the learner at a level they need in meaningful contexts and addressing their immediate goals. The flexibility of attending to individual needs fits well in one on one and non-accredited training settings.

## How do you keep in touch with what is happening in your sector?

Jane’s main way of keeping in touch is connecting with her network and colleagues, “We have a healthy system in TasTAFE for VET professional development as well as in our team where we share information, research, website and videos. We are encouraged to participate in material from across the world. I’m so lucky to work closely with colleagues with passion and we share all the time, applying new learning.”

Since TALL has been online and TasTAFE is teaching the Libraries Tasmania volunteer tutors, a great network has developed and “we have been included in some of the Library professional development. This has pushed my knowledge and skills while developing relationships that are often sources for what’s happening.”

Jane finds information from many sources, such as social media where she gets “some interesting feeds that I explore and share.” Jane is a member of the Australian Council for Adult Literacy (ACAL) and TCAL. “A colleague and I went to the ACAL Conference in 2018 and it was fantastic to be enveloped in enthusiasm, passion and knowledge from the sector. I know that conferences are probably a thing of the past but face-to-face learning is still pretty special to build relationships and stay connected.”

**“We have a healthy system in TasTAFE for VET professional development as well as in our team where we share information, research, website and videos. We are encouraged to participate in material from across the world. I’m so lucky to work closely with colleagues with passion and we share all the time, applying new learning.”**

## What have you seen change over the years?

Jane has seen so many things change. Two things she feels have been pivotal for her are the Science of Reading (SoR) and digital technology. "The Science of Reading - I'm just loving it. We just weren't getting it before. It has been an exciting change for me in recent years. The old whole language approach didn't seem to have the structure or detail very low level readers needed and it was frustrating. SoR explains so much about why they have gaps and the specific learning that will give them access to text."

Jane mentioned that for the TALL course she loves the SPELD South Australia readers and support materials "as they give tutors free tools to work with a learner with evidence-based content and learn along with their learner."

Using digital technology is hugely significant. It provides "access for people who want support and access to PD." Jane is really proud of the work they are doing in training tutors in Tasmania and from the mainland, again aided by digital technology. "Tasmania is the envy of the other states with 26TEN and our strategies to improve literacy. Mind you, we need to do it if we are to thrive as low skills impact all of us across the community. Health, justice, education, employment, etc., are all impacted by low literacy skills."

Jane concluded by saying that she considers the origins of literacy were before text, where generations learned from the stories told and songs sung over millennia and cave or rock drawings depicted how to live. "Our literacy expectations are becoming more complex and access to learning and communication, tools and resources is dividing us even more. Sometimes I despair of the exploitative forces that make wealth from keeping others poor and under-educated. The current housing and cost of living crisis, along with COVID are examples. The kindness in the thick of COVID seems to be over."

## What would you say to someone interested in working in adult language, literacy and numeracy?

Jane states "This is a rewarding yet frustrating area of work as we are still pushing for literacy, in its broadest sense, to be seen as underpinning all learning: at school, at work, in higher education and in life. Literacy is about having the skills to thrive and make sense of your life." Jane's advice is: "Be a learner, be kind to others and mostly, be kind to yourself. We are all teachers and we are all learners and sometimes our greatest learnings are from those we are supposed to be teaching!"

Given that this can be a challenging area of work in many ways, each interviewee has a real passion for it and Jane certainly does as well. "I love the people and I love learning: quite simple really! Seeing people's 'aha' moments, where a deep truth becomes clear is just the best. And, my own 'aha' moments still happen. I so enjoy sharing them amongst the best colleagues who love to learn along with me!"



# LUCY WHITEHEAD

## How did you start your career in LLN?

Lucy has been involved in the full gamut of language, literacy and numeracy over her years of working in this field.

Her journey began with teaching English in Japan for seven years and upon returning to Tasmania taught English at the University of Tasmania (UTAS).

Lucy started volunteer tutoring at the Huonville library and worked at UTAS in the academic entry program, which was closer to adult literacy than language teaching. Subsequently, Lucy started doing small literacy projects at the Geeveston Community Centre, where she currently works as the 26Ten Community Coordinator for the Huon Valley. Over time, more activities were adopted at the community centre that involved people engaging in literacy support. It has become one of the community centre's core focus points.



### LITERACY AND NUMERACY COMMUNITY COORDINATOR

GEEVESTON COMMUNITY CENTRE &  
26TEN

## How have you developed your professional skills and knowledge over time?

Lucy tries to take part in any workshops or webinars that are offered by 26TEN, TasTAFE or TCAL. She completed three of the Training and Assessment Language Literacy and Numeracy delivered by South Australian TAFE a few years ago. Lucy says, "They were really useful units and provided a solid theory of best practice and a basis for creating effective lesson plans, and suitable approaches to teaching adults." At that time this study was of no cost to Lucy and fortunately, she was able to complete the study within her working day at the Community Centre. Lucy was able to create lesson plans that she used with real learners and it was helpful to have feedback on them through SA TAFE\*. It was also a good grounding for creating comprehensive assessments.

In regards to other training, Lucy finds the webinars offered by Adult Learning Australia useful and varied in their topics.

\*TAELLN501-Support the development of adult LLN skills;

TAELLN805 Design and conduct a pre-training assessment of adult LLN skills;

TAELLN815 Develop a strategy for adult LLN skill development in a community program.

## **Do you use the Australian Core Skills Framework in your work, and how is it important?**

“Yes, the ACSF is the basis of finding a starting point for my learners and informs possible goals they can work towards. The ACSF provides a good indicator when progressing work with a learner.” Lucy has found the Precision Consultancy tools extremely useful (created from funding from the Workplace English Language and Literacy, or WELL, program). These are available freely online, and are mostly workplace focused.

## **Is there a main area of focus in your practice?**

### **If so, why?**

Lucy’s focus is on the workplace, getting people work ready and helping learners with everyday functional literacy skills. The skills Lucy finds she spends a lot of time on are spelling, reading and digital literacy. In the community space it depends on the needs of each particular person but it almost always includes some spelling and digital skills. The main focus of Lucy’s practice has changed depending on Lucy’s role. For example, when Lucy was working with apprentices in her role at Work & Training, there was a strong focus on workplace numeracy and active listening skills. Business trainees needed help with writing skills and effective reading strategies for quick and comprehensive comprehension. Learning is always tailored to the skills the person needs.

## **Can you describe any key points in your career that have helped shape the way you work in delivering LLN or foundation skills?**

Lucy explained that over the last 12 years, all her contracts have been for one year, and subject to funding. This has meant Lucy has needed to “go with the flow”. Luckily, thanks to various funding streams, there has always been the opportunity to work in both community literacy and workplace literacy. Lucy stated that she enjoys variety which is crucial when changing roles so often. That said, she suggests more job security in the industry would benefit both practitioners and LLN learners.

The contracts Lucy has secured have given her the focus of her literacy practice and it is these experiences that have given Lucy her varied experience across LLN. Lucy states, “If you are ok with a little bit of the unknown, and can think of creative ways to engage the community in learning opportunities, there are plenty of options to work in adult literacy and numeracy. There is a lot is happening in this space in Tasmania and lots of opportunities to be found.”

**“If you are ok with a little bit of the unknown, there is a lot happening in the adult LLN space in Tasmania and lots of opportunities to be found.”**

## Is there a main area of focus in your practice?

### If so, why?

There are differences when working in the community and education domains and Lucy explained she had had experience in supporting learners with mainly work-based accredited learning. For individuals working towards accredited courses, the skills people need are often things like how to plan, learn step by step, or how to present their learnings. With accredited coursework learners have specific material that they need to compete. This helps guide each lesson and target the learning that they need. Community based literacy can be much broader as learners get to choose their goals, and it is easier and important to use material from everyday life.

## How do you keep in touch with what is happening in your sector?

At the time of this interview, Lucy had been a committee member of the Tasmanian Council for Adult Literacy for six years and took on the role of president in 2020. This role involved leading the Council in its ambition to support practitioners around Tasmania and included being abreast of national and state matters to include in the newsletter. Lucy created the TCAL newsletter that was distributed every two months. This task provides an opportunity to see what is happening in the sector in Tasmania and nationally. She also subscribes to the Australian Council for Adult Literacy (ACAL) and the Victorian Adult Literacy and Basic Education Council (VALBEC) newsletters. Lucy's subscription to VALBEC includes access to the publication Fine Print.

Lucy keeps her knowledge current by watching relevant programs and reading articles as they arise. Lucy's involvement in TCAL, and having been the ACAL representative for TCAL, means that she has been involved in discussions and various meetings with like-minded practitioners, Libraries Tasmania Literacy Coordinators and her 26Ten colleagues. Lucy has been consulted by state and federal government in adult literacy policy. She is passionate about advocating for the importance of community literacy and encouraging a culture that values lifelong learning not necessarily related to employment goals.

## What have you seen change over the years?

Lucy's positive response describes Tasmania as being in a great position with tri-partisan support for 26Ten and improving literacy in the state. There are a lot of conversations and consultations happening at a national and state level which Lucy hopes will lead to improved support for those struggling with literacy and numeracy. "It seems a lot more people are aware of the need to support people with lower literacy levels these days and where to go for help improving their reading, writing, maths and digital skills too." There is also intermittent media attention on the challenges adults with low literacy face. For example, in 2022 SBS produced an 8 part series called *Lost for Words* about adult literacy learners and there have been short interviews on other 'interest' programs that have increased public awareness.

## What motivates you to work in this profession?

“Adult literacy is very goal-driven and it’s great to see people ticking off skills as they work towards being better readers and writers. There is a lot of variety in the direction that literacy and numeracy teaching can take you whether it be in the workplace, community or through accredited training.”

## What would you say to someone interested in working in adult literacy and numeracy?

“Yes, do it! I would suggest they see what opportunities there are and if possible, do some volunteering to get a taste for it, then join as many workshops and training opportunities as possible, and network with other literacy and numeracy practitioners!”



Lucy and LLN participants at the Geeveston Community Centre

# ANNE SALT

## How did you start your career in LLN?

Anne has had a varied career with a recurring interest in disability and adult learning. Following one of these interest areas, Anne began to study in around 2008, and commenced a Bachelor of Adult Vocational Education (BAVE). Anne undertook this study thinking she would work with adults or people with a disability in a tertiary classroom setting but soon decided this was not the right space for her.

Anne remembers hearing about increased funding for adult literacy. This sparked further interest for her. Studying online, she undertook a Graduate Certificate in Adult Language, Literacy & Numeracy Practice through the Brisbane Institute of Technology. This certificate was “a game changer...and I found it fascinating to be studying what I had already been doing in the workplace.” This course developed Anne’s confidence, particularly in teaching numeracy. Before undertaking these two courses, Anne had lots of hands-on workplace experience, including managing a non-government organisation with a disability focus.

While Anne was finishing this study in 2012-2013, she made enquiries with TasNetworks as she had heard some work may be available and was ready to use her skills. This began her relationship with 26Ten. She had also been working in a fascinating role, in a different workplace, supporting learners through their aged care studies. Anne found through working with individuals she witnessed their growth, learnt a lot herself, and found it was “very satisfying”.



**ADULT LITERACY  
PRACTITIONER**

## How have you developed your professional skills and knowledge over time?

At each workplace, Anne identified areas for her development and sought out training so she was more equipped to tackle the needs with which learners presented. This has meant that Anne has done a vast amount of self-funded online courses, and the increasing amount of online training available during and after the COVID-19 pandemic provided recent opportunities to do just that.

On top of the courses mentioned above, Anne has completed a Training and Assessment qualification, essential for accredited work in vocational settings. This, combined with her workplace experience, has meant she could competently contextualise training packages, and has enjoyed developing training packages for use in group training. The types of topics Anne has covered while working with groups or individuals are broad. From working with fractions in the kitchen, teaching how to use new technology, or working on writing skills to use in resumés or file notes and incident reports, Anne recognises the needs of a workplace, especially if the reporting skills impact upon the safety of all at the workplace. “It opened my eyes to low literacy... trying to support the staff to be safe at work, and report unsafe situations, they [individual staff] could not express what was happening. The impact [low literacy] can have has been a big part of being motivated to work in a workplace.”

It is also through Anne’s experience with family members that she sought to explore structured literacy, in particular spelling for those who have dyslexia. This exploration opened up the world of orthography, linguistics and structured word inquiry. Anne has learnt from Linda Mood-Bell, Gina Cooke, Lynne Andersen and Peter Bowers to name a few. She has studied Multisensory Structured Language in Wollongong and Yoshimoto Orton Gillingham through Speech Pathology Tasmania. Anne found there are a lot of exceptions with this approach and she has approached the spelling ‘exceptions’ with an orthographic mapping process that focuses on morphology. “As this approach explains away exceptions and focuses on meaning it is very useful in an adult learning context where the learners already bring a wealth of life and work experience,” Anne says.

**Anne recognises the needs of a workplace, especially if the reporting skills impact upon the safety of all at the workplace. “It opened my eyes to low literacy... trying to support the staff to be safe at work, and report unsafe situations, they [individual staff] could not express what was happening. “The impact [low literacy] can have has been a big part of being motivated to work in a workplace.”**

## **Do you use the Australian Core Skills Framework in your work, and how is it important?**

Like most adult literacy practitioners, Anne uses the ACSF for initial assessments, “Yes, I do the assessments at the start. I look at where the learner’s level is and write up their learning plan based on the performance criteria.” Anne utilises workplace documents and advised that she uses the ACSF reading strategies frequently. Trying to ‘fit in’ a literacy session in workplaces can have its drawbacks, often only having one session for one hour a week. Learners can be distracted and Anne has had to be “strategic about what you are doing... the text navigation works really well for [practice with] reading manuals.” Anne teaches and models how to ask questions to obtain information from texts. In the time available with learners Anne said it is the finer grain skills development that she focuses on. The evidence of progress is in the individual being able to do what they need/want to do. For example, complete forms or structure emails, and spelling often get woven in. Finally, Anne commented that the oral communication section of the ACSF is also helpful.

## **Is there a main area of focus in your practice? If so, why?**

A clear theme in these answers is the focus on workplace learning. Anne has often found that many learners want to work on spelling and this has become a huge focus of Anne’s work and, as mentioned above, where she has focused her professional development. All the various training Anne has done has built the toolkit she draws on depending on the circumstance. Anne talked about the importance of being word inquirers. Anne’s passion for understanding the structure of words in the English language has been driven by the learners’ needs and her ability to explain ‘why’.

## **Can you describe any key points in your career that have helped shape the way you work in delivering LLN or foundation skills?**

Anne has worked with many capable workers who have been embarrassed to address their literacy issues but over time have grown in confidence and the embarrassment has subsided. An example Anne shared was how a team leader had to communicate with his team and run team meetings with staff who had English as an additional language. Anne taught him mind mapping and from using that, the ACSF, and role-plays as practice. The team leader excelled at developing his targeted oral communication so his team understood and could do their work safely. It was so successful that he and the CEO of the organisation were guests on the SBS program ‘Insight’ to discuss the process and outcome of working on improving workplace literacy. “The confidence change... [in that person was significant], I know he has gone on to bigger and better things.”

Another example of a key moment for Anne was another of her 'hands on' approaches. This time with understanding fractions in a commercial kitchen, where she used cardboard cutouts for the learner. "Once the penny dropped with this person, they burst into tears." At a function, Anne encouraged this employee to share their experience and success where they again burst into tears and stated "If I had been taught like this at school, I wouldn't be working here." Her experiences at school had not met her needs and this demonstrated the impact that low literacy and numeracy had on her life.

A final example Anne gave was how she helped an employee apply to complete a second trade. Anne worked with this individual to "write a convincing letter and do all the research needed to build a case, and he was granted approval to do a dual trade. This ultimately benefited him and his employer." A result of this interaction was he could take some of the skills he had learnt and share them with his dyslexic daughter. The employee was a great advocate of improving literacy and numeracy, and the support the 26Ten grants provide.

## **Have you worked with accredited and non-accredited learners?**

Anne has supported many different students in various accredited and non-accredited settings, depending on the project Anne was working on at the time. "Certainly with aged care the focus was on accredited learning, but it really depended on the needs of the workplace and/or the individuals." Other examples include supporting students to learn study skills for their units at the University of Tasmania and training others to be trainers in workplace settings that involve observing tasks and breaking down what steps are involved in a given task.

## **How do you keep in touch with what is happening in your sector?**

The TCAL Facebook page and the TCAL newsletter sent to members are great sources of local knowledge for Anne. We discussed frustrations about balanced literacy approaches still being promoted at a national level. "To be quite honest I am so focused on all this structured stuff, that's where my head goes!"

## **What have you seen change over the years?**

Supporting the development of digital literacy skills has now become a regular part of an adult literacy trainer's (ALT) work. Anne stated she has witnessed the "evolution and expansion of the 26Ten program over the years" A lot more organisations have come on board over the years. This has increased the awareness of 26Ten and adult literacy issues in Tasmania. "The projects that I've seen work, have destigmatised low literacy." Anne also noted the increase and "type of professional development offered by TCAL."

**"The projects that I've seen work, have destigmatised low literacy."**



## **What motivates you to work in this profession?**

“It’s a social conscience thing, I’ve always worked where I can improve people’s lives.” Anne recalled her childhood experiences of “new Australians” (migrants) who lived in her street and who spent time around her family kitchen table learning English with her mother. This influenced many of Anne's choices and created lifelong friendships.

## **What would you say to someone interested in working in adult language, literacy and numeracy?**

Anne may be understated in her manner but her passion for helping others was clear throughout this interview and in her responses. When asked this final question Anne responded, “Go for it! I think anywhere where you are working with humans to work towards what they want to improve is very rewarding.”

# GEOFF CUMBERLAND

## How did you start your career in LLN?

Geoff has worked at TasTAFE for over 11 years, and, at the time of the interview, was working in the role of Applied Vocational Support Teacher. Geoff's work in this field started in 2010 on a contract basis with TasTAFE in their youth programs. Geoff worked there for about 3 years, at Hobart College for the first year and the remainder at Glenorchy Pulse working in the general access to work and training Certificate Level 1 where he taught various units with language, literacy and numeracy (LLN) content. Geoff's initial trade training was as a boilermaker welder.

Geoff moved to Tasmania in 1990, but unfortunately could no longer work 'on-the-tools' due to a back injury and initially had trouble finding work. At this time there was a Federal Government SkillShare program in place to help long-term unemployed get a job.

In the process of taking a typing course and completing his resume, the course facilitators "asked if they could pass my resume onto their boss. I had an interview and was offered a job doing some admin work. One thing led to another and I ended up working at a workshop in Goodwood teaching welding to long-term unemployed people and we developed a course with an English and maths teacher teaching the basics, but then the world went pear-shaped for me again".

Geoff encountered a difficult time in his life and health and was off work for several years. He then received a call from an old colleague about a new program working with youth at risk and "would I be interested in having a chat with the bloke who is running it? It started with some part-time work, then me hanging around more as my kids were in high school, then ended up being a full-time job".



**APPLIED VOCATIONAL SUPPORT  
TEACHER**

TASTAFE

It was in this role at Chance on Main, between 2005-2010, that Geoff met Gay Behren, a retired teacher who was teaching maths, times tables and such at Chance on Main. “She encouraged me to explore avenues along those lines. Gay’s motto was that if she could make one small change to one student’s life then she would have earned her wages for the year, and she intended to retire a billionaire. Geoff was so inspired by this teacher he took on the same motto and said “If I can make one small difference to an apprentice or a student then I’ve earned my wages for the year. I’ll have to help a lot of people to become a billionaire, but that’s what drives me”. Geoff didn’t have a positive education, particularly in high school, so he can empathise with those who have had negative experiences and present information in different ways so that his students have success.

When Geoff gained a position with Literacy and Numeracy South (TasTAFE), his interest in this area grew. After working at TasTAFE for a few years he recalls thinking, “I wouldn’t mind teaching a numeracy class...I got that opportunity and I loved it...it evolved and I was focused more on the trade area...I worked on the Skills for Education and Employment (SEE) Program and now it’s back to fully supporting the apprentices in the trades area”. Geoff’s trade knowledge and experience, his LLN teaching experience, and his technical drawing background enables him to support the apprentices and the engineering students.

## **How have you developed your professional skills and knowledge over time?**

To work in the vocational education and training (VET) space Geoff needed to obtain his Certificate IV in Training & Assessment. He has also done a lot of ‘on the job’ learning. Years ago Geoff attended David Tout workshops in Tasmania, and enjoys his approach. In 2022 he attended some of the Adult Learning Australia (ALA) webinars and found them good to attend. However, in general, he feels “there is nothing new in the numeracy space”.

**“If I can make one small difference to an apprentice or a student then I’ve earned my wages for the year. I’ll have to help a lot of people to become a billionaire, but that’s what drives me”.**

## **Do you use the Australian Core Skills Framework in your work, and how is it important?**

Because of the SEE program, and the numeracy classes he initially ran at TasTAFE, Geoff is very familiar with the Australian Core Skills Framework (ACSF). TasTAFE now runs the Basic Key Skills Builder (BKSB) literacy and numeracy screening assessment with the first-year apprentices, and depending on that initial screening “it gives us a heads up on how we support them through their journey”. With identified students, Geoff can begin discussions on Orientation Day to provide work examples and options for practice and work out quickly who will be requiring support. TasTAFE has received some positive feedback from students and teachers. There are lots of different ways that students can access support, whether it is work-based or through a school-based apprenticeship.

## **Is there a main area of focus in your practice? If so, why?**

Numeracy is the area that Geoff fell into and he says, “Some of the greatest things I have learnt are from the students that I’ve worked with”. About five years ago Geoff took over running the Aboriginal Training Program and had a group of students in a numeracy class ranging in age from about 17 to 75. As Geoff chatted through an example of a unit on metric measurement it surprised him that, “none of them used recipes...read a temperature gauge...[or] used kitchen scales.” This made him aware of cultural differences. “Cooking was an engaging way to work through and assess learning in this area, and don’t presume! That was a great learning experience for me.” This teaching presented surprises for Geoff and lots of opportunities to increase the student’s skills for work or daily life, and he had a lot of fun teaching it too.

## **Can you describe any key points in your career that have helped shape the way you work in delivering LLN or foundation skills?**

Geoff has developed his style and method of teaching through his own experiences, and by learning from many students’ experiences of learning, their individual needs, and not making presumptions about the learner. Geoff said, “I used to start many a session with ‘who thinks maths is fun?’...Well, I converted them!”

Working closely with colleagues through learning scenarios and exploring different ways of presenting & assessing information has helped to shape the way Geoff delivers content and supports learners. Geoff is also driven by “understanding where they’re coming from, in understanding a concept whether it be a numeracy or a literacy concept. I suppose I’ve got that empathy for them...I’ll come up with a way to find how I can support this person”.

## Have you worked with accredited and non-accredited learners?

Geoff worked with an organisation called Chance on Main (Moonah, Hobart) which existed for about five years. The motto for those participating was 'your chance, your choice'. This was a youth intervention program working with people who had been in juvenile detention or were serving out community service hours, or who were at risk of ending up in Ashley Detention Centre or at risk of disengaging from school in general. In this workshop therapy program the activities included woodwork, metal fabrication, welding, and a bike program. Geoff said, "The first part was to engage them in a practical sense, then I would build literacy and numeracy around that". Engagement was key in this program. It was well supported and the participants did well with some great outcomes although no further funding could be sourced and the program ceased. Geoff said they "were shattered. We reduced the recidivism and youth crime rate in Glenorchy."

## How do you keep in touch with what is happening in your sector?

Geoff has access to lots of generic TAFE professional learning, such as ACSF validation and moderation. Geoff feels that the focus in the LLN sector is often on literacy and many have a maths phobia!

## What have you seen change over the years?

Geoff has seen "an allowance to use more technology" because in reality people do use technology and calculators in their daily lives. Geoff stated he has noticed a lack of understanding of mathematical concepts and having a "real world concept of fractions seems foreign to students", perhaps in part because younger students have always learnt in a metric system. Geoff finds there is now more of a focus on "what tool we can provide for them that they would use in the workplace".

**"When you get a light bulb moment or you help somebody understand something...that's what gives me my job satisfaction".**

## **What motivates you to work in this profession?**

“I’ve come from a different world to many others I’ve met in the VET space over the years. Most have been trained teachers.” However, this has not meant that Geoff is a duck out of water in this field of work. Finishing school at year ten, and all the experiences he has had in his own life allows him to work with individuals to get to where they want to be in life. Witnessing those light bulb moments, helping others through Geoff’s deep sense of empathy, is a key driver for him in his work. “When you get a light bulb moment or you help somebody understand something...that’s what gives me my job satisfaction.”

Geoff suggests being open to the idea you do not necessarily need university training. “If you have empathy and life experience and want to help someone get somewhere in life, there are people that could use your help, in or out of the TAFE system. Let’s open our eyes to people who are not ‘teachers’ but have so many work and life skills that could be great in this working space.” Helping the students is what Geoff goes to work for and he has really enjoyed making numeracy fun.

## **What would you say to someone interested in working in adult language, literacy and numeracy?**

“Give it a go! It’s as simple as that! You’ve probably got a wealth of real-life knowledge that can help people...and if you have the empathy to help people improve their skills in some little ways sometimes, that’s all they need to get them on their journey.”

# HARRY ATKINSON

## How did you start your career in LLN?

Harry enjoyed visual arts and completed an honours degree in this subject area but was unsure what to do after that. He completed a Diploma of Education (Secondary School), although it didn't take Harry long to realise “it wasn't something I was excited about” so looked for other work. The first role Harry undertook in the adult space was in a language, literacy and numeracy (LLN) program run by Mission Australia in 2002. This entailed teaching job seekers from a wide range of backgrounds to fulfil mutual obligation requirements. Participants attended classes each week and it was primarily about “trying to get people to engage in the community and gain skills to get into employment.” At that time the program was called the Language, Literacy and Numeracy Program (LLNP), a precursor to the current program, Skills for Education and Employment (SEE). Harry spent six years in this role. There was a lot of on-the-job learning for him in the role, but he was fortunate to have training provided and two great mentors, Kristy Walker & Trish Hopwood.

In 2008 Harry saw a job advertised with Work & Training Ltd. He was the successful applicant and this is where he works currently. That initial role was to support apprentices and trainees.



### FOUNDATION SKILLS PROGRAMS MANAGER

WORK & TRAINING

## How have you developed your professional skills and knowledge over time?

For Harry, “it was a fair bit of trial and error [and] on-the-job training”. Over time he attended lots of workshops, conferences, and informal professional development (PD) which “really helped my skills, but it was mostly through trial and error”. Harry shared that some of the best learning he had, in terms of teaching skills, was his first job with Mission Australia as it required him to “think on my feet”, and create daily lessons that would meet the different needs and levels of his participants, often “working with people with a lot of barriers to learning”. Harry became adept at planning and sequencing learning and creating the accompanying resources and assessments. The work at Mission involved delivery of units from the Certificate of General Education for Adults curriculum and used the National Reporting System (NRS), the precursor to the Australian Core Skills Framework (ACSF).

Harry was required to hold and maintain a current training and assessment vocational education certificate, currently TAE40116 Certificate IV in Training & Assessment. Harry found the following units extremely useful and he “would like to promote” the Diploma and Graduate Diploma units, TAELLN501, TAELLN805, TAELLN815 delivered by TAFE South Australia. Harry said they were delivered in a workshop environment and were “very worthwhile”.

Over time, Harry has undertaken professional development (PD) in project management, leadership training and other internal training which, while not LLN focused, has been useful. Some PD Harry recommends is mental health first aid. “Many of our people with low LLN have a trauma background, and understanding how that interferes with learning [and] social interaction can be really useful.” Harry has also done some PD with Dear Dyslexia and SPELD.

## **Do you use the Australian Core Skills Framework in your work, and how is it important?**

In the workplace domain, the ACSF Needs Analysis is most useful. Most employers want to know whether a person has or has not got the skill(s) to be employed or promoted in a particular role. “All of our literacy programs use the ACSF to measure skills before training and after training...and to demonstrate skills objectively.” Work & Training also uses the ACSF to meet the requirements of their funding. Harry is now teaching and mentoring others working in adult LLN to use the ACSF.

Harry commented, “In Tasmania... we’ve had lots of professional development in the Australian Core Skills Framework, but there’s a lot less in terms of developing sequenced learning programs...and developing adult teaching skills”. Great mentors have bridged the gap in available PD for Harry, especially in developing his skills in teaching and learning. The gap in professional development is more specific to the workplace domain.

## **Is there a main area of focus in your practice?**

### **If so, why?**

Harry said that in the past, his focus has been on numeracy “because in terms of employment and industry, what I’ve observed, especially with apprentices and trainees, is they [employers] won’t put up with people who can’t do simple measurement and calculations. That can be a reason for someone to lose their job, but they generally can put up with someone who is a poor speller”. When Harry was working with apprentices and trainees, about fifty per cent of the content focus was on numeracy.

There was an obvious and positive change in Harry’s tone when he spoke about commencing a project in a new business. It is a really interesting part of his role to “find out and learn all I can about the business, their issues and what their needs are in terms of employee skills”. It is through this investigation that he works out what the employer needs, why those skills are required, and how they link to the strategic and business goals so he can “build a case for a literacy program within that business specific to organisational needs....It’s been really exciting, we’ve done projects for water and sewage, civil construction, transport, and disability organisations-a really diverse range of businesses”.



## **Can you describe any key points in your career that have helped shape the way you work in delivering LLN or foundation skills?**

Besides the vast amount of workplace learning and mentoring that occurred at Mission Australia, Harry answered the question in relation to his current organisation. Work & Training is a not-for-profit organisation that, as outlined in its strategic plan, is about “supporting people who have maybe missed out...or are from disadvantaged backgrounds, who have had poor schooling or who come from a different language background...it is aimed at supporting a real diversity of Tasmanians”. This is important to Harry and these values allow him and others to provide support in a respectful, open and honest way.

**When Harry was working with apprentices and trainees, about fifty per cent of the content focus was on numeracy.**

## **Have you worked with accredited and non-accredited learners?**

For about six years (several years ago) Harry delivered accredited training in language, literacy and numeracy for Mission Australia. When employed for Work & Training Harry supported learning for apprentices in specific areas of numeracy and literacy that was a part of their accredited training. Harry is currently involved in non-accredited training for 26Ten. This training is delivered based on organisation and individual needs.

## **How do you keep in touch with what is happening in your sector?**

By being a member of TCAL and receiving the “brilliant TCAL newsletters!” and through the Australian Council for Adult Literacy. Harry said, “We used to have a great WELL (Workplace English Language and Literacy) practitioner’s national network with yearly conferences... nothing has really taken its place”.

## What have you seen change over the years?

Harry said the disappearance of the WELL program “was really sad as it made a big difference for a lot of employees and employers”. One of the demands, particularly in workplaces, is the transition from using paper to record and communicate to using computers. Harry notes that “literacy support needs to sit alongside the IT skills”. Technology has become more complex to use and “the communication with government and its systems is far more complex than it used to be”. Participants in many programs “struggle with maintaining and changing usernames and passwords”. Setting up and managing accounts such as MyGov and actions like submitting evidence for a particular payment application requires relatively high levels of literacy skills, “and these are things we need for day to day living”. The overarching change is the increase in the difficulty in daily activities and the literacy skills needed to complete those tasks. The skills required to navigate online systems are high and support provided by the government has decreased. This applies to applications for Australian Business Numbers, Tax File Numbers, Working with Vulnerable People and the like. One of Harry’s roles has been helping people get a transcript of their birth certificate. The task of obtaining basic identification as an adult with little more than a Medicare card requires developed oral language skills and “a lot of literacy skills...and a lot of perseverance to get these documents”.

Harry spoke about how adult literacy teaching has changed from 20 to 30 years ago, including tasks such as formal and informal letter writing, how to use a library catalogue system, finding information in printed text and how to make notes. This has transitioned to using Google, and online communication methods such as Microsoft Teams or Outlook. “The skills are similar but not the same and many people struggle with that change.”

## What motivates you to work in this profession?

Harry continues to be involved in this work because he values social justice. He stated that “large proportions of our community are [although it’s not black and white] shut out from accessing things we might take for granted because of literacy, numeracy and communication skills...without good literacy you’re less able to get good information”. Harry has observed the struggle to ask for and get help, how people get frustrated and at times are quick to get angry with the simple and complicated parts of life. For Harry, “social justice is important”.

## What would you say to someone interested in working in adult language, literacy and numeracy?

“Yeah, do it! Get involved, absolutely. It’s terrific being able to help and support other people with skills that they might not have looked at since school or in the past. A lot of people who have poor literacy don’t have poor literacy for any fault of their own...It’s a wonderful feeling to be able to help someone.”